1 Nephi Chapter 3

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Chapter 3
{Original 1830 Chapter I – continued}

Lehi and Nephi Respond to the Covenant
(The Lord’s Servants Are Obedient)
They Seek First to Obtain the Lord’s Word

1 And it came to pass that Nephi __________ returned from speaking with the Lord [My Father] to _________ the tent of ________ my father

2 And it came to pass that he [my father] spake unto me saying

Behold

I [your father] have dreamed a dream in which the Lord hath commanded me ________ [your father]

that thou [Nephi] and thy brethren shall _________ return to Jerusalem

3 For behold Laban hath ________ the record of the Jews and also [Laban hath] ________ a genealogy of my/thy fore fathers [O, P, 1881 / 1837, 1920] and they are _________ engraved upon plates of brass

[Note: This assignment given to Nephi was essentially impossible. The plates were heavily guarded and valuable. The house of Laban was probably attached to or very near the King’s palace. The long journey was fraught with danger from wild animals and robbers. But Lehi repeats the commandment and the covenant promise of the Lord that goes with the assignment. (See Verneil Simmons, Peoples, Places and Prophecies, p. 67.)]

4 Wherefore the Lord hath commanded me ________ [your father]

that thou [Nephi] and thy brothers should ________ return to Jerusalem [and] go unto the house of Laban [and] seek ________ the records and bring them [the records] “down hither into the wilderness

[Heb. 01 – Two nouns connected by “of” = Adjective] [Heb. 03 – Compound prepositions “down” “into”]
[Heb. 02 – A verb and a noun with the same root “dream”]
5 And now behold thy brothers murmur [about returning to Jerusalem] saying it [returning to Jerusalem] is a hard thing*

which I [your father] have required of them

but behold I [your father] have NOT required it of them

but it [this thing] is a commandment of the Lord*

6 Therefore go [up to Jerusalem] my son [Nephi]* [and do the things which the Lord hath commanded]

and thou [Nephi] shalt be favored of the Lord

because thou [Nephi] hast NOT murmured [against the Lord]

[Note: Nephi, having recently been visited by the Lord and having covenanted with the Lord, makes the following covenant statement:]

7 And it came to pass that I [Nephi] said unto my father

I [Nephi] will go [up to Jerusalem] and do the things which the Lord hath commanded

for I [Nephi] KNOW that the Lord giveth NO commandments unto the children of men save He [the Lord] shall PREPARE A WAY for them that they [the children of men] may accomplish the thing which He [the Lord] commandeth them

8 And it came to pass that when [he] my father had heard these [covenant] words he [my father] was exceedingly glad [*"ily" added]

for he [my father] KNEW that I [Nephi] had been blessed of the Lord

[Par. aa – Random repetition of keyword “thing(s)”]  [Par. cc – Circular repetition of “Nephi”]
[Par. bb – Random repetition of “the Lord”]  [Heb. 04 – Passive participle with “of” instead of “by”]
And I, Nephi, and my brethren took our journey in the wilderness with our tents to go up to the land of Jerusalem.

And it came to pass that when we had gone up to the land of Jerusalem, I and my brethren did consult one with another [using the reasoning of men].

And it came to pass that the lot fell upon Laman*, who of us should go in unto the house of Laban. And he Laman went in unto the house of Laban and he Laman talked with him as he sat in his house.

And he Laman desired of Laban the records which contained the genealogy of my father which were engraved upon the plates of brass.

