

January 8–14: 1 Nephi 1–5, “I Will Go and Do”

The Prophet Nephi

Nephi begins by telling us why he is qualified to write a record that teaches the gospel of Christ

1Ne 1:1-3

[1] I, Nephi, having been born of goodly parents, therefore I was taught somewhat in all the learning of my father; and having seen many afflictions in the course of my days, nevertheless, 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.

[2] 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.

[3] And I know that the record which I make is true; and I make it with mine own hand; and I make it according to my knowledge.

What do we learn about Nephi from these verses?

(born of goodly parents, therefore... taught somewhat in all the learning of my father
I make it according to my knowledge)

He received an excellent Jewish education while in Jerusalem, at the feet of scholars of the scriptures, because he had goodly parents

What does "goodly" mean?

1. large in amount or extent or degree; "it cost a considerable amount"; "a goodly amount"; "a sizable fortune".
2. attractive, pleasing, or fine "a goodly man".

We use the second definition to emphasize that Nephi had righteous parents but the second definition would also apply – His parents had “a sizable fortune” and were able to provide him with a great education

The fact that Nephi received an excellent education is significant because when he tells us about Jerusalem and teaches the words of great prophets like Isaiah we can be assured that he knows what he is talking about

(having seen many afflictions... nevertheless, having been highly favored of the Lord)

Nephi can testify that these two circumstances go hand-in-hand because his desire to do the will of God has been accompanied by many

difficulties

(having had a great knowledge of the goodness and the mysteries of God)

We will study the revelations and visitations he received

(I make it with mine own hand, according to my knowledge)

He testifies that his record is true – he lived it and he wrote it

The Prophet Lehi

Nephi gives us the historical setting for the events that he talks about

1Ne 1:4

[4] For it came to pass in the commencement of the first year of the reign of Zedekiah, king of Judah, (my father, Lehi, having dwelt at Jerusalem in all his days); and in that same year there came many prophets, prophesying unto the people that they must repent, or the great city Jerusalem must be destroyed.

What events in the Old Testament correspond with the time of Lehi?

(the commencement of the first year of the reign of Zedekiah)

In 2nd Chronicles we learn that the Kingdom of Judah experienced its last period of greatness and freedom under king Josiah, 20 years prior to the beginning of the Book of Mormon. But king Josiah's sons were wicked which resulted in Judah being captured by the Egyptians. Then when the Egyptians were overthrown by the Babylonians, the Babylonians set up Zedekiah as a puppet king over Judah

2 Chronicles 36:10-16

[10] And when the year was expired, king Nebuchadnezzar... made Zedekiah... king over Judah and Jerusalem.

[12] And [Zedekiah] did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord his God, and humbled not himself before Jeremiah the prophet speaking from the mouth of the Lord....

[14] Moreover all the chief of the priests, and the people, transgressed very much after all the abominations of the heathen; and polluted the house of the Lord...

[15] And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them his messengers...

[16] But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised His words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy.

In what way do you think that verses 15 and 16 tie into the account of Lehi?

Nephi states that there were “many prophets” in Jerusalem at this time.

Chronicles makes it clear that in addition to Jeremiah, the Lord sent other messengers and prophets. But they mocked, despised, and misused them “till there was no remedy.”

From Nephi’s account we can see that Lehi could have been one of these prophets mentioned in Chronicles

1Ne 1:18-20

[18] Therefore, I would that ye should know, that after the Lord had shown so many marvelous things unto my father, Lehi, yea, concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, behold he went forth among the people, and began to prophesy and to declare unto them concerning the things which he had both seen and heard.

[19] And it came to pass that the Jews did mock him because of the things which he testified of them; for he truly testified of their wickedness and their abominations; and he testified that the things which he saw and heard, and also the things which he read in the book, manifested plainly of the coming of the Messiah, and also the redemption of the world.

[20] And when the Jews heard these things they were angry with him; yea, even as with the prophets of old, whom they had cast out, and stoned, and slain; and they also sought his life, that they might take it away. But behold, I, Nephi, will show unto you that the tender mercies of the Lord are over all those whom he hath chosen, because of their faith, to make them mighty even unto the power of deliverance.

What do you think Lehi did that made the people at Jerusalem so angry that they wanted to kill him?

(the destruction of Jerusalem
he truly testified of their wickedness and their abominations
manifested plainly of the coming of the Messiah)

As a result Lehi is commanded to take his family and leave Jerusalem

We learn that Laman and Lemuel are among the wicked in Jerusalem that don’t believe their father

1Ne 2:12-13

[12] And thus Laman and Lemuel, being the eldest, did murmur against their father. And they did murmur because they knew not the dealings of that God who had created them.

