

1 NEPHI 8–10

John W. Welch Notes



1 Nephi 8

1 Nephi 8:1 — The Families Gather Seeds

Nephi reports that they gathered “all manner of seeds of every kind, both of grain of every kind, and also of the seeds of fruit of every kind.” (1 Nephi 8:1). In a way, as they are starting out on their own new beginning, these words hearken back to the beginnings in Genesis, where in the creation God provides every herb-bearing or fruit-yielding seed (see Genesis 1:29).

Lehi’s and Ishmael’s families knew that they were leaving their homeland and expected to be traveling for a long time. Wisely, they started putting together something of a seed bank, knowing that wherever they eventually settled, they would need to be able to plant seeds and harvest food to stay alive. This important endeavor likely occupied much of their time. How did they know where to find seed? Perhaps, they talked to caravanners passing by.

What kinds of seeds might there have been? From archaeobotany, it is possible to know a bit about what would grow in the area where they most likely camped (a river valley known as Wadi Tayyib al-Isim). Such foods as barley, dates, and olives were available there. They didn’t have a lot of food options compared to all that we have today. And they did not know yet where they would eventually end up. But, at a minimum, these seeds no doubt came in very handy for them as they continued to travel and camp for about a dozen years in various regions of the Arabian Peninsula.

I find it interesting that Nephi began this chapter about Lehi's vision of the Tree of Life by mentioning seeds. In the previous chapter, Lehi's party was rightly focused on ensuring their own posterity—or, in other words, their *seed*. And next they gather seed crop. You never know what will trigger a dream or a vision. The group had been caravanning now for several months. They would have been thinking a lot about seeds and about how each little seed, when planted and cared for, would grow into some kind of useful plant. Some seeds they gathered would eventually grow into wonderful trees that could bear fruit to keep them alive. At this time when the families were focused on seeds, plants, and trees, Lehi received a prophetic vision and was inspired with a deep understanding of the Tree of Life, the mission of Jesus Christ, the love of God, and eternal life.

We may also want to remember here Alma's discussion of the seed of faith in Alma 32. You plant the seed, you get faith as it grows, and you can know that it's a good seed, and so on. If you plant a mustard seed, you get a mustard tree. If you plant an olive seed, you get an olive tree. But if you plant the seed of faith in Christ and then nurture it as Alma describes in Alma 32, what does he say will grow up in you? "[I]t shall be a tree springing up unto eternal life" (v. 41)—in other words, a Tree of Life within you, bearing fruit "which is sweet above all that is sweet, and which is white above all that is white, yea, and pure above all that is pure" (v. 42). This is a reference to Lehi's vision, which evidently became a well-known revelation or religious symbol that endured throughout Nephite history (see 1 Nephi 8:11; 11:8; cf. 3 Nephi 19:25).

The symbolism of the Tree of Life in Lehi's dream is very powerful and attractive in our culture as well, inspiring artists from all over the world to capture its vivid imagery in paintings, sculptures, and other media. It is the most painted or sculpted single symbol and scene in the Book of Mormon.

Book of Mormon Central, "[Have the Valley of Lemuel and the River Laman Been Found?](#) (1 Nephi 2:6)," *KnoWhy* 286 (March 13, 2017).

"Fruits and grains are found growing naturally at Wadi Tayyib al-Isim (see 1 Nephi 8:1), and the wadi's sheer granite walls rising about 2000 ft. are among the most impressive in the region, easily invoking Lehi's description, 'firm and steadfast, and immovable' (1 Nephi 2:10). Most significantly, there was a small stream running through the wadi, and return visits made at various times of the year confirmed that water flowed in the stream throughout the year."



Figure 1 Tree of Life by Hannah Butler.

1 Nephi 8:6–7 — Lehi Follows the Angel

The greatest lesson we can learn from Lehi’s interaction with the angel is to trust the Lord. We need to acknowledge the Lord and trust in what He says. That’s all part of the greatest commandment—to love the Lord and trust in Him.

How many times do the words “invitation” or “invite” show up in the Book of Mormon? When Lehi stated that the Spirit *bade* me to follow him, it was an invitation. We don’t use the words “bade,” “bid,” or “beckon” very often. Was this beckoning of the Spirit a commandment? I believe that, in essence, it was. I think, in Lehi’s mind, he understood it as a commandment and

that he obediently followed. It helps to know that the Lord presents us with options and requests. However, the invitation may be the kind of option that you don’t want to turn down (truly an offer you can’t refuse).