[Note: The above verses 3-12 have been arranged in chiastic parallelism by Donald Parry, The Book of Mormon Text Reformatted according to Parallelistic Patterns; 1992:4-5. An outline of parallel elements is as follows:]

3  [A] (Laban) (record) (genealogy of my forefathers) (engraven upon plates of brass) ee
4  [B] (house of Laban)
5  [C] (brothers)
7  [D] (I, Nephi) [E] (my father) [F] (do the things) [G] (Lord) (commanded) [G] (Lord) (commandments) [F] (accomplish the thing) [E] (my father)
8  [D] (I, Nephi)
9  [C] (brethren)
11 [B] (house of Laban)
12 [A] (Laban) (records) (engraven upon the plates of brass) (genealogy of my father)

[Heb. ** -- Reversal of order in a compound subject] [Par. dd – Circular repetition “Laman”] [Heb. ** – Reversal of order in a compound subject] [Par. ee – Chiastic or Extended inverted parallelism]
13 And behold it came to pass that [he] Laban was angry and [he] Laban thrust [him] Laman out from his presence. And he Laban would NOT that he Laman should have the records. Wherefore he Laban said unto him Laman, Behold thou Laman art a robber [Laban bears false witness] and I Laban will slay thee Laman [Laban attempts to murder].

14 But [he] Laman fled out of his presence And [he] Laman told [us] the things which [he] Laban had done unto us. And we began to be exceedingly sorrowful [“ly” added] 05 and my brethren were about to return unto my father in the wilderness.

Nephi Holds to the Lord’s Covenant Promises

15 But behold I Nephi said unto them my brethren that As the Lord liveth [covenant language] 06 and as we live we will NOT go down unto our father in the wilderness until we have accomplished the thing which the Lord hath commanded us [see 1 Ne 3:7]

16 Wherefore let us be faithful in keeping [or doing] the commandments of the Lord [Heb. 06 – A covenant oath]

[A] Therefore let us go down to the land [see v. 22]
[B] of our father’s inheritance

[Heb. 05 – The use of the words “began to be”]

24
[1 Nephi 3]

[C] for behold he [our father] left gold* and silver* and ALL manner of riches* [see 1 Ne. 2:4, 11]

And he [our father] hath done because of the commandments of the Lord [*“s” added on iP]

17 For he [my father] *knowing / knew that Jerusalem MUST be destroyed because of the wickedness of the people [*“of the Lord” added on Ooc]

Wherefore if he [my father] should dwell in the land [of Jerusalem] [duality]

after* he [my father] hath been commanded [of the Lord] [“O = that] to flee out of the land [of Jerusalem]

behold [then] he [my father] would also perish [covenant stipulations]

Wherefore it MUST needs be that he [my father] [should] flee out of the land [of Jerusalem]

God Has Preserved a Covenant Record from the Beginning God Desires Lehi’s Family to Have That Covenant Knowledge

19 And behold [A] it is wisdom in God that we should obtain these records [Heb. 08 – If / then with “then” assumed]

[C] that we may preserve unto our children [O = might]

[D] the [covenant] language of our fathers

[Par. ff – Detailing “all this” that was “done”] [Heb. 07 – Two nouns connected by “of” = Adjective] [Par. gg – Extended alternating]
20 And also
[A] [it is wisdom in God]
[B] [that we should obtain these records]
[C] that we may preserve unto them [our children] [O = might]
[D] the covenant words which have been spoken by the mouth of ALL the holy prophets

[D’] which covenant words have been delivered unto them [the holy prophets]

