



Type: Journal Article

Lehi's Dream, Nephi's Blueprint: How Nephi Uses the Vision of the Tree of Life as an Outline for 1 and 2 Nephi

Author(s): Noel Reynolds

Source: *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship*,
Volume 52 (2022)

Published by: The Interpreter Foundation

Page(s): 231–278

Abstract: This essay harnesses the late twentieth-century discovery of Hebrew rhetoric by Bible scholars to identify Lehi's dream as the foundation of the carefully constructed unity in Nephi's writings and to identify previously unrecognized elements of that dream which are distributed throughout his final work. The teachings and prophecies in 1 and 2 Nephi are shown to derive from their shared dream/vision. Further, the entirety of Nephi's writings in the Small Plates is shown to be a tightly designed rhetorical production that establishes the centrality of Christ's identity, mission, and teachings for current and future generations of Lehi's descendants and ultimately for the entire world. For decades, interpreters of the Book of Mormon and its teachings have singled out the vision of the tree of life given first to Lehi and subsequently to his son Nephi as one of the book's most prominent elements that require careful study. While literary and visual artists continue to find inspiration in the human dramas retold throughout the book, the text itself features visualizations¹ of its basic doctrinal messages: (1) God on his throne in heavenly council, (2) the tree of life with the straight and narrow path, the iron rod, and the great and spacious building, and (3) the allegory of the olive tree. As I will explain below, those three visual images are part of Lehi's and Nephi's great vision and provide the blueprint for the complex of covenant history and doctrinal teaching recorded by multiple authors throughout the entire book. This article will trace that blueprint in the structure and content of Nephi's Small Plates with limited side glances at the rest of the text.

INTERPRETER



A JOURNAL OF LATTER-DAY SAINT
FAITH AND SCHOLARSHIP

Volume 52 · 2022 · Pages 231 - 278

Lehi's Dream, Nephi's Blueprint: How Nephi Uses the Vision of the Tree of Life as an Outline for 1 and 2 Nephi

Noel Reynolds

Offprint Series

© 2022 The Interpreter Foundation. A 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.



This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/> or send a letter to Creative Commons, 444 Castro Street, Suite 900, Mountain View, California, 94041, USA.

ISSN 2372-1227 (print)
ISSN 2372-126X (online)

The goal of The Interpreter Foundation is to increase understanding of scripture through careful scholarly investigation and analysis of the insights provided by a wide range of ancillary disciplines, including language, history, archaeology, literature, culture, ethnohistory, art, geography, law, politics, philosophy, etc. Interpreter will also publish articles advocating the authenticity and historicity of LDS scripture and the Restoration, along with scholarly responses to critics of the LDS faith. We hope to illuminate, by study and faith, the eternal spiritual message of the scriptures—that Jesus is the Christ.

Although the Board fully supports the goals and teachings of the Church, The Interpreter Foundation is an independent entity and is neither owned, controlled by nor affiliated with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, or with Brigham Young University. All research and opinions provided are the sole responsibility of their respective authors, and should not be interpreted as the opinions of the Board, nor as official statements of LDS doctrine, belief or practice.

This journal is a weekly publication of the Interpreter Foundation, a non-profit organization located at InterpreterFoundation.org. You can find other articles published in our journal at Journal.InterpreterFoundation.org. You may subscribe to this journal at InterpreterFoundation.org/annual-print-subscription.

LEHI'S DREAM, NEPHI'S BLUEPRINT: HOW NEPHI USES THE VISION OF THE TREE OF LIFE AS AN OUTLINE FOR 1 AND 2 NEPHI

Noel Reynolds

Abstract: *This essay harnesses the late twentieth-century discovery of Hebrew rhetoric by Bible scholars to identify Lehi's dream as the foundation of the carefully constructed unity in Nephi's writings and to identify previously unrecognized elements of that dream which are distributed throughout his final work. The teachings and prophecies in 1 and 2 Nephi are shown to derive from their shared dream/vision. Further, the entirety of Nephi's writings in the Small Plates is shown to be a tightly designed rhetorical production that establishes the centrality of Christ's identity, mission, and teachings for current and future generations of Lehi's descendants and ultimately for the entire world. For decades, interpreters of the Book of Mormon and its teachings have singled out the vision of the tree of life given first to Lehi and subsequently to his son Nephi as one of the book's most prominent elements that require careful study. While literary and visual artists continue to find inspiration in the human dramas retold throughout the book, the text itself features visualizations¹ of its basic doctrinal messages: (1) God on his throne in heavenly council, (2) the tree of life with the straight and narrow path, the iron rod, and the great and spacious building, and (3) the allegory of the olive tree. As I will explain below, those three visual images are part of Lehi's and Nephi's great vision and provide the blueprint for the complex of covenant history and doctrinal*

1. This paper partners the concepts of visualization and verbalization to explain the visions and teachings of the Nephite prophets. *Visualizations* are the word paintings that allow readers to create illustrative pictures in their minds to show how the gospel or the plan of salvation are structured and how they work in human lives. *Verbalizations* are the explanations in words that can facilitate and regulate understanding of those same mental images through verbal discourse. By using both, the text supports the needs of both visual and verbal learners.

teaching recorded by multiple authors throughout the entire book. This article will trace that blueprint in the structure and content of Nephi's Small Plates with limited side glances at the rest of the text.

This paper explains how Nephi's writings constitute a tightly designed rhetorical unity presented as an expansion of the great dream or vision first given to Lehi and subsequently repeated for Nephi. Writing in the last decades of his life, Nephi used the original contents of that vision to lay out several key teachings for his readers:

1. The future coming of Christ into the world to atone for the sins of all peoples and
2. to overcome death by providing a resurrection for every human being.
3. The plan of salvation and the gospel or doctrine of Christ.
4. The prophecies about the future cycles of obedience and rebellion for Lehi's posterity, the house of Israel, and for the Gentile nations.
5. The frequently repeated prophecy that the prophetic records of the Nephites, including Nephi's immediate writing, would play a key role in the salvation of Israel and the Gentiles in the last days.²

Three Timeframes, Three Verbalizations, and Three Visualizations

Once the full scope of this great vision is identified, I will show that the central doctrinal teachings of the founding Nephite prophets and their successors are presented therein from the perspectives of three integrated timeframes, each of which is supported with both a visualization and a verbalization for those teachings. The eternal perspective is visualized for Lehi as he sees God on his throne in the heavenly council and verbalized as the plan of salvation. The perspective of salvation history and the future of God's covenant peoples on the earth is visualized in the allegory of the olive tree and verbalized as God's covenants with Abraham, Lehi, and the founding prophets of other dispensations. The perspective of individual lifetimes is visualized in the vision of the tree of life with a straight and narrow path that leads to salvation and with

2. See the discussion in Noel B. Reynolds, "Understanding the Abrahamic Covenant through the Book of Mormon," *BYU Studies Quarterly* 57, no. 3 (2018): 61–66.

many strange and forbidden paths that lead to the great and spacious building and eventually to death. This perspective is visualized further in the ancient doctrine of the two ways — the way of light and life that leads to Christ and eternal life, and the way of darkness and death that leads to the eternal captivity of Satan. The former is verbalized throughout the Book of Mormon as the way or as the gospel or doctrine of Christ which men and women can follow back to the presence of God and constitutes the primary message of the Nephite prophets.

The Larger Project

This paper brings to completion a larger project that has explored both the rhetorical structure and the doctrinal content of the Small Plates of Nephi. While it does exploit insights from contemporary biblical studies, its focus is primarily on the Book of Mormon text for evidence and guidance, and it does not draw significantly on other Book of Mormon scholarship. The resulting large picture can now be evaluated in comparison with other interpretations of Nephi's writing, but that comparison is not attempted here. Because it is the culmination of a larger project, many of the references will be to earlier papers that are part of the same project and upon which this one stands.

With Mine Own Hand

Modern readers have found nothing odd in Nephi's claim that he is writing his own record of prophecies and revelations. But he may have had good reason to emphasize in his opening sentences his role as both prophet and scribe. Because he has "had a great knowledge of the goodness and the mysteries of God," he asserts that double role five times in rapid succession saying, "*I make a record* of my proceedings in my days" (1 Nephi 1:1).

Yea, *I make a record* in the language of my father, which consists of the learning of the Jews and the language of the Egyptians. And I know that the *record which I make* to be true. And *I make it with mine own hand*, and *I make it* according to my knowledge. (1 Nephi 1:2-3)³

3. All quotations from the Book of Mormon are taken from the Yale critical edition, including punctuation and capitalization. Italics are sometimes added to call readers' attention to key terminology in this discussion. See Royal Skousen, ed., *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

Having received the highest level of scribal training in a late seventh-century Manassite scribal school in Jerusalem, Nephi would have been highly sensitive to the evolution of the Jewish scriptures in that century as other scribal schools reworked prophetic texts from multiple ideological perspectives.⁴ Based on their study of the Hebrew Bible, modern scholars have doubted that any prophets wrote down their own histories or prophecies. As Marti Nissinen has observed, “not a single source from the entire [extra-biblical] documentation even remotely alludes to a prophet writing a text her- or himself.”⁵ But from his perspective after thirty years of study in the Brass Plates, Nephi could easily have seen that as a prophet’s opportunity and duty.

Distributed Pieces of the Vision

The universal approach of the published interpretations of Lehi’s dream has been to focus on the descriptions of that vision located in the central chapters of 1 Nephi without recognizing that Nephi possibly held back the most important part of that great vision to share as a flashback and climax to all his writings at the end of 2 Nephi.⁶ This paper assembles a broad range of evidences for seeing other passages in 1 and 2 Nephi as additional pieces of that first great vision that are meant to expand its perspective and elevate its importance in Nephite religious culture to the highest level. It argues that Nephi’s presentation of this vision is intended to provide a comprehensive guide and lens through which

4. See Noel B. Reynolds, “Lehi and Nephi as Trained Manassite Scribes,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 50 (2022): 161–215; and Noel B. Reynolds, “A Backstory for the Brass Plates” (forthcoming).

5. Marti Nissinen, “Since When Do Prophets Write?” in *In the Footsteps of Sherlock Holmes: Studies in the Biblical Text in Honor of Anneli Aejmelaes*, Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology 72, ed. Krisin De Troyer, T. Michael Law, and Marketta Liljestrom (Leuven, BE: Peeters, 2014), 592.

6. The following presentation will include relevant insights and arguments first published in some of my earlier papers, including “Nephi’s Outline,” *BYU Studies Quarterly* 20 (Winter 1980): 1–18; “The Gospel of Jesus Christ as Taught by the Nephite Prophets,” *BYU Studies Quarterly* 31, no.3 (Summer 1991): 31–50; and “The Gospel According to Nephi: An Essay on 2 Nephi 31,” *Religious Educator* 16, no. 2 (2015): 51–75; “On Doubting Nephi’s Division between First and Second Nephi,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 25 (2017): 85–102; “Chiastic Structuring of Large Texts: Second Nephi as a Case Study,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 41 (2020): 193–210; and “Nephi’s Small Plates: A Rhetorical Analysis,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 50 (2022): 99–122.

all the principal themes of his writings in the Small Plates are to be understood.

This approach uses but does not extend the excellent work of others who have focused on related traditions in the Ancient Near East.⁷ This paper will only show how the vision is used by Nephi to both inform and structure his writings.

Though this paper focuses on Nephi's writings, its findings do apply to the rest of the Book of Mormon text. For example, in 1967 Hugh Nibley pointed to a passage in Helaman that appears to borrow several elements from Lehi's vision.⁸

Yea, we see that whosoever will lay hold upon the word of God, which is quick and powerful, which shall divide asunder all the cunning and the snares and the wiles of the devil and lead the man of Christ in a straight and narrow course across that everlasting gulf of misery, which is prepared to engulf the wicked, and land their souls — yea, their immortal souls — at the right hand of God in the kingdom of heaven, to sit down with Abraham and Isaac and with Jacob and with all our holy fathers, to go no more out. (Helaman 3:29–30)

As will soon become more evident, Lehi and Nephi really did see essentially the same vision. In a research note first published in 1993, John W. Welch showed how the visions of Lehi and Nephi, though considerably different as presented, could be read as being the same vision.⁹ Nephi wrote, "I bear record that I saw the things which my father saw, and the angel of the Lord did make them known unto me" (1 Nephi 14:29). As will be seen below, there is considerable evidence that items not detailed in Nephi's brief account of the tree of life image in Lehi's vision, and that do show up in Nephi's account of his own version

7. See, e.g., the 40th annual Sperry Symposium compilation, *The Things Which My Father Saw: Approaches to Lehi's Dream and Nephi's Vision*, ed. Daniel L. Belnap, Gaye Strathearn, and Stanley A. Johnson (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, 2011); and the 1988 compilation of papers from the Second Annual Book of Mormon Symposium in *The Book of Mormon: First Nephi, The Doctrinal Foundation*, ed. Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate, Jr. (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, 1988).