[13] Neither did they believe that Jerusalem, that great city, could be destroyed according to the words of the prophets. And they were like unto the Jews who were at Jerusalem, who sought to take away the life of my father.

Why did Laman and Lemuel reject the words of their father and the other

prophets?

(They knew not the dealings of that God who had created them
Neither did they believe that Jerusalem could be destroyed)

Neal A. Maxwell

“Failing to understand the ‘dealings’ of the Lord with His children—meaning His relations with and treatment of His children—is very fundamental. Murmuring is but one of the symptoms, and not the only consequence either; in fact, brothers and sisters, this failure affects everything else!

“To misread something so crucial constitutes a failure to know God, who then ends up being wrongly seen as unreachable, uninvolved, uncaring, and unable—a disabled and diminished Deity, really—about whose seeming limitations, ironically, some then quickly complain.” (CR, Oct. 1999)

But Nephi did believe his father and the other prophets

1Ne 2:16

[16] And it came to pass that I, Nephi, being exceedingly young, nevertheless being large in stature, and also having great desires to know of the mysteries of God, wherefore, I did cry unto the Lord; and behold he did visit me, and did soften my heart that I did believe all the words which had been spoken by my father; wherefore, I did not rebel against him like unto my brothers.

What did Nephi do that caused his heart to be softened to the point that he knew that the teachings of his father were true?

(having great desires to know of the mysteries of God, wherefore, I did cry unto the Lord; and behold he did visit me, and did soften my heart)

W. Mark Bassett

"In order to understand the mysteries of God, or those things that can be understood only through revelation, we must follow the example of Nephi...

"Nephi's example of seeking knowledge included (1) a sincere desire, (2) humility, (3) prayer, (4) trust in the prophet, and an exercise of (5) faith, (6) diligence, and (7) obedience. This method of seeking is in great contrast to... trying to force an understanding of things meant to be revealed according to the Lord's timetable and through the power of the Holy Ghost." (CR, Oct. 2016)

Exercising Faith

Lehi tells his sons that they have been commanded to return to Jerusalem for the brass plates

1Ne 3:3-8

[3] For behold, Laban hath the record of the Jews and also a genealogy of my forefathers, and they are engraven upon plates of brass.

[4] Wherefore, the Lord hath commanded me that thou and thy brothers should go unto the house of Laban, and seek the records, and bring them down hither into the wilderness.

[5] And now, behold thy brothers murmur, saying it is a hard thing which I have required of them; but behold I have not required it of them, but it is a commandment of the Lord.

[6] Therefore go, my son, and thou shalt be favored of the Lord, because thou hast not murmured.

[7] And it came to pass that I, Nephi, said unto my father: I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them.

[8] And it came to pass that when my father had heard these words he was exceedingly glad, for he knew that I had been blessed of the Lord.

How did Nephi demonstrate that he understood that God would bless him to accomplish what he had been commanded to do?

("I will go and do...
for I know that the Lord... shall prepare a way... [to] accomplish the thing
which he commandeth)

Spencer W. Kimball

"When my feeling of incompetence wholly overwhelmed me, I remembered the words of Nephi.... I want to tell you that I lean heavily on these promises, that the Lord will strengthen and give me growth and fit and qualify me for this great work. I have seen the Lord qualify men. In my church experience I have helped to [call] many bishops. I have seen them grow and prosper and become great and mighty men in the Church; men who were weak and men who were foolish, and they became strong and confounded the wise, and so I rely upon that promise of the Lord that he will strengthen and empower me that I may be able to do this work to which I have been called." (CR, Oct. 1943)

The Lord did indeed prepare a way for Nephi to obtain the Brass Plates. But note how much sacrifice and faith he needed to demonstrate first

1Ne 3:10-14

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

[11] And we cast lots -- who of us should go in unto the house of Laban. And it came to pass that the lot fell upon Laman; and Laman went in unto the house of Laban, and he talked with him as he sat in his house.

[12] And he desired of Laban the records which were engraven upon the plates of brass, which contained the genealogy of my father.

[13] And behold, it came to pass that Laban was angry, and thrust him out from his presence; and he would not that he should have the records. Wherefore, he said unto him: Behold thou art a robber, and I will slay thee.

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

How much effort would you say was put into their first attempt?