To say that the Lord *commands* carries a lot of weight in the English language. However, I am not sure that in Lehi and in Nephi’s language they would have understood it quite that way. They had the word *mitzvah*. A *mitzvah* is a commandment, but when it says “thou shalt not kill,” the Hebrew reads more like “don’t kill,” “no killing.” The meaning is almost, “please don’t kill.” Yes, the words of the Lord are couched in an imperative form, but it is a negative. Similarly, in German, the expressions “nicht rauchen,” or “rauchen Sie nicht” mean “do not smoke, you had better not,” and you always need to look at the context of such statements to see how these invitations are being extended, what is immediately happening, and how will things move forward. In Lehi’s case, the Spirit “bade” him to follow. Lehi realized that there must be a choice in such matters, and that there was something more going on here than an order or command and the assumption that everybody *must* blindly follow.

Remember that the texture of the relationship between God and Lehi was very warm. Even though there would be undesirable consequences if Lehi didn’t follow the bidding

of the Lord, His gentle commands were all grounded in a loving relationship. After all, the tree that the Spirit is bidding Lehi to approach is a representation of the Love of God.

Book of Mormon Central, "[Why Were Lehi and Nephi Guided by Angelic Escorts in Their Visions?](#) (1 Nephi 11:11)," *KnoWhy* 492 (December 11, 2018).

"One feature common to [apocalyptic visions], both Jewish and Christian, is the presence of a heavenly being who guides the recipient of a revelation through a visionary experience and interprets or clarifies what is being revealed. ... Angelic escorts appear in the visions of Lehi, Nephi, and their contemporaries because in those days the subjects of these revelations were not already familiar and self-evidently recognized even by the prophet"

1 Nephi 8:10 — World Views of the Tree of Life

Just about every culture and every religion recognizes, in some way, the importance of the Tree of Life. One of the best sources on this topic is a book called [The Tree of Life: From Eden to Eternity](#). The widespread presence of Tree of Life imagery may be the result of a distant collective memory of the Garden of Eden and Adam and Eve's choice to partake of the fruit of knowledge of good and evil and their subsequent banishment from Eden and from the Tree of Life.

It also seems to be a universal cultural phenomenon that people create and recognize life-giving metaphors in relation to trees and the fruit of trees. The Tree of Life is a pervasive symbol of permanence, growth, fruitfulness, shade, and shelter. Furthermore, many trees lose their leaves in winter but come back to life again in the spring, which has led to them being seen as a symbol of death and resurrection.

In the Nag Hammadi Gnostic literature, in a text called [On the Origin of the World](#), we run across a description of the Tree of Life. Margaret Barker, a Methodist scholar of ancient temple symbolism and ceremony, was excited to read this early Gnostic Christian text, which says that the Tree of Life was of "immense height, coloured like the sun, with beautiful branches, leaves like a cypress and fruit like bunches of white grapes" (Margaret Barker, *The Great High Priest: The Temple Roots of Christian Liturgy* (New York, NY: T & T Clark, 2003), 244; citing CG II.5.110). Early Christians believed that people could obtain purity, light, and powers over evil beings and destruction by approaching and eating the fruit of the Tree of Life.

The Ways of Life and Death

The Visionary Perception of Lehi and Nephi (1 Nephi 8; 11–15; 2 Nephi 31:17–32:5)