8. Hugh Nibley, *Since Cumorah*, 2nd ed., ed. John W. Welch (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1988), 161.

9. See John W. Welch, "Connections between the visions of Lehi and Nephi," in *Pressing Forward with the Book of Mormon: The FARMS Updates of the 1990s*, ed. John W. Welch and Melvin J. Thorne (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1999), 49–53.

of the vision, were also shown to Lehi when he received the original vision. The vision of the tree of life is treated in more detail in Lehi's account, and the prophecies and salvation history are detailed more in Nephi's account. But the evidence seems clear that both had seen all of it. By featuring different elements or dimensions of the larger vision as Lehi's account or Nephi's account or as unlabeled pieces distributed throughout his Small Plates, Nephi may have been able to include the whole vision without unnecessary repetitions.

The Big Picture

When reading 1 Nephi and 2 Nephi, it is important to remember that the text we have is a focused and carefully planned account of spiritual matters drawn decades later from the longer and more complete records written by both Lehi and Nephi, beginning with their original revelations and flight from Jerusalem around 597 BCE.¹⁰ Nephi did not begin writing this second record until thirty years after leaving Jerusalem, and it took him more than a decade to finish it.¹¹

All of Nephi's writings in the Small Plates are a single project. Matthew Bowen has shown that all of 1 and 2 Nephi is tied together as a single inclusio, with opening and closing references to "the goodness of God."¹² That suggests to the reader that 1 and 2 Nephi should be seen as a single, carefully designed rhetorical unit — not as an accumulation of independent pieces. The division between Nephi's two books was unnecessary from a historical perspective but was dictated by the rhetorical structures that he devised for the project.¹³ The unity of the two books may also be indicated by the fact that in the Original Manuscript

10. In a separate paper, I have identified seven passages where Nephi and Jacob explain the nature and purpose of Nephi's Small Plates. The paper also proposes analyses of the rhetorical structures of those passages and summarizes the rhetorical structure of the Small Plates as a whole that I have published in previous articles. See Reynolds, "Nephi's Small Plates."

11. See 2 Nephi 5:28–34.

12. Cf. 1 Nephi 1:1 and 2 Nephi 33:14. See Matthew L. Bowen, "Nephi's Good Inclusio," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 17 (2016): 181–95 and now reprinted as the lead chapter in a collection of his related papers: Matthew L. Bowen, *Name as Key Word* (Orem, UT: Interpreter Foundation, 2019), 1–15.

13. In response to some interpretations of the Small Plates that propose a different division in the text, I have written an extended explanation of my reasons for opposing any attempts to reject Nephi's obvious textual structure through interpretation. See Reynolds, "On Doubting Nephi's Division."

they bore identical titles — *The Book of Nephi*.¹⁴ Readers should see both 1 and 2 Nephi as products of a mature prophet looking back on his life experiences with decades of added perspective and wisdom. This timing also gave Nephi plenty of time to bring his early education in Hebrew rhetoric to bear on this final project, enabling him to communicate his most important thoughts and memories through both words and rhetorical structures in this second telling.¹⁵

A Side Comment on Superscriptions, Prefaces, and Chapter Breaks

Other writers have speculated about the authorship and purposes of the superscriptions, prefaces, summaries, and chapter breaks that were part of the original translation of the Book of Mormon. I have not found any of these to be convincing or important for the present study and so will not engage them here. They obviously are not creations of Joseph Smith, because they derive from knowledge of what is coming in the text. Royal Skousen has shown definitive evidence in the photographs and transcriptions of the Original Manuscript and the testimony of witnesses to the translation process that Joseph was dictating one word at a time from his view of 25–30 words that would appear on the stone until they were transcribed.¹⁶

Nor do they seem to have been written by the authors of the text, at least for the Small Plates translation. Nephi emphasizes repeatedly that the Small Plates were a late composition designed to bring out the spiritual teachings of the revelations and prophecies that he, Lehi, and Jacob had received.¹⁷ But the superscriptions consist of unsystematic lists

14. See the explanation provided in Royal Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon*, 2nd ed. (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2017), 44.

15. In “Nephi and Lehi as Trained Manassite Scribes,” I have developed a long, historical argument that presents Nephi as a recipient of the very highest level of scribal training available in seventh-century BCE Jerusalem, together with an outline of the system of Hebrew rhetoric that scholars believe was at its peak of development at that same time.

16. See Royal Skousen, “A Pre-Print of A Discussion of the Book of Mormon Witnesses,” *Interpreter Blog*, February 8, 2021, <https://interpreterfoundation.org/blog-a-pre-print-of-a-discussion-of-the-book-of-mormon-witnesses-by-royal-skousen/>; and Royal Skousen and Robin Jensen eds., *The Joseph Smith Papers, Revelations and Translations*, Vol. 5: *Original Manuscript of the Book of Mormon* [facsimile edition] (Salt Lake City: Church Historical Department, 2021), x.

17. See Reynolds, “Nephi’s Small Plates.”

of historical events that seem quite insensitive to the guiding purposes of the writer and the rhetorical structures he employed.

The prefaces to books abridged by Mormon also tend to be historical or genealogical, very brief, and totally dependent on information the reader would easily get from the text itself. It is not easy to see Mormon penning these. And he would not likely have written prefaces for Nephi's and Jacob's writings in the Small Plates, which Mormon seems to have discovered late in his project and simply attached to his plates.¹⁸

These reflections admittedly leave us with more questions than answers. One possibility could be that the unknown translator inserted these prefaces. But we know almost nothing about such a hypothetical person other than that he/she produced a text that is most easily identified with Early Modern English (EME).¹⁹ Potentially narrowing that identity, we can note that the superscriptions prepended to 1 and 2 Nephi do include two occurrences of a usage clearly identified with the EME of southern England (*rebelleth* with a plural subject).²⁰ There are also thirteen brief explanatory prefaces for new sections within books. These seem to fit the same analysis offered above for the book's superscriptions.

The chapter breaks in the original manuscript also remain unexplained. In his work on the critical text project, Royal Skousen speculated that in the transcription process Joseph Smith may have seen some symbol or even blank space that he was interpreting as the end of a chapter — leading him to dictate the word *chapter*.²¹ But the significance of these breaks for interpretation of the text remains obscure, and I have not made them an issue in the interpretation of the Small Plates offered in this paper. The clearly labeled break between the first two books

18. See *The Words of Mormon* 1:3-7.

19. The most recent general exposition of this conclusion is presented in Stanford Carmack, "The Nature of the Nonstandard English in the Book of Mormon," in *The History of the Text of the Book of Mormon: Part One: Grammatical Variation*, Royal Skousen (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2016), 45-95. The original version of this paper was published as Stanford Carmack, "A Look at Some 'Nonstandard' Book of Mormon Grammar," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 11 (2014): 209-62.

20. Charles Barber, *Early Modern English*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Univ. Press, 1997), 169.

21. See the explanation in Skousen, *Earliest Text*, xl. Brant Gardner has published a very helpful and detailed study of the chapter breaks we can attribute to Mormon, but that does not apply directly to this study of 1 and 2 Nephi. See Brant A. Gardner, "Labor Diligently to Write: The Ancient Making of a Modern Scripture, Chapters 4 & 5," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 35 (2020): 47-106.

of Nephi is the only such break that seems to have a purely rhetorical function. It does not coincide with any break in the story or authorship, but as will be explained below, it only marks the transition from one major rhetorical structure to the next.

Hebrew Rhetoric

Reviewers of this paper have suggested that it should include at least a brief overview of Hebrew rhetoric as now understood by Old Testament scholars. In other writings I have described in some detail how these scholars have moved on from traditional reliance on Greek rhetoric in their study of the Hebrew Bible. They realized that the Hebrew writers of the seventh century BCE had developed their own rhetorical patterns by which meanings could be communicated at a distance in their texts, a full century or more before the Greeks developed their more direct analytical or logical rhetorical style.²² We have no access to ancient handbooks or manuals that would give us a seventh-century scribe's perspective on Hebrew rhetoric. We do now have contemporary reconstructions of the principles and patterns that seem to have guided those scribes.²³

For present purposes, I will introduce *four basic principles* of Hebrew rhetoric that I find most helpful in the interpretation of the Nephite compositions.²⁴ It helps to understand and appreciate these principles by remembering that they are used to organize and present texts for listeners in an oral culture. I refer to these principles as *repetition*, *demarcation*, *parallelism*, and *subordination*. These principles are not the products of the Hebrew language itself, but rather of a literary approach developed among seventh-century Hebrew scribes in their oral culture. The same principles of composition could be used when writing in other languages, as is done by Nephi, who tells us he is writing in Egyptian.

1. Bible scholars and translators have long recognized the Hebrews' penchant for *repetition*. Often viewed as inefficient and unnecessary by translators, *repetition* plays a key role in organizing and signaling the organization of Hebrew texts.

22. Noel B. Reynolds, "The Return of Rhetorical Analysis to Bible Studies," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 17 (2016), 91–98.

23. See the survey of these late twentieth-century efforts in Reynolds, "The Return of Rhetorical Analysis."

24. For a more developed explanation and these four principles of Hebrew rhetoric see Reynolds, "Chiastic Structuring of Large Texts."

2. The Hebrews used repetition and internal rhetorical structuring to *demarcate* subunits of text. The *demarcation* of subunits is important because it enables recognition of larger rhetorical structures in which smaller units serve as pieces. Rhetorical structuring can also partially compensate for the absence of conventions of punctuation.
3. Many forms of *parallelism* appear in Hebrew texts, both to augment or intensify meaning and to signal rhetorical structure. *Chiasmus* is commonly introduced as a form of reverse parallelism.
4. Large rhetorical structures can be formed by the *subordination* of smaller rhetorical structures, which can again be composed of even smaller ones. Some analysts have identified up to six or seven rhetorical levels in some biblical texts. Questions about the chiasmic structure of Alma 36 are resolved when we recognize that every word of that chapter fits into a multi-level chiasm.²⁵

These principles will surface repeatedly but unheralded in the rhetorical structures of 1 and 2 Nephi that will be identified in the rest of this paper.

Reading and Seeing Things

Hints of Nephi's rhetorical strategy begin to surface when we ask ourselves exactly at what point in his story did Lehi receive the vision of the tree of life. Chapter 1 reports explicitly on two visions received by Lehi in Jerusalem during the first year of the reign of king Zedekiah. In the first one (v. 6), "he saw and heard much," which seemed to confirm what the other prophets were saying, that the people "must repent or the great city of Jerusalem must be destroyed" (1 Nephi 1:4); it left him quaking and trembling "exceedingly."

In the second one (vs. 8–13, 19), while still "overcome with the Spirit" he "was carried away in a vision." Nephi includes more details of Lehi's second vision, all of which may match up with elements of their shared tree of life visions as described in later chapters by Nephi. Specific elements of the second vision that show up later include (1) the opening of the heavens (seeing God on his throne), (2) seeing one descending out of heaven and (3) "twelve others following him," (4) learning of the

25. See Noel B. Reynolds, "Rethinking Alma 36," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 34 (2020), 279–312.

abominations of Jerusalem and the coming destruction and captivity of its inhabitants, (5) the future coming of a Messiah, (6) the baptizing of the Messiah, and (7) the redeeming of the world. Lehi's own writings contain many other "things which he saw in visions and dreams" (1 Nephi 1:16).

However, it was not until the full group that would be traveling together to their promised land was assembled at the first camp in the wilderness after two trips back to Jerusalem that Lehi shared his vision of the tree of life. It was after Nephi's acquiring of the Brass Plates, the arrival of Ishmael's family and the gathering of "seeds of every kind" while they "tarried in the wilderness" that Lehi announced, "Behold, I have dreamed a dream, or in other words, I have seen a vision" (2 Nephi 8:2). Nephi does not tell his readers how much time elapsed between Lehi's first vision and his telling of the tree of life vision — whether it was a few weeks or many months. The most problematic text for this equation of the tree of life vision with the second vision Lehi received in Jerusalem is 1 Nephi 9:1: "And all these things did my father see and hear and speak as he dwelt in a tent in the valley of Lemuel." But even this might possibly be read to say that the things Lehi had "seen and heard" in Jerusalem were what he spoke to them in the wilderness.²⁶ It is also possible that Nephi was shown all the things his father had seen in multiple visions.