(the lot fell upon Laman; and Laman went in unto the house of Laban, and he talked with him)

Gene R. Cook

“Nephi and his brothers... needed to make a decision. Would they go on believing in the Lord's word with double the faith they had before, or would they quit?... I feel [Nephi] understood the great principle that is intertwined throughout this whole experience: When tribulations and problems come, you cannot let your faith weaken, but you must redouble your faith in the Lord.” (Living by the Power of Faith, pg. 44-45)

As Elder Cook states, instead of losing faith, Nephi relies even more on the Lord. Let's read about their next attempt

1Ne 3:15-16, 24-26

[15] But behold I said unto them that: As the Lord liveth, and as we live, we will not go down unto our father in the wilderness until we have accomplished the thing which the Lord hath commanded us.

[16] Wherefore, let us be faithful in keeping the commandments of the Lord therefore let us go down to the land of our father's inheritance, for behold he left gold and silver, and all manner of riches. And all this he hath done because of the commandments of the Lord.

[24] And it came to pass that we went in unto Laban, and desired him that he would give unto us the records which were engraven upon the plates of brass, for which we would give unto him our gold, and our silver, and all our precious things.

[25] And it came to pass that when Laban saw our property, and that it was exceedingly great, he did lust after it, insomuch that he thrust us out, and sent his servants to slay us, that he might obtain our property.

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

How do we know that Nephi was committed to obeying the commandments of the Lord?

(we will not go down unto our father in the wilderness until we have

accomplished the thing which the Lord hath commanded us)

Bruce R. McConkie

“Thus Nephi made God his partner. If he failed to get the plates, it meant God had failed. And because God does not fail, it was incumbent upon Nephi to get the plates or lay down his life in the attempt.” (CR, April 1982)

After coming up with a good plan that required sacrifice on their part, and that plan failed, Laman and Lemuel were sure that Lehi and Nephi were wrong

1Ne 3:28-31

[28] And it came to pass that Laman was angry with me, and also with my father; and also was Lemuel, for he hearkened unto the words of Laman. Wherefore Laman and Lemuel did speak many hard words unto us, their younger brothers, and they did smite us even with a rod.

[29] And it came to pass as they smote us with a rod, behold, an angel of the Lord came and stood before them, and he spake unto them, saying: Why do ye smite your younger brother with a rod? Know ye not that the Lord hath chosen him to be a ruler over you, and this because of your iniquities? Behold ye shall go up to Jerusalem again, and the Lord will deliver Laban into your hands.

[30] And after the angel had spoken unto us, he departed.

[31] And after the angel had departed, Laman and Lemuel again began to murmur, saying: How is it possible that the Lord will deliver Laban into our hands? Behold, he is a mighty man, and he can command fifty, yea, even he can slay fifty; then why not us?

Why do you think that Laman and Lemuel still did not believe they could obtain the plates?

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

Gene R. Cook

“After two failures, Nephi still remained strong in the faith. Even when Laman and Lemuel were beating him, he believed. I ask, do you still believe when you are being beaten by life? Do you say to the Lord, ‘I do not know how I am going to do it, Father, but with thy help I am still going to accomplish thy will.’ Or, do you follow the example of Laman and Lemuel who doubted, murmured, feared, and gave up?” (Living by the Power of Faith, pg. 47)

1Ne 4:1-4

[1] And it came to pass that I spake unto my brethren, saying: Let us go up again unto Jerusalem, and let us be faithful in keeping the commandments of the Lord; for behold he is mightier than all the earth, then why not mightier than Laban and his fifty, yea, or even than his tens of thousands?

[2] Therefore let us go up; let us be strong like unto Moses; for he truly spake unto the waters of the Red Sea and they divided hither and thither, and our fathers came

through, out of captivity, on dry ground, and the armies of Pharaoh did follow and were drowned in the waters of the Red Sea.

[3] Now behold ye know that this is true; and ye also know that an angel hath spoken unto you; wherefore can ye doubt? Let us go up; the Lord is able to deliver us, even as our fathers, and to destroy Laban, even as the Egyptians.

[4] Now when I had spoken these words, they were yet wroth, and did still continue to murmur; nevertheless they did follow me up until we came without the walls of Jerusalem.

Aside from the visit by the angel, how do we know that Laman and Lemuel had an understanding of God's power and abilities?

(ye know that [the story of Moses] is true... wherefore can ye doubt?)

This seems to have softened their hearts enough for them to at least follow Nephi back to Jerusalem

Nephi had listened to the angel and did what he was told. He went back to Jerusalem with faith that Laban would be delivered into his hands. But that faith would be severely tried

1Ne 4:5-12

[5] And it was by night; and I caused that they should hide themselves without the walls. And after they had hid themselves, I, Nephi, crept into the city and went forth towards the house of Laban.

[6] And I was led by the Spirit, not knowing beforehand the things which I should do.