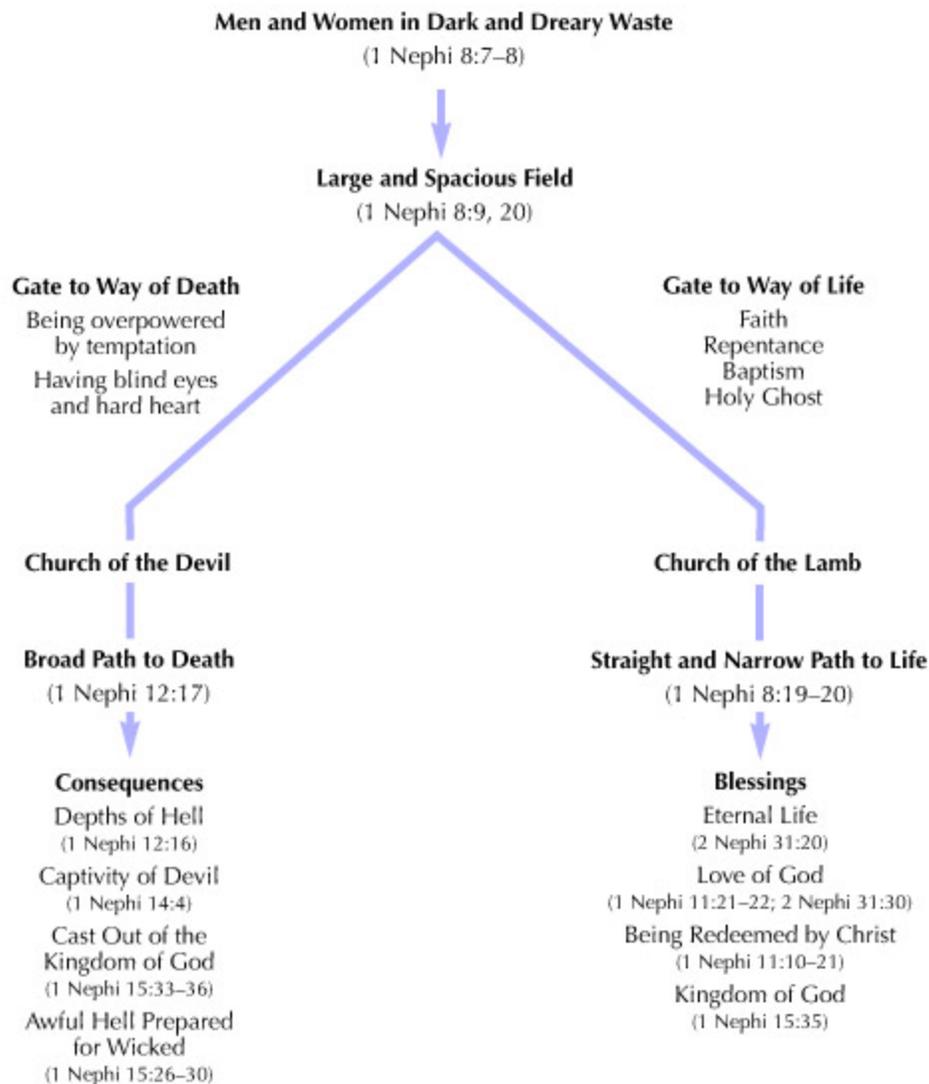


Figure 2 Welch, John W., and Greg Welch. *The Ways of Life and Death: The Visionary Perception of Lehi and Nephi*. Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1999.

In the very first psalm in the book of Psalms an interesting polarity is found. Psalm 1:1–3 states, “Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water *For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish.*” Here in the Psalms, we find one of the strongest early representations of what can be called “The Doctrine of the Two Ways,” or “The Ways of Life and Death.” (See Noel B. Reynolds, “[The Ancient Doctrine of the Two Ways](#),” *BYU Studies Quarterly* 56, no. 3 (2017): 49–78.)

Lehi’s dream, which also emphasizes this theme of divergent paths, can be seen as a spiritual fountainhead that influences later Book of Mormon thought. In succession, prophets such as Jacob, Abinadi, Alma the Elder and the Younger, and Mormon, draw heavily upon the imagery of living waters, which as Nephi explains (1 Nephi 11:25), is connected to the symbolism of the Tree of Life. (See Mack C. Stirling, “[The Way of Life and the Way of Death in the Book of Mormon](#),” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 6 no. 2 (1997): 180–186). Lehi emphasized how blessed people are who will keep the law and the commandments, following the straight and narrow path to eternal life (See Figure 2). Seeing in his dream a complex scene of a tree planted in a garden next to a river, Lehi would have been reminded of powerful images coming from several religious and cultural directions.

Interestingly, when Alma the Younger uses the image of the “seed” in Alma 32, he assumes that his poor Zoramite audience is familiar with the basic concept of a tree being planted by a river of water. Notice that Alma explains that when you plant the seed which he wants you to plant in your heart, you’re not supposed to plant just any random seed. You must plant the seed of a basic belief in Christ—that He will be the Son of God, that He will come to redeem His people, that He will suffer and die to atone for their sins, that there will be a resurrection, and that you will be judged according to your works (Alma 33:22). Alma calls this set of beliefs “the word” or the seed, that if “ye shall plant” in your heart (Alma 33:23), it will grow in you unto “a tree springing up in you unto everlasting life,” becoming a tree in you bearing precious fruit that is white above all that is white and sweet above all that is sweet (Alma 32:42).

Thus, the message of Alma 32, which is talking all about faith and the seed of faith, builds upon Lehi’s dream of the Tree of Life. Alma’s message involves going forward with keeping the commandments, doing God’s bidding, and being diligent in cultivating, caring for, and protecting this tender plant of faith so that you yourself will become, in effect, a Tree of eternal Life in the garden of God’s paradisiacal glory.

Three Trees

in the Book of Mormon

Zenos's Olive Tree

The tame olive tree symbolizes the house of Israel as a whole. Groups or individuals are branches or leaves on this tree.

Collectively speaking, the Lord does all he can to save his vineyard and will redeem the house of Israel after grafting, or gathering, the branches of Israel together in the last days.

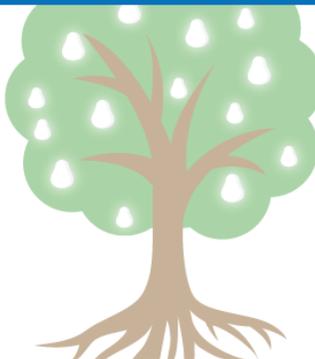


Jacob 5
The House of Israel
Collective Salvation

Lehi's Tree of Life

When Lehi was physically separated from the house of Israel, and knowing that salvation was not to be found in Jerusalem in his day, the focus of his view of salvation shifted.