As Nephi relates the tree of life segment of Lehi's vision to his readers, he warns them that they are getting the short version. "And now I Nephi do not speak all the words of my father. But to be short in writing, ..." (1 Nephi 8:29–30). "And it came to pass that after my father had spoken all the words of his dream or vision, which were many" (1 Nephi 8:36) — "including a great many more things which cannot be written upon these plates" (1 Nephi 9:1). Then, two chapters later, as Nephi records his own version of the vision, readers may start to recognize bits and pieces that sound like the earlier vision Lehi had reported receiving during those first critical days in Jerusalem. Several key sections of Nephi's writings may derive from Lehi's great vision, which are distributed throughout 1 and 2 Nephi as anchoring elements in Nephi's larger rhetorical design.

Twelve Others Following Him

One of the more obvious connections is in 1 Nephi 11:29 in Nephi's account of the ministry of Christ where he mentions seeing "twelve

26. In his discussion of Lehi's visions, Don Bradley also sees connections between the tree of life vision and the vision reported in 1 Nephi 1. See Don Bradley, *The Lost 116 Pages* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2019), 127–33.

others following him.” This is the exact phrasing Nephi attributed to Lehi’s report of his second vision: “And it came to pass that he saw one descending out of the midst of heaven, and he beheld that his luster was above that of the sun at noonday. And he also saw *twelve others following him*” (1 Nephi 1:9–10). In Hebrew rhetoric, this kind of repetition invites the reader to reflect on the connections between the two occurrences of the phrasing. While this may not prove that Lehi received his great vision of the tree of life during those first critical days in Jerusalem, it does clearly suggest that possibility.

The Goodness of God

In the second sentence of his first book, Nephi explains: “having been highly favored of the Lord in all my days, yea, having had a great *knowledge of the goodness and the mysteries of God*, therefore I make a record of my proceedings in my days” (1 Nephi 1:1). As mentioned above, this early reference constitutes the first element of the inclusio that signals the textual unity of all of 1 and 2 Nephi. It also introduces the most fundamental theme of Nephite theology that both connects the Book of Mormon to the Hebrew Bible and distinguishes the theologies in the two scriptures.²⁷ Old Testament references to “the goodness of God” usually refer to the Lord’s dependability as a covenant partner. This seems to be the very concept Nephi has in mind when at the end of this first chapter he announces his thesis, which describes how the Lord will deliver the faithful from their earthly enemies (1 Nephi 1:20). But Nephi and other Nephite prophets also use the phrase to explain God’s motivation for developing a plan of salvation for all his human creations — a plan of eternal deliverance from sin and death for those who will accept and follow his gospel.

The Mysteries of God

The second personal qualification Nephi gives for him to be writing this record is his great knowledge of *the mysteries of God*. Nephi mentions his desires for this knowledge twice when he goes to the Lord for revelation.²⁸ What may not be obvious to modern readers is that this phrase was linked in Old Testament discourse to the visions of prophets who see

27. For a comprehensive analysis of this Book of Mormon usage, see Noel B. Reynolds, “The ‘Goodness of God’ and his Children as a Fundamental Theological Concept in the Book of Mormon,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 46 (2021): 131–56.

28. See 1 Nephi 2:16 and 1 Nephi 10:19.

the heavens opened and God on his throne as he receives his prophetic calling. In that experience, the prophet becomes part of the heavenly council and then returns to earth with a divinely appointed message for his people.²⁹ While older ANE literatures speak of divine councils that send divine messengers to men, they do not include human prophets in that function. “No parallel to this concept of prophecy, or even to Israelite prophecy itself, has thus far been found in the ANE.”³⁰

Prominent Bible scholar Raymond E. Brown warns strongly against the tendency of Christian scholars to link pre-Christian usages of “mystery” to the *mysterion* of Greek mystery religions. Rather, he sees pre-exilic references to the divine council where secrets are shared with prophets as the source of *the mysteries of God*. This meaning persisted among others down to the first century BCE in pseudepigrapha and the Dead Sea Scrolls. Prophecies of what would happen to humans at the end of times were also called *mysterries* in this tradition.³¹

Saw the Heavens Open

As Nephi reports, Lehi “saw the heavens open,” and saw “God sitting upon his throne, surrounded with numberless concourses of angels.” Then he saw “one descending out of the midst of heaven” and “twelve others following him.” Then the first “stood before” Lehi and “gave unto him a book and bade him that he should read” (1 Nephi 1:8–11). Modern scholars have claimed that “it was by such a vision that a prophet received

29. The linkage of the prophetic call to the vision of God on his throne in a heavenly council has been documented by biblical form critics and has been recognized to have some similarities with ancient Near Eastern (hereafter ANE) literature that describes a council of the gods. See the very helpful summary of the scholarly literature on the divine council in the Bible and in ANE literature by John W. Welch, which also recognizes and incorporates the findings of earlier Book of Mormon scholars on this topic: “The Calling of Lehi as a Prophet in the World of Jerusalem” in *Glimpses of Lehi’s Jerusalem*, ed. John W. Welch, David Rolph Seely, and Jo Ann H. Seely (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2004), 421–48.

30. The quotation is from E. Theodore Mullen, Jr., *The Assembly of the Gods: The Divine Council in Canaanite and Early Hebrew Literature* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1980), 218; cf. 279. Interested readers can consult the full discussion on pp. 209–26.

31. Raymond E. Brown, “The Pre-Christian Semitic Concept of ‘Mystery,’” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 20, no. 4 (October 1958): 417–43. John W. Welch has incorporated the insights of Brown and many other scholars into his superb analysis of 1 Nephi 1. See Welch, “The Calling of Lehi.”

his commission, his authorization, his perspective, his knowledge of God, and his information about God's judgments and decrees."³²

The similarity of this description with Nephi's description of his own experience with his vision is striking. Four times Nephi saw the "heavens open." The first time, "an angel came down and stood" before him, becoming his guide through the next part of the vision in which he would first see the unfolding of the events related to the nativity of Jesus Christ (1 Nephi 11:14). The second time, he saw the baptism of Jesus and how "the Holy Ghost came down out of heaven and abode upon him in the form of a dove" (1 Nephi 11:27). He then saw Jesus "ministering unto the people in power and great glory" and "twelve others following him (vs. 28–29). The third time he saw "the heavens open again," and he "saw angels descending upon the children of men" and ministering unto them (v. 30). The fourth time, Nephi "saw the heavens open and the Lamb of God descending out of heaven" as he came down and showed himself to the Nephites about one year after his resurrection (1 Nephi 12:6). And again, he saw the Holy Ghost fall "on twelve others" who "were ordained of God and chosen" (vs. 7).

Nephi does not explicitly state that he saw God on his throne in any of these four occasions in which he reports seeing "the heavens open," but he does later share what the Father and the Son taught him on that occasion.³³ We can remember his clear references to his knowledge of the mysteries of God in his opening lines (1 Nephi 1:1) as his qualification for writing the Small Plates and to his desire to know the mysteries (like Lehi) as expressed in his preface to this vision (1 Nephi 10:19, 11:1–3).

Given the connection explained by Raymond Brown, we can reasonably conclude that Nephi also saw the council of Yahweh, as did his father and as did various Old Testament prophets at the time they received their prophetic calls.³⁴ Bible scholars have concluded that in these visions of the heavenly council, the prophet becomes a member

32. Welch, "Calling of Lehi," 427.

33. 2 Nephi 31:4–21 reports how Nephi was team-taught the doctrine of Christ in connection with his vision of the baptism of Christ. As will be explained further below, this all seems to have been part of the great vision that began with the tree of life.

34. See the detailed explanation and documentation in Welch, "Calling of Lehi," 40–42. Note how five centuries later Alma quotes Lehi's exact words from 1 Nephi 1:8 to describe the experience that launched him as a Nephite prophet to succeed his father: "Yea, and methought I saw, even as our father Lehi saw, God sitting upon his throne, surrounded with numberless concourses of angels in the attitude of singing and praising their God" (Alma 36:22).

of that council, participates in its deliberations, and becomes a trusted emissary to convey its decisions to the people of his generation. From that time on he operates having the eternal perspective of God and his council and can speak for them authoritatively in different situations that may arise with the people.³⁵

Reading and Seeing Marvelous Things

Lehi had been praying “with all his heart, in behalf of his people” when these first visions came to him. After he saw the twelve following after Jesus in the second vision, Jesus came

and stood before my father and *gave unto him a book* and bade him *that he should read*. And it came to pass that *as he read*, he was filled with the Spirit of the Lord. And *he read*, saying: Woe unto Jerusalem, for I have seen thine abominations. Yea, and many things *did my father read* concerning Jerusalem, that it should be destroyed and the inhabitants thereof; many should perish by the sword and many should be carried away captive into Babylon. (1 Nephi 1:11–13)

What the Lord gave Lehi to read in this vision would seem to have confirmed his worst fears: he had been praying that somehow these destructions prophesied by other contemporaries might be averted. Nephi no doubt expects his readers to be surprised, to do a double-take, as he reports Lehi responding with great joy:

- A And it came to pass that *when my father had read and saw many great and marvelous things*,
- B he did exclaim many things unto the Lord, such as: Great and marvelous are thy works, O Lord God Almighty.
- C *Thy throne is high in the heavens*,
- D *and thy power and goodness and mercy is over all the inhabitants of the earth.*
- C* And because thou art merciful, *thou wilt not suffer those who come unto thee that they shall perish.*
- B* And after this manner was the language of my father in the praising of his God, for *his soul did rejoice and his whole heart was filled*

35. See the extended discussion in Welch, “Calling of Lehi” and H. Wheeler Robinson, *Inspiration and Revelation in the Old Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1946), 167–72, where he reviews several examples of the prophetic call in the Old Testament to support this interpretation of the heavenly council.

A* because of *the things which he had seen*, yea, which the Lord had shewn unto him. (1 Nephi 1:14–15)

While there is no straightforward repetition of language to convince us that this important passage is a chiasm, it is not difficult to imagine that Nephi had organized it chiastically. Key quotations that could be reused in various contexts are often presented in chiastic format by Nephite and biblical writers. The principles of Hebrew rhetoric as articulated by modern scholars are not hard and fast rules that ancient authors had to follow. Rather, they are only principles that authors can implement in creative ways to accomplish their purposes. If Nephi was thinking chiastically as a way to set this passage apart as a quotation and as an explanation of Lehi's transformed perspective about the pending destruction of Jerusalem, readers can note how A/A* both refer to what Lehi had read or seen. B/B* both report Lehi's words in praising God from his new perspective and emotional state. C/D/C* give us the content of that new perspective with D at the center, stating the foundation of all subsequent Nephite theology with its dense concatenation of covenant terminology. It is the power, goodness, and mercy³⁶ of God that explain his great plan of salvation and the gospel as a covenant path back to his presence for all the earth's inhabitants.³⁷

Nephi clearly wants readers to ask themselves what the “many great and marvelous things” were that had so dramatically changed Lehi's perspective on the coming calamity for Jerusalem. The great and marvelous things Lehi “read and saw” included the plan of salvation, the gospel of Jesus Christ, and the salvation history³⁸ spelled out at least partially in chapters 8–15, and the expansions and repetitions of each of these presented throughout 1 and 2 Nephi. Nephi clarifies immediately that the things which Lehi “saw and heard” and “read in the book, manifested plainly of the coming of a Messiah and also the redemption of the world” (1 Nephi 1:19).

36. *Mercy* is the preferred English translation for biblical *hesed* in the KJV. For an explanation of *hesed* as covenantal faithfulness, see Noel B. Reynolds, “Biblical *hesed* and Nephite Covenant Culture,” *BYU Studies Quarterly* 60, no. 4 (2021): 143–72.

37. See Reynolds, “The Goodness of God.”

38. I use the terms salvation history and covenant history to refer to the accounts of the Lord's dealings with his covenant people as recorded in scripture or as prophesied in future events and not in the technical senses that have evolved through contemporary Christian theological studies.