by the Spirit and [by the] power of God

since the world began even down unto this present time

* * *

21 And it came to pass that after this [covenant] manner of language did I [Nephi] persuade my brethren that they [my brethren] might be faithful in keeping [or doing] the commandments of God

~~~Nephi Goes Down to the Land of Their Inheritance & Back Up to Jerusalem
Nephi Is Willing to Sacrifice All He Possesses (Gold, Silver, etc.) to Be Faithful to His Covenant with the Lord

22 And it came to pass
[A] that we went down to the land
[B] of our inheritance
[C] and we did gather together our gold and our silver and our precious things

23 And after we had gathered these things together [O = that]
[B] [of our inheritance]
[A] we went up again [to Jerusalem]
unto the house of Laban

24 And it came to pass that we went in unto Laban* hh
and desired him [Laban] that he [Laban] would give unto us

[Heb. 09 – Separated prepositions]
[Par. ** -- Extended alternating parallelism from v. 16 + chiastic parallelism]
[Par. hh – Circular repetition “Laban”]
the records which were engraved upon the plates of brass for which we would give unto him Laban our gold and our silver and ALL our precious things

And it came to pass that when Laban saw our property it was exceedingly GREAT he did lust after it insomuch that he did thrust us out And he Laban sent his servants to slay us insomuch that he might obtain our property

And it came to pass that we did flee before the servants of Laban and we were obliged to leave behind our property And it fell into the hands of Laban

And it came to pass that we fled into the wilderness and the servants of Laban did NOT overtake us and we hid ourselves in the cavity of a rock

[Note: According to Donald Parry (2007:6-7) verses 16 thru 22 can be seen as a chiasmatic parallelism. The following is an outline of the parallel phrases:

16 [A] (down to the land) [B] (the commandments of God)
18 [C] (words of the prophets)
19 [D] (that we may preserve)
20 [D] (that we may preserve)
21 [C] (mouth of all the holy prophets)
22 [A] (down to the land)

[Par. ii – Circular repetition “our property”] [Heb. 10 – Metaphor “hands” = power]
28 And it came to pass that Laman was angry with me [Nephi] and also [Laman was angry] with my father

and also was Lemuel [angry] with me Nephi and also was Lemuel hearkened unto the words of Laman

Wherefore Laman and Lemuel did speak MANY hard words [hard = sharp, forceful, violent] unto us their younger brothers and they did smite us even with a rod

Nephi Has Been Chosen (by Covenant) to Be a Ruler
As with Moses, the Rod Is Nephi’s Symbol of Rulership
Rebellious Laman & Lemuel Are Rebuked
for Not Understanding the Covenant Way

29 And it came to pass as they smote us with a rod [did smite?] behold an angel of the Lord [symbolically a personage of light, Hum] came and stood before them and he [the angel of the Lord] spake unto them saying

Why do ye smite your younger brother [Nephi] with a rod? [A “rod” or scepter is a symbol of rulership – see Isaiah 14:5]

Know ye NOT that the Lord hath chosen him [Nephi] to be a ruler over you and this [the Lord hath chosen him] because of your iniquities?

Behold ye shall go up to Jerusalem again [O = thou shalt] and the Lord will deliver Laban into your hands

30 And after [that] [he] the angel[of the Lord] had spake/spoken unto us he [the angel of the Lord] departed

[Heb. 11 – Irony A “rod” is a symbol of rulership] [Heb. ** -- Use of “after that”]
[Par. jj – Questions are used to make a point]
Laman and Lemuel Deny Further Light and Knowledge from the Lord

And after [that] he the angel [of the Lord] had departed [after the “light” had departed]

Laman and Lemuel again began to murmur saying

How is it possible that the Lord will deliver Laban into our hands?

Behold he [Laban] is a mighty man

and he [Laban] can command fifty

yea even he [Laban] can slay fifty

Then why [can] not [Laban] slay us?

[Heb. 12 – Idiom “mighty” refers to having multiple powers—physical, military, political, mental, etc.]
[Par. kk – Using numbers]
[Par. LL – Questions are used to make a point]