Instead of focusing on collective salvation, he invited individuals to the Tree of Life. The fruit of the Tree of Life is Christ's Atonement, which leads to individual salvation.



1 Nephi 8, 11
The Love of God
Blessedness

Alma's Tree of Righteousness

In Alma's pluralistic society, salvation was portrayed even more as a matter of individual choice.

Alma's tree symbolizes the personal righteousness that grows inside each individual who plants Christ's Atonement and God's Love in his or her heart.



Alma 5, 32
Personal
Righteousness
And Testimony

Figure 3 Welch, John W., and Greg Welch. *Three Trees in the Book of Mormon* In *Charting the Book of Mormon*. Provo, UT: Book of Mormon Central, 1999.

Thus, the symbolic meaning of the great cosmic tree has migrated from being a national symbol in Zenos’s allegory in Jacob 5, to becoming a symbol of choice here in Lehi’s dream as he and his family face an either-or choice, and finally to being a representation of inward fruitful righteousness and personal testimony in Alma 32. The image of the tree of life bears a lot of weight and yields fruit in many ways (See Figure 3).

Book of Mormon Central, “[Why We Still Have to Cling to the Iron Rod Even Though the Path is Strait](#) (1 Nephi 8:13–14),” *KnoWhy* 402 (January 25, 2018).

“The image of the people struggling uphill towards the tree of life is a fitting symbol for life on earth. At times, life may feel like an uphill climb, a desperate attempt to overcome the effects of the Fall and return to the Eden from which we have been cast out.”

Book of Mormon Central, “[What Fruit is White?](#) (1 Nephi 8:11),” *KnoWhy* 10 (January 13, 2016).

“The Book of Mormon’s description of white fruit adorning the Tree of Life may ... be seen as a symbol of something holy and sacred that should be freely picked and gladly eaten by all people who seek righteousness and eternal life.”

1 Nephi 8:11 – What Does it Mean to Partake of Something?

Lehi partook of the fruit of the tree. Linguistically, what does the word “partake” mean? If you *partake*, you become a participant, not just a taker of some kind. The word “partake” comes from the Latin *particeps*, meaning “participant,” and thus has a stronger meaning than just eating or taking a piece or a part of something. When you *partake* of something—as when you partake of the sacrament—you become a participant. It becomes part of you, and you become part of it yourself.

Mark D. Ogletree, “[‘That My Family Should Partake’](#),” *Religious Educator* 17, no. 1 (2016).

“Remember Lehi’s encounter with the tree of life? As soon as he partook of the fruit, his deepest desire was that his ‘family should partake of it also’ (1 Nephi 8:12). Lehi’s desire wasn’t to share his initial joy with neighbors or friends, or even fellow Saints. Foremost on his mind was his family; his desires were riveted on sharing his gospel knowledge with those he loved the most.” (p. 95)

1 Nephi 8:11 – Other Tree of Life Imagery

What other imagery could be likened to the brilliant whiteness of the fruit that Lehi saw in his vision? Lights, of course, are often white and bright. In the Holy Place of the tabernacle of Moses and later in the temple of Jerusalem stood a seven-branched candelabra or lampstand. It was lit not by wax candles but by oil lamps. It was the main

source of light in the tabernacle tent and the temple edifice. By standing back and looking at that seven-branched menorah or candelabra all lit up, one could make out the image of a tree—the world tree—with light that was bright, white, and beautiful. Margaret Barker (the Methodist scholar of ancient temple symbolism and ceremony, mentioned in the discussion under 1 Nephi 8:10, above) writes about the candelabra representing the Tree of Life. It is through the oil of sacred lamps that we can let our light shine in such a way that when people see our good works they will glorify, not us, but our Father who is in Heaven.

Kevin Christensen, "[The Temple, the Monarchy, and Wisdom: Lehi's World and the Scholarship of Margaret Barker](#)," in *Glimpses of Lehi's Jerusalem*, ed. John W. Welch, David Rolph Seely, and Jo Ann H. Seely (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2004), 449–522.

1 Nephi 8:13–18 — Lehi Beckons His Family to Partake of the Fruit of the Tree of Life

In his dream, Lehi looked around and saw his family. What were they doing? They were searching. Lehi observed that it looked like they were lost. As a good father, what did Lehi instinctively do? He beckoned them by calling out with a loud voice. Notice that Lehi did not go and get them. Even though they were confused and lost, he still required them to come to him and the tree. He beckoned; he did not force them to come. Sariah, Sam, and Nephi chose to follow the path and partake of the tree. He could not make Laman and Lemuel come to the tree, and they chose not to do so. But Lehi was there. He invited, and he did it with a loud, clear voice so they would not miss it.