Only after seeing all that did Lehi realize how “great and marvelous” are the works of the Lord God and that his “power and goodness and mercy is over all the inhabitants of the earth,” and not just the House of Israel. And it was this same perspective from which the mature Nephi drew as he formulated and advanced his thesis for the book of 1 Nephi: “Behold, I Nephi will shew unto you that the tender mercies of the Lord is over all them whom he hath chosen because of their faith to make them mighty, even unto the power of deliverance” (1 Nephi 1:20). First Nephi exhibits an elaborate rhetorical structure that organizes its six stories and its visions and prophecies into a powerful proof of that thesis. It is excerpted and summarized below.³⁹

The Things Which Lehi Had Read

The things that Lehi “had read” come back to us in 2 Nephi in his final teachings to his children as he explains basic concepts of the plan of salvation to Jacob, who in turn will become the great explainer of the “great plan of our God” (2 Nephi 2:17 and 9:13). In the middle of this principal Book of Mormon discussion of the creation of mankind with agency to choose between good and evil, Lehi appears to refer to that same second vision as his source for this knowledge: “And I Lehi, *according to the things which I have read*, must needs suppose that an angel of God, according to that which is written, had fallen from heaven; wherefore he became a devil, having sought that which was evil before God” (2 Nephi 2:17).

From our perspective as modern readers, we might speculate that Lehi got all this from reading the brass plates, which may have contained an expanded version of the creation story such as is recorded in the Book of Moses that was revealed to Joseph Smith in 1830.⁴⁰ But recognizing that Nephi, as the author, will be using selective repetition of phrases to send his readers back to the original mention of a phrase for more complete understanding of both, we can recognize the reference and

39. See Reynolds, “Nephi’s Outline.”

40. In Jeffrey Lindsay and Noel B. Reynolds, “‘Strong Like unto Moses’: The Case for Ancient Roots in the Book of Moses Based on Book of Mormon Usage of Related Content Apparently from the Brass Plates,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 44 (2021): 1–92, we have shown the high likelihood that the version of Genesis included in the Brass Plates is quite similar to the Book of Moses.

assume that indeed, the plan of salvation or *redemption* was part of what Lehi learned in the second vision reported in chapter 1.⁴¹

2 Nephi 31 as a Flashback to the Tree of Life Vision

An exploration of how the principles of Hebrew rhetoric apply to 2 Nephi finds that Nephi's presentation of the doctrine or gospel of Christ in 2 Nephi 31 is set up as a parallel passage to Lehi's teaching of the plan of salvation in chapter 2.⁴² That makes it less surprising to discover that chapter 31 is a major piece of that great original vision that Nephi has held back to use as the climax of all his writings.⁴³

We are alerted to the flashback character of Chapter 31 in its opening verses when Nephi says: "Wherefore *I would that ye should remember* that I have spoken unto you concerning that prophet which the Lord shewed unto me that should baptize the Lamb of God, which should take away the sin of the world" (2 Nephi 31:4). Readers will note how this baptismal scene is reported by both Lehi and Nephi, so that the flashback takes us to both of their accounts and links the subsequent instruction in the doctrine of Christ to both their visions.⁴⁴

The Gospel of Jesus Christ

Having returned to his account of the baptism of Jesus, Nephi describes in more detail how it provides the example to "the children of men" of how they must repent or humble themselves and witness to the Father by baptism in water that they too have covenanted to keep his commandments and to take the name of Christ upon them.⁴⁵ Then,

41. The most frequently used label for this plan of salvation in Nephite discourse is *plan of redemption*, and the atonement of Jesus Christ is usually its featured component. See Noel B. Reynolds, "The Plan of Salvation and the Book of Mormon," *Religious Educator* 20, no. 3 (2020): 31–53.

42. See Reynolds, "Chiastic Structuring of Large Texts."

43. In his contribution to the 40th annual Sperry Symposium, Jared T. Parker argued that "Nephi used the vision of the tree of life as the model for teaching the doctrine of Christ." Parker recognized a number of elements in 2 Nephi 31–32 that echoed or assumed elements from the tree of life visions, though he did not recognize the two as reports of different parts of the same visionary experience. See Jared T. Parker, "The Doctrine of Christ in 2 Nephi 31–32 as an Approach to the Vision of the Tree of Life," in *The Things Which My Father Saw*.

44. Compare 2 Nephi 31:4 with 1 Nephi 10:7–10 and 11:27.

45. For a comprehensive account of this interpretation of Nephite baptism see Noel B. Reynolds, "Understanding Christian Baptism through the Book of Mormon," *BYU Studies Quarterly* 51, no. 2 (2012): 4–37.

without any forewarning, Nephi begins quoting both the Father and the Son as they taught him the basic points of the doctrine of Christ — citing or quoting each of them three times.⁴⁶ Nephi knows full well that nowhere else in scripture does a prophet claim to have been team-taught the gospel by the Father and the Son.⁴⁷

It is small wonder that Nephi chose this part of his earliest visionary experience as the climax of all his writings. He styled 1 Nephi as his proof that the Lord will deliver all those who keep their covenants with him from the dangers and sorrows of this mortal world. Second Nephi more directly applies that same thesis to spiritual salvation and uses this account as a capstone that tells every human being what they must do to be delivered from the devil and receive eternal life, concluding with parallel triplets as follows in verse 21:

- A And now behold, my beloved brethren, *this is the way*.
 B And *there is none other way* nor name given under heaven
 C whereby man can be saved in *the kingdom of God*.
 A* And now behold, *this is the doctrine of Christ*,
 B* and *the only and true doctrine* of the Father and of the
 Son and of the Holy Ghost,
 C* which is *one God* without end. (2 Nephi 31:21)

In these closing three chapters of 2 Nephi readers are reminded nine times that for Nephi *the gospel of Jesus Christ* or *doctrine of Christ* is also termed *the way* or *the straight and narrow path* that leads to eternal life — and that this specific teaching is the central and final message of all his writings.⁴⁸ The doctrine of Christ thus provides a verbal explanation for the visualization of “the straight and narrow path” as described in the vision of the tree of life (1 Nephi 8:20).

46. See the analyses of this teaching in Reynolds, “The Gospel of Jesus Christ” and “The Gospel According to Nephi,” and in Noel B. Reynolds “The Gospel according to Mormon,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 29 (2018): 85–104.

47. For discussion and documentation of how the Nephite prophets used the doctrine of Christ and the gospel of Jesus Christ and other terminology (the way, the path, the word) interchangeably, see Noel B. Reynolds, “This is the Way,” *Religious Educator* 14, no. 3 (2013): 79–91.

48. Compare 2 Nephi 31:18, 21 (twice), 32:1, and 5 with 2 Nephi 31:9, 18, 19, and 2 Nephi 33:9 (twice).

The Lamb of God

Other textual connections indirectly confirm the hypothesis that Nephi’s account of how he was taught the doctrine of Christ by the Father and the Son in 2 Nephi 31 was given to him and to Lehi as part of the larger vision that began with the tree of life. First, Nephi’s accounts of that vision uniquely refer 60 times to the Lord as “the Lamb of God.” That title for the Lord does not show up again in the text until 2 Nephi 31–33, where it is used another four times.⁴⁹ As the author of all these passages, Nephi’s repeated returns to the divine title used uniquely in the tree of life vision must be understood as an intentional and silent linkage of the content of 2 Nephi 31 to the earlier vision account.

The Fullness of the Gospel

Reading 2 Nephi 31 as a flashback to the tree of life vision resolves one other textual question. As Lehi related his dream or vision to his family in Chapter 10, he also told them that *the gospel* would be taught to the Jews and that *the fullness of the gospel* would be given to the Gentiles in the last days so that it could be instrumental in gathering the house of Israel back “to the knowledge of the true Messiah, their Lord and their Redeemer” (1 Nephi 10:11 and 14). These are the first direct mentions of the gospel in Nephi’s writings, though the preservation and propagation of the fullness of the gospel of Jesus Christ will be mentioned repeatedly in revelations to Joseph Smith as one of the primary purposes for the compilation of the Book of Mormon.⁵⁰ Where did Lehi learn about the gospel, which has not been mentioned in the accounts of his visions to this point? The most economical explanation is that he received it as Nephi did in that great vision which included the tree of life. And the visualization provided in that vision shows how the gospel of Jesus Christ provides *the way* or *the path* that leads people to him.

In 1 Nephi 8, Nephi includes the visualization of the tree of life part of Lehi’s vision only in his account — while mentioning repeatedly that there was a lot more he has not included. We then get an indication of the parts he did not include as he lists in Chapter 10 sixteen other topics Lehi covered with his family while reporting his dream or vision of the tree of life, including these two references to the gospel. That would suggest

49. I am grateful to Joseph Spencer, who points out this strategic repetition, even though he does not recognize the original unity of these two texts. See Joseph M. Spencer, *1st Nephi: A Brief Theological Introduction* (Provo: Maxwell Institute, 2020), 48.

50. See D&C 20:9, 27:5, 42:12, and 135:3.

that a full account of Lehi's dream and vision would have included the presentation of the doctrine or gospel of Christ that Nephi finally provides in 2 Nephi 31.

Rhetorical Analysis of 1 Nephi

In my 1980 exploration of the rhetorical structure of 1 Nephi I found the book to be deliberately divided into two halves. As labeled by Nephi, "Lehi's account" includes chapters 1–9, and "Nephi's account" includes the rest (chapters 10–22). I then showed how each of these can be divided into twelve sequential units or pericopes that remarkably parallel one another point by point in the two accounts.⁵¹ On that analysis, Nephi's brief account of Lehi's revelations received in Jerusalem (1 Nephi 1) matches up in a chiasmic structure with his summary of the many things Lehi taught his family after recounting his vision of the tree of life (1 Nephi 10:2–15). That match is even more powerful when we recognize that the two structurally parallel passages appear to report the same vision and have the same content. Clifford Jones has proposed a different way of interpreting the structure of these passages by leaning on similar resumptive patterns in the much later writings of Alma and Moroni, but I continue to find the clarity and power of the parallel chiasms identified in my 1980 article to be truer to Nephi's language, purpose, and overall rhetorical strategy, as will be explained more fully below.⁵²

Table 1. Lehi's Account Compared to Nephi's Account.

1 Nephi 1–9 (Lehi's Account)	1 Nephi 10–22 (Nephi's Account)
1. Nephi makes a record (or account) of his proceedings but first gives an abridgment of Lehi's record (1:1–3, 16–17).	1. Nephi now commences to give an account of his proceedings, reign, and ministry but first "must speak somewhat of the things of [his] father, and ... brethren" (10:1).
2. Nephi gives a brief account of Lehi's prophecies to the Jews, based on visions he received in Jerusalem (1:5–15, 19).	2. Nephi reports Lehi's prophecies about the Jews, as given to Laman and Lemuel in the wilderness (10:2–15).
3. Lehi is commanded to journey into the wilderness, and he pitches his tent in the valley he names Lemuel (2:1–7).	3. Nephi desires to see, hear, and know these mysteries; he is shown a great vision by the Spirit of the Lord and by an angel (10:17–14:30).

51. See below Table 1 as excerpted from "Nephi's Outline," 4. Note the balanced reversal in the parallel accounts. Elements 3 and 5 and 9 and 11 are reversed in Nephi's account relative to their parallel elements in Lehi's account.

52. See Clifford P. Jones, "The Record of My Father," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 32 (2019): 9–32.

1 Nephi 1–9 (Lehi’s Account)	1 Nephi 10–22 (Nephi’s Account)
4. Lehi teaches and exhorts his sons, and they are confounded (2:8–15).	4. Nephi instructs and exhorts his brothers, and they are confounded (15:6–16:6).
5. Nephi desires to know the mysteries of God; he is visited by the Holy Spirit and is spoken to by the Lord (2:16–3:1).	5. Lehi is commanded to journey further into the wilderness, and he pitches his tent in the land he names Bountiful (16:9–17:6).
6. Lehi is commanded in a dream to send his sons for the brass plates of Laban; this he does (3:2–5:22).	6. Nephi is commanded by the voice of the Lord to construct a ship; this he does (17:6–18:4).
7. In response to a command from the Lord, Lehi sends for Ishmael’s family (7:1–22).	7. In response to a command from the Lord, Lehi enters the ship and then sails (18:5–23).
8. They gather seeds of every kind (8:1).	8. Lehi’s family plants the seeds and reaps in abundance (18:24).
9. Lehi reports to his sons the great vision received in the wilderness (8:2–35).	9. Nephi details the distinctions between the two sets of plates (19:1–7).
10. Lehi exhorts Laman and Lemuel, preaching and prophesying to them (8:36–38).	10. Nephi preaches and prophesies to Laman and Lemuel, his own descendants, and all Israel (19:7–21:26).
11. Nephi makes a distinction between the two sets of plates (9:1–5).	11. To explain Isaiah’s prophecies to his brothers, Nephi draws on the great vision given to him and Lehi (22:1–28).
12. Nephi ends with a general formulation of his thesis and the formal punctuation: “And thus it is. Amen” (9:6).	12. Nephi ends with the highest formulation of his thesis, and with the formal punctuation: “And thus it is. Amen” (22:29–31).