[7] Nevertheless I went forth, and as I came near unto the house of Laban I beheld a man, and he had fallen to the earth before me, for he was drunken with wine.

[8] And when I came to him I found that it was Laban.

[9] And I beheld his sword, and I drew it forth from the sheath thereof; and the hilt thereof was of pure gold, and the workmanship thereof was exceedingly fine, and I saw that the blade thereof was of the most precious steel.

[10] And it came to pass that I was constrained by the Spirit that I should kill Laban; but I said in my heart: Never at any time have I shed the blood of man. And I shrunk and would that I might not slay him.

[11] And the Spirit said unto me again: Behold the Lord hath delivered him into thy hands. Yea, and I also knew that he had sought to take away mine own life; yea, and he would not hearken unto the commandments of the Lord; and he also had taken away our property.

[12] And it came to pass that the Spirit said unto me again: Slay him, for the Lord hath delivered him into thy hands;

Why do you think that Nephi reacted the way that he did to the solution that the Lord had prepared for him?

(Never at any time have I shed the blood of man. And I shrunk and would

that I might not slay him)

He also realized that he was justified in carrying out the things that the Lord had commanded him:

I also knew that he had sought to take away mine own life
he would not hearken unto the commandments of the Lord
he also had taken away our property)

Jeffrey Holland

“I believe that story was placed in the very opening verses of [the Book of Mormon] and then told in painfully specific detail in order to focus every reader of that record on the absolutely fundamental gospel issue of obedience and submission to the communicated will of the Lord. If Nephi cannot yield to this terribly painful command, if he cannot bring himself to obey, then it is entirely probable that he can never succeed or survive in the tasks that lie just ahead.” (BYU devotional, Jan. 17 1989)

The lesson is that the Lord will prepare a way for us to accomplish his commandments. But it won't always be easy, obvious, or pleasant. And pressing forward in these circumstances is what causes our faith to grow.

Brass Plates

When the brothers returned to the place where their parents were staying, Lehi studied the brass plates and described what was in them

1Ne 5:11-14

[11] And he beheld that they did contain the five books of Moses, which gave an account of the creation of the world, and also of Adam and Eve, who were our first parents;

[12] And also a record of the Jews from the beginning, even down to the commencement of the reign of Zedekiah, king of Judah;

[13] And also the prophecies of the holy prophets, from the beginning, even down to the commencement of the reign of Zedekiah; and also many prophecies which have been spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah.

[14] And it came to pass that my father, Lehi, also found upon the plates of brass a genealogy of his fathers; wherefore he knew that he was a descendant of Joseph; yea, even that Joseph who was the son of Jacob, who was sold into Egypt, and who was preserved by the hand of the Lord, that he might preserve his father, Jacob, and all his household from perishing with famine.

Nephi expressed the importance of obtaining the brass plates while he was attempting to get them with his brothers.

Does anyone recall from chapters 3 and 4 what Nephi said about the importance of the brass plates?

1Ne 3:19-20

19 And behold, it is wisdom in God that we should obtain these records, that we may preserve unto our children the language of our fathers;

20 And also that we may preserve unto them the words which have been spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets, which have been delivered unto them by the Spirit and power of God, since the world began, even down unto this present time.

1Ne 4:15-16

15 Yea, and I also thought that they could not keep the commandments of the Lord according to the law of Moses, save they should have the law.

16 And I also knew that the law was engraven upon the plates of brass

(we may preserve unto our children the language of our fathers
preserve unto them the words... of all the holy prophets
I also knew that the law was engraven upon the plates of brass)

In what ways do we know that the brass plates differ from our Old Testament?

(Lehi, also found upon the plates of brass a genealogy of his fathers;
wherefore he knew that he was a descendant of Joseph)

This would indicate that there was more information about the Northern Kingdom (Ephraim) in the brass plates. The compilers of our Old Testament may have only been concerned with the Southern Kingdom (Judea) so they left out this information about the Northern Kingdom

John L. Sorenson

“Book of Mormon writers mention five prophets whose words appear in the brass plates: Zenos, Zenock, Ezias, Isaiah, and Neum.... Only Isaiah is surely known from existing biblical texts. Internal evidence suggests a reason why: all four direct a great deal of attention to the Northern Kingdom. Since the Masoretic text, which lies behind our King James' version, came out the South, omission of [these books] is explicable.... The probability is high, therefore, that the prophets cited from the brass plates date between 900 B.C. and the end of the Northern Kingdom in 721 B.C.”
(The Brass Plates' and LDS Biblical Scholarship, pg. 5)