If you or someone you love is lost, it is not the end of the story. Even those who have wandered off will be brought to the tree or given opportunities in the next life. The Lord continues to work with people as they exercise their agency, and He continues to beckon and do all He possibly can to try to lead them back on the righteous path of happiness. Brigham Young once said, "How long will this missionary work go on?" His answer was, "It will go on in the next life and it will continue and it will go on and on until every soul that possibly can be saved has been saved, and we are not going to be finished until we have reached that point."

Noel B. Reynolds, "[How 'Come unto Me' Fits into the Nephite Gospel](#)," *Religious Educator* 18, no. 2 (2017): 14–29.

"Returning to the metaphor of the gospel as the path or the way that leads to eternal life, with repentance and baptism providing the gate into that path, the invitation to *come unto me* appears to be addressed to those who have entered the path already as encouragement to stay on it or return to it—to follow the Spirit

that leads them back to the Lord, day by day, sanctifying them in the process.”
(p. 28)

1 Nephi 8:19 – What is Significant about an Iron Rod?

I was with Margaret Barker in Washington, DC for the commemoration at the Library of Congress of the bicentennial of the birth of Joseph Smith. The night before she was going to give her [talk](#), she was rereading 1 Nephi 8, and when she noticed the reference there to “an iron rod,” she thought of the Septuagint Greek translation of Psalm 2:9. The King James Version of Psalm 2:9, following the Hebrew, states that the king will *beat* or break his people with a rod of iron. But, one might well wonder, is this really what a good king would do to his people? Maybe, if he wanted to punish or reprimand them. But in this instance, the ancient Greek version of Psalm 2:9 reads, “He will *lead* his people with a *rod of iron*.” In the revelation given to Lehi, it is the iron rod that will lead us to the Tree of Life, which symbolizes the begotten Son, the King, and the Anointed One, mentioned in Psalm 2:2, 7. Indeed, for Lehi, the rod leads us to Him.

It is good that the narrow path has a rod of iron that can lead us, step by step, in the right direction. Along the way, we get rewards—we receive benefits. As you’re holding onto the rod, with the mist of darkness and the confusion all around, you can feel the stability of the rod. That’s a reward that helps you know that you are still on the right path. That kind of reinforcement applies not only to first-time investigators, but it still applies in my life and I assume it does so in yours as well.

Book of Mormon Central, “[How Are Rod and Sword Connected to the Word of God?](#) (1 Nephi 11:25),” *KnoWhy* 427 (April 24, 2018).

“In Nephi’s vision, the iron rod seems to function much like a shepherd’s staff—leading people to the Tree of Life just as a shepherd would use a ‘rod’ (Psalm 23:4) to lead his sheep to ‘green pastures’ and ‘still waters’ (v. 2). However, Nephi later quoted Isaiah’s prophecy that the Lord ‘shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked’ (2 Nephi 30:9; cf. Isaiah 11:4). Thus, the rod is used both as a symbol of loving guidance and of divine punishment in the Book of Mormon.”

Harold B. Lee, “[The Iron Rod](#),” *Ensign*, June 1971, online at churchofjesuschrist.org.

“If there is any one thing most needed in this time of tumult and frustration, when men and women and youth and young adults are desperately seeking for answers to the problems which afflict mankind, it is an ‘iron rod’ as a safe guide along the straight path on the way to eternal life, amidst the strange and devious

roadways that would eventually lead to destruction and to the ruin of all that is ‘virtuous, lovely, or of good report’.”

1 Nephi 8:21 — Lehi Sees Multitudes of People Making Different Choices

The type of vision Lehi saw can be classified as an *archetypal vision*. The vision touches some of the basic principles that tell us who we are in this world, what kind of conditions we live in, and the choices we have to make. Sometimes we make mistakes. Nevertheless, the Lord is there for us, and He knows us inside and out. He has gone through everything that we ever will have to go through, and so He understands what we have done and why we chose to do wrong. In the process of repentance, when we make our commitment to Him that we are so, so sorry for what we have done, He helps us get over it, so that we can go forward and become whole again. I think Lehi understood that change is always possible and that is why he was so willing, to the very end of his life, to hold out hope that Laman and Lemuel would repent.

1 Nephi 8:24 — What Does it Mean to “Press” Forward?

The people who hold onto the iron rod don’t just amble along the path. They are *pressing forward*. Think of the hymn “Press Forward, Saints.” We kind of let that phrase glide past us. It’s got a nice, lyrical ring to it. However, in order to “press” forward, there must be something pushing back against you, while you are *pressing* with determination and strength against it—whatever it may be that is holding or keeping you back.