Further analysis shows that the six basic stories in 1 Nephi provide the grounding for both the thematic and the rhetorical framework of that book. The 1980 publication shows how the two principal stories of obtaining the Brass Plates and building the ship provide the structural and thematic centers for Lehi’s and Nephi’s accounts respectively. Further, these two principal stories are presented chiastically, and they each feature the murmuring of Laman and Lemuel as their central point and references to the miraculous power given to Moses as he delivered Israel from Egypt.⁵³ The four other stories are each doubly parallel (1) to the other minor story in the same account, and (2) to the corresponding

53. In a separate essay, I explore the ways in which the murmuring of Laman and Lemuel provides a key structural element in Nephi’s account, giving insight into the ways of the wicked who resist the gospel’s call to repent and endure to the end and who seek to kill the prophets, as do the Jews at Jerusalem and the followers of the devil in all times and places. Noel B. Reynolds, “Rethinking Nephi’s Treatment of Laman and Lemuel,” working paper, August 10, 2021.

(by order) minor story in the other account. Nephi built the parallel structures into the stories by repeating a long sequence of similar elements in the stories in the same order.⁵⁴

The result is a structural foundation based in the six stories that Nephi advances as support of his thesis that the Lord will deliver the faithful — a version of the Abrahamic covenant promises.⁵⁵ With all this arranging of the stories and the parallels of Lehi's and Nephi's accounts, Nephi has also managed to present each account chiastically as shown in the following tables. First Nephi turns out to be structured as two facing chiasms with matching elements that make them parallel to each other, presenting both Lehi and Nephi as witnesses of the same divine teachings, prophecies and promises in their respective accounts. And, because Nephi has also introduced in these first accounts the visions and other revelations on which the teachings of 2 Nephi will be based, he has linked 1 and 2 Nephi solidly together in terms of their purpose and teachings.

Table 2. Chiasmus in 1 Nephi 1–9 (Lehi's Account).

A	Nephi discusses his record, and he testifies it is true (1:1–3).
B	Lehi's early visions are reported, followed by his preaching and prophesying to the Jews (1:6–15, 18–20).
C	Lehi takes his family into the wilderness (2:2–15).
D	The Lord speaks prophecies to Nephi about Lehi's seed (2:19–24).
E	Lehi's sons obtain the brass plates, and Nephi records the most striking example of the murmuring of his faithless brothers (3:2–5:16).
D*	Lehi, filled with the Spirit, prophesies about his seed (5:17–19; 7:1).
C*	Ishmael takes his family into the wilderness (7:2–22).
B*	Lehi's tree of life vision is reported, followed by his prophecies and preaching to Laman and Lemuel (8:2–38).
A*	Nephi again discusses his record, and he records his testimony (9:1–6).

54. See the detailed explanations in Reynolds, "Nephi's Outline."

55. To see how I interpret this as a version of the Abrahamic covenant, see Noel B. Reynolds, "Covenant Language in Biblical Religions and the Book of Mormon," *BYU Studies Quarterly* 61, no. 3 (2022), 139–76.

Table 3. Chiasmus in 1 Nephi 10–22 (Nephi’s Account).

- A Lehi expands on his great vision, detailing prophecies about the Jews and gentiles (10:1–16).
- B Nephi explains that all men can know the mysteries of God by the power of the Holy Ghost (10:17–22).
- C Nephi reports the great visions and prophecies given to him (11–14).
- D Overcome by the hardness of his brethren, Nephi interprets the great vision to his family, rehearsing one of Isaiah’s prophecies as support (15:2–16:5).
- E Lehi takes his family further into the wilderness (16:9–17:6).
- F Nephi builds a ship and records his most complete reply to the murmuring of his brothers (17:7–18:4).
- E* Lehi takes his family across the ocean in the ship (18:5–25).
- D* Concerned for those at Jerusalem, Nephi writes for his descendants and all the house of Israel and explains the ancient prophecies of a Redeemer (19:3–23).
- C* Nephi quotes chapters of a prophecy from Isaiah which parallels portions of his own great vision (20–21).
- B* Nephi explains to his brethren that prophecies are only to be understood by the same Spirit that also manifested these things to the prophets (22:1–3).
- A* Nephi offers a final summary of the prophecies about the Jews and the gentiles, drawing primarily from the language of the great vision but also from the brass plates (22:3–28).

Rhetorical Analysis of 2 Nephi

In 1980 very few nonspecialists would have been aware of the turn taken by the highly successful “form criticism” movement among Bible scholars to broaden their approach under the rubric “rhetorical criticism” and search out the full range of rhetorical techniques exemplified in the Hebrew Bible.⁵⁶ The work that movement produced over the last few

56. In his 1967 presidential address to the Society for Biblical Literature, James Muilenberg, a leading form critic, pointed out the diminishing returns of that movement as he and his colleagues seemed to have wrung out all the illumination they were going to get from that approach to textual biblical studies

decades of that century and into the next led to explorations of the basic tool kit taught in the scribal schools of Jerusalem, which is now known as *Hebrew rhetoric*.⁵⁷

A brief listing of four basic principles of Hebrew rhetoric has been provided above. By way of comparison, Duane Watson penned a brief description of the methodology employed by the rhetorical critics who study Hebrew rhetoric:

A basic methodology includes first defining the literary unit, looking for repeated motifs, opening and closure formulas, and *inclusion*. ... Second, both the overall structure (macro-structure) and the structure of individual components (micro-structure) of the literary unit are determined and the relationship between all components defined. At every step, close attention is given to repetition, parallelism, strophic structure, motifs, climax, chiasm, and numerous other literary devices. Such close examination of the composition is an attempt to achieve a better understanding of the movement of the author's thought, intent, and message, and to determine how the rhetoric would be experienced by the audience.⁵⁸

Applying this new approach in Hebrew Bible studies to 2 Nephi in 2018, I found structural patterns that were previously invisible. Applying the principle of demarcation revealed that all of 2 Nephi is divided into 13 smaller textual units by the standard biblical rhetorical device of *inclusio*. These 13 subdivisions were organized chiastically in turn into one grand chiasm as determined by their principal themes. The following tables 4 and 5 show first the 13 textual units and the inclusios

and were increasingly forcing tenuous claims with debatable evidence. His address recommending the shift to a new phase of "rhetorical criticism" has been published. See James Muilenburg, "Form Criticism and Beyond," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 88 (March 1969): 1–18.

57. For a more detailed description and documentation of these developments in Hebrew rhetoric as they may relate to the Book of Mormon, see Reynolds, "The Return of Rhetorical Analysis," 91–98.

In a separate paper I have advanced the hypothesis that Lehi and Nephi were trained in a Manassite scribal school in seventh-century Jerusalem. See Reynolds, "Lehi and Nephi as Trained Manassite Scribes." Nephi's extraordinary mastery of the Hebrew rhetoric of that period may be the most compelling evidence for that thesis.

58. Duane F. Watson, s.v., "Rhetorical Criticism," *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Winona Lake, IN: Eerdmans, 1988), 4:182.

used to demarcate them. Table 5 lists, in chiasmic format, the principal themes of those 13 text units, demonstrating the parallel elements in the structure.⁵⁹

Table 4. Inclusio markers for 2 Nephi.

Label	Text	Rhetorical boundary (inclusio) markers
A	2 Nephi 1:1–1:30	“out of the land of Jerusalem”
B	2 Nephi 1:31–2:4a	Zoram and Jacob “blessed”
C	2 Nephi 2:4b–30	“know good”/“have chosen the good part”
D	2 Nephi 3:1–4:12	Lehi “speaks” — to Joseph/all his household
E	2 Nephi 4:13–5:34	Laman and Lemuel angry/wars and contentions
F	2 Nephi 6–11:1	words/things “Jacob spake”
G	2 Nephi 11:2–8	“the words of Isaiah”
F*	2 Nephi 12–24	Lord’s house established/Zion founded
E*	2 Nephi 25:1–6	“Isaiah spake/hath spoken”
D*	2 Nephi 25:7–31:1	“mine own prophecy/my prophesying”
C*	2 Nephi 31:2–21	“the doctrine of Christ”
B*	2 Nephi 32:1–8a	“ponder in your hearts”
A*	2 Nephi 32:8b–33:15	Nephi “must speak/commanded to seal” words

Table 5. Themes of Table 4 text units in 2 Nephi.

- A Lehi’s final testimony and call *to his family* to repentance.
 B The Spirit — Jacob redeemed — in the service of God.
 C Lehi’s explanation of *the way of salvation* based on “the things which [he] had read.”
 D Lehi’s last blessings (prophecies) *to his people*.
 E Historical detailed interlude on the founding of “the people of Nephi,” “my soul delighteth/grieveth.”
 F Jacob’s teachings witness of Christ.
 G Nephi’s witness of Christ.
 F* Isaiah’s prophecies witness of Christ.
 E* Historical interlude — the education of “my people” — “my soul delighteth/delighteth.”
 D* Final restatement of Nephi’s prophecies — *to all people*.
 C* Nephi’s detailed explanation of *the way or doctrine* of Christ based on what he learned from the Father and the Son directly.
 B* The Spirit — the Holy Ghost will show you what to do.
 A* Nephi’s final testimony and call *to all people* to repentance.

59. See Reynolds, “Chiastic Structuring of Large Texts,” 182–83.

Applying the four basic principles of Hebrew rhetoric to 1 and 2 Nephi shows that Nephi has presented this material in three highly structured chiasms. The first two are made parallel to each other in 1 Nephi as Lehi's account and Nephi's account respectively, each providing proofs of Nephi's thesis that the Lord delivers his covenant people when they are faithful and pointing repeatedly to the constant danger of murmuring or hardening one's heart against the revelations of the Lord which prevents that deliverance — as the Jews in Jerusalem are destroyed and carried away captive.⁶⁰

The third chiasm organizes the principal teachings and prophecies of 2 Nephi and elevates Nephi's thesis to a higher level, featuring explanations of the plan of salvation and the gospel/doctrine of Christ as the means by which the Lord's covenant people can be delivered from their common enemy, the devil, and receive eternal life. The primary intent of both Lehi and Nephi is to bring their people and eventually all peoples who will receive their message to Jesus Christ that they might receive the salvation he has prepared for them. For example:

Lehi: “I have none other object save it be the everlasting welfare of your souls” (2 Nephi 2:30).

Nephi: “And my soul delighteth in proving unto my people that save Christ should come all men must perish” (2 Nephi 11:6).

Wherefore my soul delighteth to prophesy concerning him, for I have seen his day, and my heart doth magnify his holy name” (2 Nephi 25:13).

And now behold, I say unto you that the right way is to believe in Christ and deny him not. And Christ is the Holy One of Israel; wherefore ye must bow down before him and worship him with all your might, mind, and strength, and your whole soul. And if ye do this, ye shall in no wise be cast out” (2 Nephi 25:29).

“For none of these iniquities come of the Lord. For he doeth that which is good among the children of men. And he doeth nothing save it be plain unto the children of men. And he inviteth them all to come unto him and partake of his goodness. And

60. Reynolds, “Nephi's Outline.”

he denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female; and he remembereth the heathen. And all are alike unto God, both Jew and Gentile” (2 Nephi 26:33).

A secondary theme is the transition at the center of the book from the claim that the plan of salvation and the gospel enable the salvation of covenant Israel to the clearly universalized teaching that they equally enable the salvation of all peoples — both Israelites and Gentiles.⁶¹

And the way is prepared *for all men* from the foundation of the world if it so be that they repent and come unto him. For he that diligently seeketh shall find, and the mysteries of God shall be unfolded to them by the power of the Holy Ghost as well in this time as in times of old and as well in times of old as in times to come; wherefore the course of the Lord is one eternal round. (1 Nephi 10:18–19)

Nephi makes the same point even more directly in 2 Nephi.