[Note: Some might ask, “How can anyone begin to murmur minutes after being visited by an angel? To me, the focus here is on rejection of light, rather than rejection of an angel. There are apparently times when angels do not reveal their true identity. “In Genesis 18, Abraham welcomed three angelic guests who appeared at first to be nothing more than some travellers. In the following chapter, two angels went to Sodom where they were simply assumed to be a pair of human visitors.” (christiananswers.net)]

[Note: Hugh Nibley notes that “fifty” would have been the number of a permanent military “garrison” in Jerusalem (see 1 Ne 4:1). (Lehi in the Desert, FARMS, pp. 97-98). Interestingly, according to biblestudy.org, the number fifty can be found 154 times in the Bible. "Its meaning is directly related to the coming of God's Holy Spirit." This could mean that in a subtle manner, Nephi is implying here that not only Laban, but Laman and Lemuel had rejected the spirit of the Lord, which attempted to confirm to them the correctness of Nephi’s motives of covenant-obedience in attempting to retrieve the plates.]

[Note: In 1987, Noel B. Reynolds proposed a conceptual chiastic structure for chapters 3—5 of 1 Nephi (see the following page). The full chiastic structure contains 17 parallel elements, all leading to the Central Message, which deals with the question: “Who is mightier, God or Laban?” Reynolds notes that the element “K” (for 1 Nephi 4:12-19) is advanced one position in the structure because of chronology, but that the structural parallel is easy to recognize. (See Noel B. Reynolds, “The Political Dimension in Nephi’s Small Plates,” FARMS, 1987, p. 14.)
A. Lehi tells Nephi of the commandment he has received in a dream. (3:2)
B. Lehi describes the contents of the plates of brass, mentioning genealogy. (3:3)
C. Lehi was commanded that his sons should seek this record. (3:4)
D. Laman and Lemuel murmur that it is a hard thing. (3:5)
E. Nephi testifies that God will “prepare a way.” (3:7)
F. Lehi is glad, because he knows Nephi has been “blessed of the Lord.” (3:8)
G. The brothers return to Jerusalem and consult with each other. (3:9-10)
H. Laban attempts to slay Laman. (3:11-13)
I. The four are sorrowful: Laman and Lemuel want to return to the wilderness. (3:14)
J. Nephi’s oath: “As the Lord liveth and as we live” to keep the commandments of the Lord. (3:15-18)
K. Nephi’s reasons for getting the plates. (3:19-21)
L. The brothers collect Lehi’s gold, silver, and precious things. (3:22-23)
M. The brothers attempt to buy the plates, but Laban steals their property and attempts to slay them. (3:24-26)
N. They hide in “the cavity of a rock.” (3:27)
O. Lemuel “hearkens” to Laman; they are angry, speak harsh words, and “smite” Nephi and Sam with a rod. (3:28)
P. An angel announces that Nephi has been chosen to be their ruler and promises that the Lord will deliver Laban into their hands. (3:29)
Q. Laman and Lemuel murmur again, for who can deliver them from Laban and his fifty? (3:31)
Q’. Nephi assures his brothers that God is mightier than Laban and his fifty. (4:1)
P’. Nephi speaks of Moses and reminds them of the angel’s promise to deliver Laban into their hands. (4:2-3)
O’. Laman and Lemuel are still angry, they continue to murmur, and they do follow Nephi. (4:4)
N’. Nephi hides his brothers outside the city walls. (4:5)
M’. Nephi is led by the Spirit to find the plates, and the Spirit reminds him of Laban’s theft and attempt to kill them; Nephi slays Laban. (4:6-12)
L’. Nephi gets the metal plates with Zoram’s assistance. (4:20-30)
K’. The Spirit’s reasons for Nephi to kill Laban. (4:12-19)
J’. Nephi’s oath again: “As the Lord liveth and as I live” used to urge Zoram to join them in following Lehi. (4:31-34)
I’. Sariah is sorrowful and wishes to be back in Jerusalem. (5:2-3)
H’. Nephi spares Zoram’s life. (4:35-38)
G’. Lehi comforts Sariah as their sons travel up to Jerusalem. (5:4-6)
F’. Sariah is gladdened by her sons’ return as the Lord has delivered them. (5:7)
E’. Sariah testifies that God has accomplished this, using Nephi’s very words. (5:8)
D’. Lehi and Sariah rejoice and offer sacrifices and thanks to God. (5:9)
C’. Lehi searches the record. (5:10)
B’. Lehi summarizes the prophecies and genealogies in the plates of brass. (5:11-19)
A’. Lehi and Nephi had kept all the Lord’s commandments to them. (5:20-21)