1 Nephi 8:30 — Those Who Partake of the Fruit and Stay

In verse 30, we learn of a third group of people who were not ashamed. They were the only ones who managed to stay at the tree and continue to partake of the fruit. What did they do that was different from the others? “They did press their way forward, continually holding fast to the rod of iron.” They did not let go of the rod. I suppose that they were moving along by putting one hand over the other, not letting go for a minute—continually holding to the rod.

Moreover, when they finally made it to the tree, these people fell down. Why? Out of gratitude. That’s why. They actually fell down before they had even eaten the fruit. And so, there may be several other reasons why someone in this situation would fall down. They could be humbling themselves. “To fall down” in the ancient world meant literally “to bow down.” When someone came into the presence of a powerful person, he would prostrate himself on the ground in front of greatness. You see this in the Egyptian depictions of a person entering into the presence of pharaoh or one of the gods. In bowing down, the person did not just bow his head; he bowed his whole body and fell to the ground.

In the Beatitudes, when it says “blessed are the poor in spirit,” the phrasing can be understood as saying, “blessed are they who bow down themselves to the earth.” They are brought down and humbled. Maybe the people reaching the tree fell down for reasons of paying tribute or giving honor. Maybe they fell down out of exhaustion. They had completed a hard, long journey. Perhaps, they were overwhelmed by the entire experience at the tree and fell down for that reason.

Whatever the reason, their gratitude and humility made them different from the others who simply partook and then wandered off. These were the people who did not let it affect them when they looked around and saw other people mocking, ridiculing and scorning them. They did not pay any attention to the comments of other people in the great and spacious building. They had their testimonies. They were firm. And they were grateful to God.

Book of Mormon Central, “[Why Did the People Fall Down at the Feet of Jesus?](#) (3 Nephi 11:17),” *KnoWhy* 202 (October 5, 2016).

“Thus by falling to the ground, those who worshiped Christ at Bountiful ritually signified that their bodies were created from the dust of the earth, that they were mortal and fallen, and that they were willingly humbling themselves in the presence of their Creator.”

1 Nephi 8:37–38 — Lehi Pleads with Laman and Lemuel

In the vision, Lehi pleads with Laman and Lemuel to keep the commandments. What does it mean to “keep” the commandments? One obvious definition would be to “obey.” But, what do you *do* when you *keep* something? You hold onto it. You treasure it. You can keep something when you protect it. You have to protect the commandments. In all these senses, we have to *keep* the commandments.

In ancient languages, the word “keep” often means to protect or to guard. You have to *guard* the commandments. You have to guard them for your own good, but you also have to guard them so that they do not slip into some kind of misunderstanding or errors in the way they are applied. I think after Nephi had done what he did to get the plates, he wanted to keep them. He did not want to lose those plates. And so, keeping the commandments means not only obeying them, but keeping them and preserving them and passing them on to the next generation.

Now what about our phrase “keeping at it?” Lehi’s dream helps you see that he was *keeping at* the commandments. This is not something you do once in your life. And, what about that iron rod? There was one group—the third group—that managed to get all the way to the tree. But what did they do? They did *cling* to the rod. I suppose they were

going hand over hand as they gripped the rod. They didn't let go with one hand in order to keep moving ahead. They kept in direct and constant contact with it.

There were some who were wandering in the darkness and, somehow, they bumped into the iron rod. They continued on the path and they got to the tree—this is the second group. We all pray and hope that we will cross the straight and narrow path as often as possible. Well, this second group looked around and felt ashamed. So, off they went. They did not keep clinging to the rod. They did not *keep* holding to it. *Tenacity* is an important part of our *keeping* the commandments.

Lehi clearly believed with all his heart that Laman and Lemuel had the opportunity to repent. Even though, at this point, Laman and Lemuel had rejected the tree and had rejected the path, Lehi did not believe that this was their fate. He still, with the tender pleadings of a loving father, continued to entreat them to come to the tree.

Finally, at a certain point, Lehi stopped talking. Maybe they had heard enough. That is a good parenting lesson as well.

Louis Midgley, "[To Remember and Keep: On the Book of Mormon as an Ancient Book](#)," in *The Disciple as Scholar: Essays on Scripture and the Ancient World in Honor of Richard Lloyd Anderson*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks, Donald W. Parry, and Andrew H. Hedges (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2000), 95–137.

"The Book of Mormon links remembrance with covenants and their renewals. Remembering means to keep the terms of the covenant between God and his people; it is faithful response to God's commandments. At the same time, strictly keeping the commandments leads to remembering. Thus ... [l]ike the Hebrew Bible, the Book of Mormon uses the expressions *keep* and *remember* interchangeably."