For behold, I say unto you: As many of the Gentiles as will repent are the covenant people of the Lord; and as many of the Jews as will not repent shall be cast off. For the Lord covenanteth with none save it be with them that repent and believe in his Son, which is the Holy One of Israel. (2 Nephi 30:2)

Nephi’s Blueprint

It may be tempting for some readers to breeze past 1 Nephi 10:2–14, since it is presented as a list of topics Lehi discussed with his family in connection with the account of his great vision of the tree of life — discussions that Nephi has not recorded here in any detail. But the list soon turns out to be of great importance as it includes all the topics of the revelations and teachings that will be presented by Nephi in his two books. In other words, Lehi’s teachings to his family, based on his vision of the tree of life, provide Nephi with a guide or a table of contents for the rest of his writings. The remainder of 1 Nephi and all of 2 Nephi will consist of expansions of the topics on this list. And most of these will be seen to be drawn directly from the great tree of life vision. Gardner noted the similarity between Nephi’s reporting of his own prophecies, which have sometimes been interpreted as commentaries on the Isaiah

61. See Reynolds, “Chiastic Structuring of Large Texts,” 184.

chapters, and the tree of life vision: “The elements of this vision are so closely aligned with those of Nephi’s vision of the tree of life that it is virtually certain that it is that vision he is referring to.”⁶²

Another Explanation of this Record

Another reason that the list in Chapter 10 can be too readily disassociated from the tree of life vision is that Nephi inserts another explanation of the Small Plates (1 Nephi 9:2–6) between the account of the vision and Lehi’s preaching to his family based on that vision in Chapter 8 and this more detailed listing of the topics included in that preaching to his family.⁶³ This insertion can be confusing to modern readers unless they recognize that it is required by Nephi’s chiasmic rhetorical structuring and serves as a wrap-up for Lehi’s account. As can be seen in Table 2, the insertion about the records in chapter 9 matches up as the chiasmic parallel of the discussion of the record in Chapter 1.

This rhetorical move also allows Nephi to make Chapter 10 into the beginning of his own account, following the account of his father in chapters 1–9. The artificiality of this division is not concealed, for Nephi first announces that he is moving on to his own account in verse 1 and immediately circles back in verses 2–16 to finish out the account of his father’s teachings. This is made explicit as Nephi uses the same phrasing in verse 2 to introduce the longer list of things that were summarized at the end of chapter 8:

And he *did exhort them* then with all the feeling of a tender parent that they would hearken to his words, in that perhaps the Lord would be merciful to them and not cast them off. Yea, my father *did preach unto them*. And after that he had preached unto them and also prophesied unto them of many things, *he bade them to keep the commandments* of the Lord.
(1 Nephi 8:37–38)

Nephi’s Own Account

Nephi refers to these closing lines of chapter 8 as he begins his own account in Chapter 10: “For behold, it came to pass that after my father had made an end of *speaking the words of his dream* and also of *exhorting them to all diligence*, he spake unto them ...” (1 Nephi 10:2). The attached

62. Brant Gardner, “Nephi as Scribe,” *Mormon Studies Review* 23, no.1 (2011): 53.

63. See the explanation in Reynolds, “Nephi’s Small Plates,” 114–15.

appendix assembles and sorts all the passages Nephi will incorporate into this writing that detail the sixteen topics Nephi lists in 1 Nephi 10:2–15 as a summary of Lehi’s teaching to his company at the time he told them about his tree of life vision. By starting out his own account with a listing of the contents of what Lehi taught his family based on his vision, Nephi makes that listing structurally parallel to Lehi’s first visions as described in chapter 1, as displayed in Table 1 above as items numbered 2 in each column.

Chapter 10 as a Table of Contents for 1 and 2 Nephi

In 1 Nephi 10:2–15 Lehi first tells his family about the tree of life, but then goes on to teach them about sixteen or possibly seventeen other prophecies and teachings that Nephi lists with very brief descriptions. See the following Table 6 for a listing that identifies the numerous passages in 1 and 2 Nephi where each of those prophecies or teachings is mentioned or presented in some context. An appendix follows this list and provides a paraphrase for each of those passages. First (1), Lehi confirms the prophecies of the coming destruction of the Jews and Jerusalem and their subsequent captivity in Babylon. He then mentions (2) their future return from captivity to the land of inheritance. Lehi then tells them (3) that in 600 years from the time they left Jerusalem “a prophet would the Lord God raise up among the Jews, yea, even a Messiah, or in other words, a Savior of the world” (1 Nephi 10:4). Lehi also spoke (4) of the other prophets who had testified about this coming Messiah. He taught them (5) about the need for a redeemer, because “all mankind was in a lost and in a fallen state,” reminding us again of his detailed explanations of the fall and the needed redemption recorded in 2 Nephi 2. This points to the plan of salvation that Lehi expands on in 2 Nephi 2 and that Jacob features in 2 Nephi 9–10. The more lengthy and detailed section that Nephi reports from Lehi’s teaching to his family focused (6) on the baptism of the Messiah and the prophet that would come before him to prepare the way. Nephi’s threefold repetition of accounts of the baptism of the Messiah and the prophet that would baptize him (1 Nephi 10:7–10) constitutes a powerful link between Lehi’s vision, the version of that vision given to Nephi (1 Nephi 11:26–27), and Nephi’s presentation of the doctrine of Christ (2 Nephi 31:4–9).

Following Lehi’s long description of the baptism of Christ, he spoke to his children (7) about “the gospel which should be preached to the Jews,” and about (8) the subsequent “dwindling of the Jews in unbelief.” After (9) their slaying of the Messiah, he would (10) “rise from the dead”

and (11) manifest himself “by the Holy Ghost unto the Gentiles.” He spoke then (12) about the Gentiles and the house of Israel, comparing them to an olive tree whose branches would be broken off and “scattered upon all the face of the earth.” Lehi then explained to his family that (13) it was necessary that their family be led to their own land of promise to fulfill the word of the Lord and that eventually (14) both their descendants and the rest of the house of Israel would be scattered upon all the face of the earth. Finally, (15) he prophesied that the Gentiles would receive the fullness of the gospel, and in due course (16) the remnants of the house of Israel would “come to the knowledge of the true Messiah.”

Table 6. Lehi's 17 themes. (Isaiah passages are in bold type.)

	Content Description of the Prophecy	Text Occurrences
1.	Destruction of Jerusalem, the Jews, and Babylonian captivity	1 Nephi 1:4, 13, 8–19, 7:13; 2 Nephi 6:8; 13:1–15:25, 16:1–18:22, 19:8–20:11 , 25:10
2.	Future return from captivity	2 Nephi 6:9, 20:12–34 , 25:11
3.	Future coming of Jesus Christ	1 Nephi 1:9–10, 19, 10:17, 11:7, 19:7–8; 2 Nephi 6:9, 21:1–22:6 , 25:12, 20–30
4.	Other prophets testify of the coming Messiah.	1 Nephi 19:10–12; 2 Nephi 9–10, 11:2–4, 19:1–7 , 25:18–19
5.	The need for a Redeemer and the plan of redemption/salvation	1 Nephi 1:14, 3:4, 15:26–36, 16:1–5, 17:36; 2 Nephi 1:13, 15, 2:1–30, 9:4–39, 10:23–25, 11:5–7, 33:11–15
6.	A prophet will prepare the way for the Messiah and baptize him.	1 Nephi 10:7–10, 11:27; 2 Nephi 31:4–12
7.	The gospel of Jesus Christ to be preached	1 Nephi 8:2–35, 11:31, 15:24–25, 4:16–35; 2 Nephi 9:23–24, 31:9–32:6, 33:1–10
8.	The dwindling of the Jews foretold	1 Nephi 11:35, 12:7–8, 19:13–14, 20:1–22
9.	The Messiah to be slain	1 Nephi 11:32–33, 19:9–10; 2 Nephi 6:9, 10:3–5, 25:13, 26:3–8
10.	Resurrection of the Messiah	2 Nephi 9:6, 25:14, 26:1–3
11.	Messiah to be made manifest to the Gentiles by the Holy Ghost	1 Nephi 13:12–33; 2 Nephi 10:8–18
12.	House of Israel compared to an olive tree	1 Nephi 15:7–18, 19:24, 21:1
13.	Nephites will be led to a land of promise.	1 Nephi 2:2–7, 2:20, 3:5, 8, 7:2, 13, 17:12–13–14, 23–47; 2 Nephi 1:3–9, 16–29, 4:2–9, 5:5–29, 10:19–22
14.	Israel to be scattered (including Lehi's seed)	1 Nephi 2:21–24, 12:13–23, 15:19–20, 22:3–5; 2 Nephi 1:10–12, 6:10–11, 25:14–15, 26:10–11
15.	Gentiles to receive the fullness of the gospel	1 Nephi 13:33–7, 14:1–14, 21:22–23 , 22:6–9, 22:20–22; 2 Nephi 6:6–7, 12–13, 12:1–4 , 26:12–28:32, 30:1–3

	Content Description of the Prophecy	Text Occurrences
16.	Remnants of Israel to be gathered — to come to the knowledge of the true Messiah	1 Nephi 6:4, 13:38–42, 14:15–17, 19:15–17, 21:14–21, 24–26 , 22:24–28; 2 Nephi 3:1–4:2, 6:14–7:3, 8:1–25, 9:1–3, 12:5–22, 24:1–3 , 25:16–17, 29:1–14, 30:4–7
17.	End of the world prophecies	1 Nephi 14:18–30, 22:13–19, 22:23; 2 Nephi 23:1–22, 24:4–27, 29–32 , 30:8–18

This seventeenth line of prophesying surfaces eight times in Nephi’s writings but is not included on the list of teachings of Lehi to his people in Chapter 10. Lehi was doubtless fully aware of it. At the end of his own vision, Nephi reports that he was shown events pertaining to the end of the world. He will come back to that topic seven additional times in his writings, while respecting the command that he (and presumably Lehi) had received not to write what he had seen. All eight of Nephi’s references to the end of the world are included in the Appendix 1 as item 17. Three of these are in materials quoted from Isaiah, and one is Nephi’s paraphrase of “the prophet,” which in context might easily be taken as another reference to Isaiah. People often ask why Nephi has included such lengthy excerpts from Isaiah’s writings. This listing suggests that Nephi saw Isaiah as one who had seen the same visions and received the same prophecies as had he and Lehi. Isaiah provides an impeccable, independent witness. As indicated by the bolding in this list, Nephi invokes Isaiah 18 times in support of 9 of these Nephite prophecies.

Time and Eternity

Book of Mormon interpreters and Latter-day Saint writers in general often struggle to understand the connections and distinctions between such basic elements of prophetic teachings as the plan of salvation, the Abrahamic covenant, and the gospel of Jesus Christ. Nephi used all these concepts repeatedly and confidently in his writings. And it is in the great tree of life vision that we can find guidance on how the terms are both distinguished from and integrated with each other in his teachings.

One key to an understanding of these biblical and Book of Mormon teachings is to recognize the three different *time frames* they bring with them — usually without making those differences clear. A visual image is provided for each of these, as well as a verbal explanation, as indicated below in Table 7.

We see first the eternal perspective of God, who sees the end from the beginning. In his heavenly council, decisions were made to create this earth, to provide a plan of salvation that would make human salvation

possible, and to provide a way by which individuals could qualify for eternal life in their own mortal lifetimes.

Second, we see the past, present, and future of the world and its people in relationship to God. Specific peoples have from time to time been chosen to be God's covenant people, to receive his prophets and teachings, and to provide an example to all the world of the ways in which he will bless and discipline his covenant people through their cycles of rebellion and obedience.

But third, and in the final analysis, salvation turns out to be an individual matter, and eternal judgment will come to every individual and will be based on the response of individuals to the gospel invitation to repent and come to Christ. That is the timeframe that matters most to each human being while in this mortal probation. The salvation history on display in the history and prophesied future of God's covenant peoples provides them with a surrogate or model that teaches individuals how to relate to their god as they strive to endure to the end.

In the Book of Mormon, as in the ancient world generally, this was verbalized as *the doctrine of the two ways*.⁶⁴ It divides into two doctrines. The positive version is the gospel or doctrine of Christ, which teaches the only way by which one can return to God — the way of light and life. The negative version is the way of the devil, of darkness, of death, that leads to hell or eternal damnation. The tree of life vision presents these dramatically as the “straight and narrow path” and the iron rod that leads to the tree in contrast to the “strange paths” and “forbidden ways” that lead to the great and spacious building or the filthy river.

Table 7 lists these three timeframes, their visualizations, and their verbalizations.

Table 7. Timeframes visualized and verbalized.