1 Nephi 9

1 Nephi 9:3–6 — For a Wise Purpose (see also Words of Mormon 1:6–7)

To fully understand the impact of these passages, one must be acquainted with how the Book of Mormon was translated by Joseph Smith. At what point in the translation process were the Small Plates of Nephi translated? At the end, the very end. After Joseph Smith completed the translation of the rest of the Book of Mormon, he found these plates (the Small Plates of Nephi) and translated them (See Figure 4).

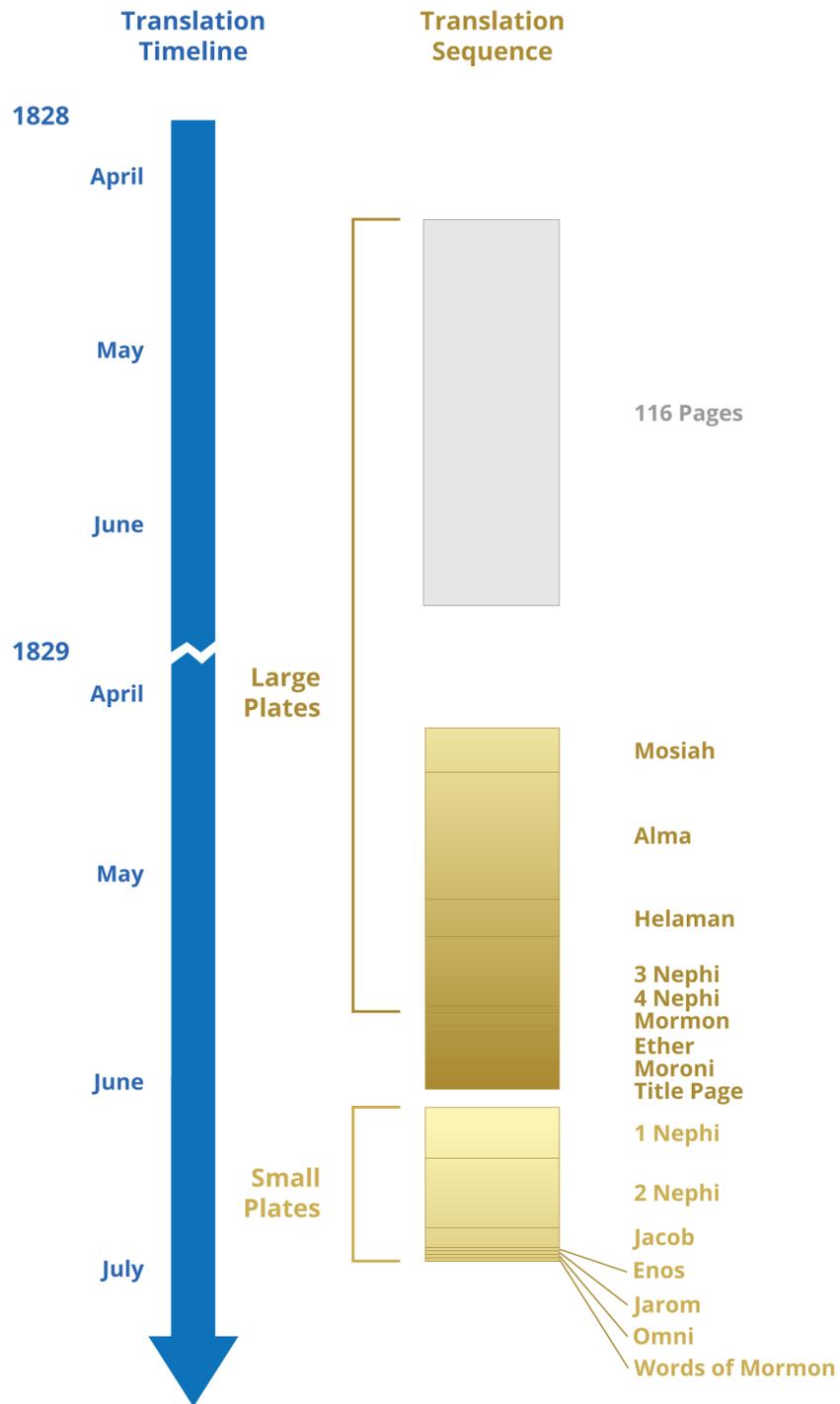


Figure 4 This chart depicts how after the 116 pages were lost, Joseph Smith translated from Mosiah to Moroni before returning to translate the small plates. Image by Book of Mormon Central.

Put yourself in the position of Joseph Smith. The first 116 pages of the Book of Mormon were lost and Joseph was devastated that he allowed that to happen. For a period of time, his gift to translate was taken away from him. Finally, Joseph was forgiven, but he was instructed to not go back and retranslate the 116 pages that had been lost. He was to start translating where he had left off when the translation process had been disrupted—which was early in the book of Mosiah. That is where Joseph Smith resumed the translation process. So, think about this: the whole time Joseph Smith was translating from Mosiah to Moroni, he was probably thinking about all the effort that Mormon had put into abridging the book of Lehi in the first part of the record and regretting that those who would read the Book of Mormon in modern times would not have those words of Lehi.