	Timeframe	Visualization	Verbalization
1.	Eternity	Divine council	Plan of salvation
2.	Salvation history	Olive tree allegory	Abrahamic covenant
3.	Individual lifetimes	Tree of life vision	Doctrine of two ways

Nephi's list of the sixteen teachings of Lehi to his people draws on all three of these timeframes in a way that integrates them fully. (1) From the eternal perspective, there was a divine council before the creation of

64. See the comprehensive development of these doctrines in Noel B. Reynolds, “The Ancient Doctrine of the Two Ways and the Book of Mormon,” *BYU Studies Quarterly* 56, no. 3 (2017), 49–78.

this world which adopted the plan of salvation, including the creation and the atonement, and which included a final judgment that will bring all peoples back into that same eternal timeframe. (2) In multiple dispensations of the gospel, God has established his covenants with successive peoples, the most prominent of which has been the covenant with Abraham, which animates the salvation history not only of Israel, but also the nations of the Gentiles, as explained to Nephi and Lehi in their visions. Most of the teachings on Nephi's list address different dimensions of that salvation history, and the visualization of the allegory of the olive tree is provided to help understand how apostate Israel can one day be grafted back into the mother tree. (3) But the visualization of the tree of life and the straight and narrow path supports the third timeframe as it portrays individuals — even different members of Lehi's family — facing the choice between the two ways — whether to turn away from the attractions of a fallen world — forbidden paths and the great and spacious building — or to pursue the way of salvation — the gospel path and the iron rod that Christ has provided.

As a side note, it is generally recognized that the decisions of fourth century and later councils of the Christian churches adopted Greek philosophical concepts of divinity that placed God beyond any human timeframes. These theological moves have never been reconciled with the traditional timeframes embedded in Bible prophecies and teachings, nor is it likely that they ever can be. The German theologian Oscar Cullmann devoted much of his career to this issue, arguing that the gospel taught by the Primitive Christians could not be divorced from these salvation histories and individual lives without destroying the essence of its message.⁶⁵

The Book of Mormon consistently conveys this combination of timeframes laid out in the visions of Lehi and Nephi. The *goodness of God* is repeatedly cited to explain the plan of salvation, how we got here in the first place, and how we can be blessed at a final judgment. The salvation history of Israel, of the Nephites and Lamanites, and of the Gentile nations is taught constantly to show how God has worked and will work with all peoples to provide individuals with the gospel and the opportunity to live their own lives in a way that can prepare them for eternal life. The Nephite prophets understood from the beginning that the peoples of all nations could receive all the blessings promised to

65. Oscar Cullmann, *Christ and Time: The Primitive Christian Conception of Time and History*, trans. Floyd V. Filson, rev. ed. (1962; repr., Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2018).

Abraham by repenting and coming to Christ in the manner prescribed in his gospel.

In a 2011 article, Daniel L. Belnap demonstrated how Lehi's vision provided the Nephite peoples with a foundational cultural narrative that served them much as the Israelite exodus served the ancient Hebrews to "define themselves and their place in the greater cosmos."⁶⁶ Matthew L. Bowen has added strong evidence for the millennium-long reappearance of key associations in that vision in the writings of Nephite prophets.⁶⁷ I would propose that Nephi's use of that vision as a blueprint for his writings and its integration of these three timeframes also contributed to establishing the Nephite prophets' shared vision as a cultural narrative that shows up repeatedly in their writings throughout their dispensation.

The more a reader reflects on this list of prophecies and revealed teachings that Nephi provides at the center of 1 Nephi, the more astonishing it appears. On the one hand, Nephi names or summarizes 16 topics (teachings and prophecies) that Lehi took up with his family as he spoke to them after describing his vision of the tree of life at the first camp in the wilderness, all of which will be presented multiple times and in much more detail elsewhere in 1 or 2 Nephi. On the other hand, the same list serves as a comprehensive guide to the teachings and prophecies of all the Nephite prophets and Jesus Christ who will teach the Nephites and Lamanites over the next ten centuries. This extraordinary teaching session between Lehi and his emigrant company as they prepare to launch themselves into the Arabian wilderness provides the complete packet of Book of Mormon prophecies and teachings, including what Jesus will teach the Nephites when he appears to them after his resurrection. That body of revelation will be available to the Nephites for almost a thousand years; and Lehi's and Nephi's great vision or visions that feature the tree of life appear to be the original source for it all.

Conclusions

Three hypotheses are proposed in this paper. First, Nephi's final writing in his Small Plates was organized using the principles of Hebrew rhetoric as these had evolved in those same scribal schools before the Babylonian

66. Daniel L. Belnap, "Even as our Father Lehi Saw': Lehi's Dream as Nephite Cultural Narrative," in *The Things Which My Father Saw*, 214.

67. Matthew L. Bowen, "'That Which They Most Desired': The Waters of Mormon, Baptism, the Love of God, and the Bitter Fountain," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 39 (2020): 261–98.

exile. Nephi designed a formal rhetorical structure that divided his material into two books — both organized chiastically in a way that determined the two-book structure.

Second, both books can be understood as expansions of the brief account of the great vision of the tree of life in which Nephi and Lehi were called as prophets, seeing the heavens opened, seeing the past and future implementation of the plan of salvation and the shape of salvation history as it would unfold for their descendants, for the house of Israel, and for the Gentiles. As Nephi's summary of the things Lehi taught his family as part of his report on the tree of life vision shows, the principal teachings and prophecies in Nephi's two books do come from that same great vision. And the visualizations provided in the vision chapters help the Nephites understand the plan of salvation, the salvation histories of the scriptures, and the gospel of Jesus Christ — which is frequently referred to thereafter as “the straight and narrow path” or “the way.”

Third, we can see that this experience of seeing the heavens opened and of being brought into the heavenly council where they were taught the plan of salvation, the gospel of the Lamb, and the prophecies outlining a salvation history for their own descendants, the Gentile nations, and the rest of the house of Israel prepared Lehi and Nephi with the necessary other-worldly perspective and understanding to be the prophets that would launch the Nephite dispensation. Having received the same great vision, Lehi and Nephi were able to stand together and provide a double witness to the goodness of God, his teachings and plans for all of humanity in this earthly probationary estate, and the coming judgment and possibility of eternal life for all. They also understood what was at stake in the lives of their family members and descendants who would not listen or soften their hearts to be guided by the Spirit on that path that leads to the Lord.

So interpreted, the great vision of the tree of life provided Nephite and Lamanite prophets with the perspective and teachings to call Lehi's descendants to repentance and to teach them the right way over a span of almost a thousand years. The experiences of Lehi and Nephi and the record they would leave would become the primary means by which the true gospel would be restored to the Gentiles, to Lehi's distant descendants, and to the house of Israel in the last days. When we grasp the full scope of that early vision, we can see how it provides the divinely revealed basis for the Lord's work with his people throughout the period recorded in the Book of Mormon as well as for the last days, when the

gospel would be revealed again to the Gentiles and to all the house of Israel.

Appendix:
Charting Book of Mormon Teachings and Prophecies
per 1 Nephi 10:2-14

This article explains that the list of topics Nephi reports from Lehi's account of his great vision provided Nephi with a table of contents for all of 1 and 2 Nephi. This appendix substantiates that claim by taking each item from Nephi's list in 1 Nephi 10:2-14 and listing all the passages distributed throughout Nephi's writings where that item is addressed, together with a brief description of the passage.

1 Nephi 10:2-4

- 1. Destruction of Jerusalem and Captivity of Israel**
 - a. 1 Nephi 1:4 Many prophets warned that Jerusalem would be destroyed.
 - b. 1 Nephi 1:13 Lehi read of the coming destruction and captivity.
 - c. 1 Nephi 1:8-19 Lehi warned Jerusalem of the coming destruction.
 - d. 1 Nephi 7:13 Nephi promised that the prophecies of Jerusalem's destruction will be fulfilled.
 - e. 2 Nephi 6:8 The Lord showed Jacob the captivity of Jerusalem after Lehi's departure.
 - f. 2 Nephi 13:1-15:25 Isaiah's summary of the judgments of God against Israel and prophecies of its coming destruction and captivity
 - g. 2 Nephi 16:1-18:22 Israel's transgressions and punishments
 - h. 2 Nephi 19:8-20:11 The coming destruction and captivity of Israel
 - i. 2 Nephi 25:10 Nephi confirmed the destruction and captivity of those at Jerusalem as prophesied.
- 2. Return of Captive Israel**
 - a. 2 Nephi 6:9 The Lord showed Jacob that Israel would return.
 - b. 2 Nephi 20:12-34 Israel will be rescued from Assyria and return.
 - c. 2 Nephi 25:11 They shall return and possess the land of Jerusalem and be restored to their lands.

3. Coming of the Messiah among the Jews, a Savior of the World

- a. 1 Nephi 1:9-10 Lehi in vision saw the coming the Messiah.
- b. 1 Nephi 1:19 Lehi testified of the coming Messiah.
- c. 1 Nephi 10:17 The Son of God is the coming Messiah.
- d. 1 Nephi 11:7 Nephi commanded to bear witness of the Son of God.
- e. 1 Nephi 19:7-8 “[T]he very God of Israel” will come “in six hundred years from the time my father left Jerusalem” — according to the angel.
- f. 2 Nephi 6:9 The Lord showed Jacob that the Lord would manifest himself to the Jews in the flesh.
- g. 2 Nephi 21:1-9 A rod from the stem of Jesse to come forth and with righteousness and faithfulness will reprove the earth.
- h. 2 Nephi 21:10-22:6 Israel will be gathered home in the last days.
- i. 2 Nephi 25:12 The Father of heaven and earth will manifest himself to them.
- j. 2 Nephi 25:20-30 Nephi’s longest prophecy of the coming Christ “whereby man can be saved.” “[T]he right way is to believe in Christ and deny him not.” Christ is the Holy One of Israel.

1 Nephi 10:5-6

4. Prophets Who Foretold the Coming Messiah

- a. 1 Nephi 19:10 Zenoch, Neum, and Zenos prophesied the coming of the Lord in his ministry to the Jews.
- b. 1 Nephi 19:11-12 Zenos foretold the destructions that will occur when the Savior is crucified.
- c. 2 Nephi 9-10 Jacob explains why Christ must come to make the plan of salvation effective.
- d. 2 Nephi 11:2-4 In this rhetorical center point of his second book, Nephi explains his reasons for including the prophecies of Jacob and Isaiah. Isaiah, Jacob, and Nephi have all seen their Redeemer and prophesy the future coming of Jesus Christ. Nephi delights in proving the truth of the coming of Christ.

- e. 2 Nephi 19:1-7 Isaiah prophesies the coming of the Lord.
- f. 2 Nephi 25:18-19 The prophets have spoken of one Messiah who would come 600 years after Lehi left Jerusalem.

5. Plan of Salvation — Mankind in a Lost and Fallen State Needing a Redeemer

- a. 1 Nephi 1:14 Lehi saw that the eternal goodness and mercy of the Lord would not allow any faithful person to perish.
- b. 1 Nephi 3:4 Lehi saw the goodness of God in his vision.
- c. 1 Nephi 15:26-36 A great gulf and the sword of God's justice separates the wicked from the righteous in this life and the next, as there will be a judgment, and the wicked will go to the hell of the devil and the righteous to the kingdom of God.
- d. 1 Nephi 16:1-5 Nephi exhorts his brothers to keep the commandments that they might be lifted up at the last day.
- e. 1 Nephi 17:36 “[T]he Lord hath created the earth that it should be inhabited, and he hath created his children that they should possess it.”
- f. 2 Nephi 1:13 Lehi calls his wicked sons to repentance—to shake off “the sleep of hell” and the chains that bind them and not be “carried away captive down to the eternal gulf of misery and woe.
- g. 2 Nephi 1:15 Lehi testifies that “the Lord hath *redeemed* my soul from hell.
- h. 2 Nephi 2:1-30 Lehi's great discourse on the plan of redemption given as part of a final father's blessing to his son Jacob.
- i. 2 Nephi 9:4-39 Jacob's great discourse on the plan of redemption and the consequences for those who accept the gospel and for those who persist in sins.
- j. 2 Nephi 10:23-25 Jacob summarizes the plan of redemption in an appeal to his brethren to choose *the way of eternal life*.
- k. 2 Nephi 11:5-7 Nephi delights in the covenants of the Lord and his “great and eternal plan of deliverance from death.”

- l. 2 Nephi 33:11–15 Nephi’s final words testify of a coming judgment and of salvation in the kingdom of the Father.