Imagine the joy that Joseph Smith felt when he finally got to the end of the plates and he read Mormon's words saying: "Hey, I am appending this record here. I do not know quite why, but the Spirit is whispering for me to do it."

We talk about God, His omniscience and all His knowledge. This very statement is made in Words of Mormon 1:6–7. God knew fourteen hundred years in advance that those 116 pages of manuscript would be lost. Maybe cutting his editorial teeth on that part of the record had served as a means for Mormon to perfect his editing style. Perhaps by the time he got to Mosiah, Mormon was doing really well with this task.

By having Nephi's own words, Mormon knew that we would have the benefit of hearing Nephi's voice at the beginning of the Small Plates, as what would have been a second witness to the words of Lehi. Nephi's words are beautiful. As we read the record of Nephi, we become aware that this was not a one-time journal that he was keeping. Nephi was writing other records and was instructed by the Lord to rewrite things. What we have in 1 Nephi is his final revision of several records. The record we have is something that Nephi labored over, and he got things beautifully and wonderfully correct. I am grateful to him for that, and in the end, it is a blessing from the Lord that we have it this way.

What about Mormon himself? Are you grateful to Mormon for what he did? Here was a young, 16-year-old general who was called to lead his people. He was able to look back on a civilization that he was very proud of. He was a long inheritor of a great tradition which he knew was going down. He was well aware of the prophecies as well as the spirit of the time and yet, in spite of everything he could do, he did not throw in the towel. He gave it his best shot. Mormon tells us that the people living in his time would not listen, but that he was going to leave a record that would influence the world

hundreds and thousands of years hence. What a courageous spirit it took for him to respond to challenges in that way.

Book of Mormon Central, "[How Does the 'Mosiah-First' Translation Sequence Strengthen Faith?](#) (Words of Mormon 1:5)," *KnoWhy* 503 (February 22, 2019).

"Besides making clear sense of the manuscript and historical data, this understanding of the translation sequence [Mosiah–Words of Mormon] also provides fascinating and somewhat unexpected evidence for the Book of Mormon's authenticity. This is because many passages from Mormon's abridgment of the Large Plates, as well as from the books of Mormon, Ether and Moroni, refer *back* to content from the Small Plates, even though the Small Plates hadn't even been translated yet!"

Book of Mormon Central, "[What Was on the Lost 116 Pages?](#) (1 Nephi 9:5)," *KnoWhy* 452 (July 24, 2018).

"Whatever challenges or setbacks we may suffer in our personal lives, we can ... trust that the Lord can compensate for our weaknesses and limitations. Sometimes, like Joseph Smith and Martin Harris, we may feel that 'all is lost.' Yet through the infinite power of Christ's Atonement, all that seems lost can be ultimately and miraculously restored."

1 Nephi 10

1 Nephi 10:4–10 — Lehi Prophecies of a Messiah

There is a prophecy in Deuteronomy 18:18 that the Lord would send another prophet like unto Moses, and to him shall ye listen. The book of Deuteronomy had been rediscovered and had become very influential when Lehi was a young man, probably still in his twenties. Lehi's own visions and prophecies about the coming of a divine figure even greater than Moses was corroborated by, and perhaps influenced by, this earlier writing in Deuteronomy. Lehi explained that a great number of prophets had testified that the Lord had promised to send a Messiah, and as they and Lehi had testified, that Messiah would be the Savior whom Lehi had seen in vision.

For insights regarding Lehi speaking of Jesus being baptized at Bethabara (1 Nephi 10:9–10), see:

Book of Mormon Central, "[Video: The special symbolism behind the place where Jesus Christ was baptized](#)," online at bookofmormoncentral.org.

On Nephi's desire to see, hear, and know the meaning of his father's visions (1 Nephi 10:17), watch for the upcoming discussion of the interpretive relationship between 1 Nephi 11–14 and 1 Nephi 8. In this regard, see:

Jared M. Halverson, "[Lehi's Dream and Nephi's Vision as Apocalyptic Literature](#)," in *The Things Which My Father Saw: Approaches to Lehi's Dream and Nephi's Vision* (2011 Sperry Symposium), ed. Daniel L. Belnap, Gaye Strathearn, and Stanley A. Johnson (Salt Lake City and Provo, UT: Deseret Book and Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2011), 53–69.

"A tree and a river, a building and a rod, mists of darkness and wandering multitudes—each element leaves inquisitive readers with a desire that echoes Nephi's—to 'know the interpretation thereof' (1 Nephi 11:11)."