1 Nephi 10:7–10

6. A Prophet Coming to Prepare the Way for the Messiah and His Baptism

- a. 1 Nephi 10:7–10 Lehi’s account
- b. 1 Nephi 11:27 Nephi’s account
- c. 2 Nephi 31:4–12 Nephi explains Christ’s baptism as an exemplar.

1 Nephi 10:11

7. The Gospel of Jesus Christ to be Preached

- a. 1 Nephi 8:2–35 Lehi reports his vision of the tree of life as a visualization symbolic of what individuals must do to be saved.
- b. 1 Nephi 11:31 Nephi saw Jesus’s ministry of miracles.
- c. 1 Nephi 15:24–25 The iron rod is “the word of God,” and if the people would “hearken” to it, keeping the commandments, they would not perish or be led into destruction by the “temptations and the fiery darts of the adversary.”
- d. 2 Nephi 4:16–35 Nephi’s psalm expressed his desires to be free of temptation and his great trust in the Lord, the rock of his righteousness.
- e. 2 Nephi 9:23–24 Jacob gives both positive and negative versions of the gospel message as part of the great plan.
- f. 2 Nephi 31:9–32:6 Nephi shares the doctrine of Christ as taught to him by the Father and the Son.
- g. 2 Nephi 33:1–10 Nephi has written the gospel or the words of Christ, which speak against pride and sin, but which offer eternal life. All will be blessed or cursed depending on whether they accept this message and endure to the end.

8. The Dwindling of the Jews

- a. 1 Nephi 11:35 Nephi saw that the house of Israel fought against the apostles.
- b. 1 Nephi 12:7–8 Nephi saw the coming of Christ to the Nephites.

- c. 1 Nephi 19:13-14 After crucifying their god, the Jews will be “scourged by all people” and “they shall wander in the flesh and perish,” having “become a hiss and a byword” and being “hated among all nations.”
- d. 1 Nephi 20:1-22 Isaiah rehearses the calling and covenant God made to Israel and the promises given to the obedient. Nevertheless, “there is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked.”

9. Slaying the Messiah

- a. 1 Nephi 11:32-33 Nephi saw Jesus would be slain by the people.
- b. 1 Nephi 19:9-10 Jesus will suffer smiting, scourging, spitting and be crucified.
- c. 2 Nephi 6:9 Jacob was shown that the Jews would crucify him.
- d. 2 Nephi 10:3-5 Jacob was told that the Jews would crucify their god.
- e. 2 Nephi 25:13 They will crucify him.
- f. 2 Nephi 26:3-8 Destructions of Nephites at the time of Christ's death enumerated.

10. Resurrection of the Messiah

- a. 2 Nephi 9:6 As death has passed on all men, there must be “a power of resurrection.
- b. 2 Nephi 25:14 After three days, he will rise from the dead.
- c. 1 Nephi 26:1-3 Christ shall have risen from the dead. Signs will be given of his death and resurrection.

1 Nephi 10:12-14

11. Messiah made manifest to the Gentiles by the Holy Ghost

- a. 1 Nephi 13:12-33 Nephi sees the Holy Ghost blessing the Gentiles and bringing them to his promised land.
- b. 2 Nephi 10:8-18 The future Gentiles will be blessed upon this land and be numbered among the house of Israel.

12. House of Israel Compared to an Olive Tree with Branches Broken Off

- a. 1 Nephi 15:7-18 On request, Nephi explains the analogy of the olive tree Lehi had shared, pointing to the apostasies of the Jews and Lehites, the restoration of the gospel to the Gentiles and linking the eventual fulfillment of the covenant of Abraham that in his seed all kindreds of the earth be blessed.
- b. 1 Nephi 19:24 Nephi tells his brethren that they are a branch broken off from the house of Israel.
- c. 1 Nephi 21:1 Because of wickedness, the house of Israel “are broken off and are driven out.” They are “broken off” and “scattered abroad.”

13. Nephites to be Led to a Land of Promise

- a. 1 Nephi 2:27 Lehi departs Jerusalem because of a dream.
- b. 1 Nephi 2:20 Nephi was promised a land choice above all others.
- c. 1 Nephi 3:5 Lehi reminds his wife he has obtained a land of promise.
- d. 1 Nephi 3:8 Sariah knows that the Lord commanded Lehi to flee.
- e. 1 Nephi 7:2 Lehi commanded to get Ishmael’s family to go with him.
- f. 1 Nephi 7:13 Nephi tells Ishmael and company that they will obtain a land of promise if they will be faithful.
- g. 1 Nephi 17:12-13 The Lord had told Nephi that if they would keep his commandments he would make raw food sweet, be their light in the wilderness and prepare the way before them, leading them to a promised land.
- h. 1 Nephi 17:14 After all this help, Lehi’s company would arrive at the promised land and would know the Lord is God, that he delivered them from destruction, and that he “did bring [them] out of the land of Jerusalem.”

- i. 1 Nephi 17:23-47 Nephi's long speech comparing their situation in the wilderness with Moses and the Israelites being delivered out of Egypt, both being led to a promised land and needing to obey the Lord's commandments.
 - j. 2 Nephi 1:3-9 Lehi spells out details of the promises the Lord has made to him and his posterity for this promised land as a land of liberty.
 - k. 2 Nephi 1:16-29 Lehi warns his sons to repent so that many future generations would not be cursed. If they will follow Nephi's inspired leadership, Lehi's first blessing will rest on them. If not, it will be transferred to Nephi.
 - l. 2 Nephi 4:2-9 Lehi reminds the children of Laman and Lemuel that they will be blessed or cursed in this promised land depending on whether they keep the commandments the Lord has given them.
 - m. 2 Nephi 5:5-29 Nephi is warned to take his people into a new wilderness, and they establish a righteous community under his leadership. Nephi summarizes the ways in which the Lord prospered them and cursed the Lamanites for their rebellion.
 - n. 2 Nephi 10:19-22 The Lord consecrated this promised land to Lehi's seed, and the Lord will remember them in the end.
- 14. Israel to be Scattered (Including Lehi's Seed)**
- a. 1 Nephi 2:21-24 Lamanites will have no power over righteous Nephites.
 - b. 1 Nephi 12:13-23 Nephi saw the future destruction of his people and the dwindling of the Lamanite remnant in unbelief.
 - c. 1 Nephi 15:19-20 Nephi spoke to his brothers about "the restoration of the Jews in the latter days" and rehearsed the words of Isaiah who taught about that restoration and declared that they would never be confounded or scattered again.

- d. 1 Nephi 22:3-5 Nephi cites Isaiah's prophecy that Israel will be scattered among all nations and will be "hated by all men" because they did "harden their hearts" against the Holy One of Israel.
- e. 2 Nephi 1:10-12 Lehi foretells the calamities that will come to his descendants if they "reject the Holy One of Israel." They will be "scattered and smitten."
- f. 2 Nephi 6:10-11 Jacob is shown that Israel would be smitten and afflicted, scattered and smitten and hated.
- g. 2 Nephi 25:14-15 Jerusalem will be destroyed again, and the Jews scattered among all nations.
- h. 2 Nephi 26:10-11 Rebellious Nephites will be destroyed.

15. Gentiles to Receive the Fullness of the Gospel

- a. 1 Nephi 13:33-7 Nephi sees that the Gentiles will be given the gospel through the Nephite record.
- b. 1 Nephi 14:1-14 Blessings and challenges faced by believing Gentiles who will embrace the restored gospel.
- c. 1 Nephi 21:22-23 The Lord will lift his hand to the Gentiles and set up his standard to his people Israel. The Gentiles will be a nurse to Israel and bring her in their arms that they may know he is the Lord.
- d. 1 Nephi 22:6-9 The Lord will "make bare his arm in the eyes of the nations" by making known "his covenants and his gospel" to the Gentiles and through them to Israel.
- e. 1 Nephi 22:20-22 "The Lord will surely prepare a way for his people."
- f. 2 Nephi 6:6-7 Jacob reads Isaiah to the people, prophesying of the day when the Gentiles would bring the house of Israel back to their god.
- g. 2 Nephi 6:12-13 The Gentiles will be saved and wait for the coming of the Messiah.
- h. 2 Nephi 12:1-4 Zion established in the tops of the mountains.

- i. 2 Nephi 26:12-28:32 Nephi provides a lengthy and detailed account of how the Nephite record will facilitate the restoration of the gospel to the Gentiles and the challenges they will face in the world in their day.
- j. 2 Nephi 30:1-3 The gospel will be restored to the Gentiles.

16. Remnants of the House of Israel to be Gathered Again — to Come to the Knowledge of the True Messiah

- a. 1 Nephi 6:4 Nephi's intent is to persuade men to come to Israel's God and be saved.
- b. 1 Nephi 13:38-42 Through restored scriptures, Gentiles, descendants of Lehi, and then Jews will be convinced that Jesus is the Eternal Father and Savior of the world.
- c. 1 Nephi 14:15-17 Nephi beheld wars and rumors of wars poured out on the great and abominable church — “preparing the way for the fulfilling of his covenants ... [with] the house of Israel.”
- d. 1 Nephi 19:15-17 Zenos prophesied the day would come that Israel would “remember the covenants” made to their fathers when “all the people which are of the house of Israel” will be gathered in and “all the earth shall see the salvation of the Lord,” and “every nation, kindred, tongue, and people shall be blessed.”
- e. 1 Nephi 21:14-21 Scattered Israel will not be forgotten and will “gather themselves together.”
- f. 1 Nephi 21:24-26 The Lord will deliver Israel from the oppression and captivity of the mighty, and “all flesh shall know that I the Lord am thy Savior and thy Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.”
- g. 1 Nephi 22:24-28 The time cometh speedily when the righteous will be led up and the Holy One of Israel will reign in dominion and might and power and great glory. He gathers his children from the four quarters of the earth, and they will dwell safely in him.

- h. 2 Nephi 3:1-4:2 Lehi's blessing to his son Joseph focused on the future fulfillment of the ancient prophecy to Joseph of Egypt that through records kept by his descendants, a restoration of the covenants to the house of Israel would come about.
- i. 2 Nephi 6:14-7:3 Isaiah foretells the gathering of Israel in the last days.
- j. 2 Nephi 8:1-25 Isaiah prophesies the future glory of redeemed Israel.
- k. 2 Nephi 9:1-3 Jacob affirms the prophecies of the restoration of Israel.
- l. 2 Nephi 12:5-22 The house of Jacob will be called to "walk in the light of the Lord" in the last days.
- m. 2 Nephi 24:1-3 The restoration of Jacob to his own land
- n. 2 Nephi 25:16-17 After many generations, Jews that are persuaded to believe in Christ will be restored from "their lost and fallen state."
- o. 2 Nephi 29:1-14 The gathering of Israel will be effected by bringing forth the books of the Nephites, the Bible, and the records of the lost tribes. Israel will be gathered home and the Lord's covenant to Abraham fulfilled.
- p. 2 Nephi 30:4-7 Through the Gentiles, the gospel will be restored to Lehi's seed and to all the house of Israel. "As many as shall believe in Christ shall also become a delightsome people."
- 17. Prophecies of the End of the World⁶⁸**
- a. 1 Nephi 14:18-30 Nephi was told not to write the things he saw "concerning the end of the world" as these would be written by John.
- b. 1 Nephi 22:13-19 The fall of the great and abominable church, Satan to lose his power over the hearts of the children of men, and the proud and the wicked shall burn as stubble as the Lord delivers the righteous. "[T]he righteous shall not perish."
- c. 1 Nephi 22-23 All they who work iniquity and belong to the kingdom of the devil will be brought low, according to the prophet (Isaiah?).

68. Although not included in Nephi's 16-element list, these prophecies constitute a significant repeated feature in Nephi's composition.

- d. 2 Nephi 23:1-22 The destruction of the wicked in the last days
- e. 2 Nephi 24:4-27 The defeat of Satan and his powers
- f. 2 Nephi 24:29-32 The poor and the needy shall lie down in safety. The Lord has founded Zion and the poor shall trust in it.
- g. 2 Nephi 30:8-10 The wicked will be destroyed by fire, and the Lord will spare his people.
- h. 2 Nephi 30:11-18 Nephi's prophecies about the millennium

Noel B. Reynolds (*PhD, Harvard University*) is an emeritus professor of political science at Brigham Young University, where he taught a broad range of courses in legal and political philosophy, American heritage, and the Book of Mormon. His research and publications are based in these fields and several others, including authorship studies, Mormon history, Christian history and theology, and the Dead Sea Scrolls.

