

1 NEPHI

The overall structure of 1 Nephi is chiasmic—Lehi’s ministry followed by travels in the wilderness, visions, further travels, and Nephi’s teaching ministry as exhibited in his exposition of Isaiah. Note that the *Apocalypse of Nephi* (11–14) dominates the account of the book, focusing on the vision of the Condescension with its interpretive centerpiece that shows that Christ is the Love of God, the Tree of Life and the Fountain of Living Waters (11:21–25). *Isaiah is quoted* towards the end and then cited in the final verse as the authority for the contents of the book.

Overview

- *Superscription*
- Lehi’s Jerusalem Ministry (1:4–20)
 - Journey Into the Wilderness (2:1–7:22)
 - Lehi’s Dream and Prophecy (8:1–10:22)
 - The Apocalypse of Nephi (11:1–15:19)
 - The Journey Resumed (16:1–18:25)
- Nephi Quotes and Interprets Isaiah (19:1–22:28)
- *Witnesses of the Brass Plates (esp. Isaiah), Lehi, and Nephi (22:29–31)*

Detailed View

SUPERSCRIPTION (Nephi writes an explanatory introduction to his record for his readers):
“THE FIRST BOOK OF NEPHI. HIS REIGN AND MINISTRY. An account of Lehi and his wife Sariah, and his four sons, being called, (beginning at the eldest) Laman, Lemuel, Sam, and Nephi. The Lord warns Lehi to depart out of the land of Jerusalem, because he prophesieth unto the people concerning their iniquity and they seek to destroy his life. He taketh three days’ journey into the wilderness with his family. Nephi taketh his brethren and returneth to the land of Jerusalem after the record of the Jews. The account of their sufferings. They take the daughters of Ishmael to wife. They take their families and depart into the wilderness. Their sufferings and afflictions in the wilderness. The course of their travels. They come to the large waters. Nephi’s brethren rebel against him. He confoundeth them, and buildeth a ship. They call the name of the place Bountiful. They cross the large waters into the promised land, and so forth. This is according to the account of Nephi; or in other words, I, Nephi, wrote this record.”

[THE RECORD OF NEPHI]

Nephi Begins His Record (1:1–3) Nephi

Lehi’s Jerusalem Ministry (1:4–20) Nephi writes a narrative description of his father’s call, visions, and preaching, interrupted by an editorial digression on his record keeping practices < original source: Record of Lehi

- Lehi's Visions and Call (1:4–15)
- Nephi Abridges the Book of Lehi (1:16–17) Nephi's First Editorial Digression for His Readers Explaining His Record Keeping Practices
- Lehi Prophecies to the Jews (1:18–20a)
- Nephi's Reflection (1:20b)

Journey Into the Wilderness (2:1–7:22)

- Lehi Takes His Family into the Wilderness (2:1–24) Nephi writes a narrative of their departure from Jerusalem < original sources: Record of Lehi and Nephi's own recollections and records
 - Flight from Jerusalem: Warned by the Spirit, Lehi Leads His Family to a Desert Site (2:1–7)
 - Laman and Lemuel's Murmurings (2:8–15)
 - Nephi's Faithfulness and Blessing (2:16–24)
- The Brothers Return for the Brass Plates (3:1–4:38) Nephi, narrative continues punctuated with speeches and quotations
 - Commandment to Retrieve the Brass Plates Revealed (3:1–5)
 - Nephi's Willingness (3:6–8)
 - First Attempt with Laban (3:9–14)
 - Second Attempt (3:14–31)
 - Nephi's Successful Attempt (4:1–29)
 - The Slaying of Laban (4:7–19)
 - Zoram Joins the Expedition (4:30–38)
- Lehi's Family Reunited (5:1–9) Nephi, narrative with speeches and quotations
 - Sariah's Murmuring and Return to Faith (5:1–8)
 - Sariah's Testimony (5:8)
 - Rejoicing and Sacrifices of Thanksgiving (5:9)
- The Contents of the Brass Plates (5:10–22)
- Nephi's Intents for the Record (6:1–6) Nephi's second editorial digression for his readers explaining his record keeping practices
- Ishmael's Family Joins the Expedition (7:1–22) Nephi, narrative with speeches and quotations
 - Finding Favor with Ishmael (7:1–5)
 - Rebellion in the Wilderness (7:6–22)
 - Nephi Exhorts His Brothers (7:6–15)
 - Nephi Bound, Delivered, and Reconciled (7:16–22)

Bridge: "And it came to pass that we gathered together all manner of seeds of every kind . . ." (8:1) Sets up "horticulture motif" for the following vision

Lehi's Dream and Prophecy (8:1–10:22) Nephi recounted this, either from memory or more likely from his father's records (Book of Lehi) in his Small Plates narrative, for the descendants of Lehi and for all future readers. < Lehi described his visionary dream to his family

- The Tree of Life (8:2–20) Vision
 - Dark and Dreary Waste (8:2–8)

- The Tree and Its Fruit (8:9–12)
- The River (8:13)
- Reactions of Lehi’s Family (8:14–18)
- The Rod and the Path (8:19–20)
- The World and the Tree (8:21–35) Parable or comparative story
 - Mists of Darkness (8:21–23)
 - Shame (8:24–25)
 - Great and Spacious Building (8:26–28)
 - The Persistent Partake (8:29–30)
 - Many Lost (8:31–35)
- Lehi Pleads with His Family (8:36–38) Nephi’s narrative of his father’s exhortations to his children
- Nephi’s Two Sets of Plates (9:1–6) Nephi’s third editorial digression for his readers explaining his record keeping practices
- Lehi Prophecies of the Messiah and the House of Israel (10:1–16): sermon < copied or recalled by Nephi for his readers < Lehi’s sermon or exhortation intended to move and convince his family (material came to him originally as prophecy or revelation)
 - The destruction of Jerusalem (10:1–3)
 - The coming of the Messiah (10:4–6)
 - The mission of John the Baptist (10:7–10)
 - Christ’s death and resurrection (10:11)
 - Allegory of the Olive Tree Summarized: The Scattering and Gathering of Israel (10:12–16; see 1 Ne 15:12–20; Jacob 5)

Nephi’s Desire to Know for Himself (10:17–22) Personal account that moves to an written exhortation to his readers (as opposed to a sermon delivered orally)

- Principle: God the same yesterday, today, and forever (10:18)
- Addressing the reader: Nephi moves to an account of his vision (10:20–22)

The Apocalypse of Nephi (11–14) Nephi’s record of his interpretative vision of his father’s Tree of Life dream; shares many of the characteristics of an apocalypse, including panoramic depictions of world history given by a divine or otherworldly guide (compare to John’s Revelation)

- **Christ, the Tree of Life** (11:1–36)
 - Nephi and the Spirit of the Lord (11:1–12)
 - Pondering opens the door to revelation (11:1)
 - The Vision of the Tree (11:2–11)
 - The Coming of Jesus Christ in the Old World (11:12–33)
 - The Condescension of God the Father and the Son (11:12–20)
 - *Interpretive Centerpiece: Christ is the Love of God, the Tree of Life and the Fountain of Living Waters (11:21–25)*
 - The Condescension of God the Son (11:26–33)
 - The Rejection of the Apostles of the Lamb (11:34–36)
- **History of the Children of Lehi** (12:1–23)
 - The “Near History” of Lehi’s Descendants (before the advent of Christ, 12:1–3)

- The Coming of Jesus Christ in the New World (12:4–12; cf. 2 Nephi–3 Nephi 7)
 - Destructions at His Coming (12:4–5; cf. 3 Nephi 8–10)
 - Christ’s Ministry among the Nephites (12:6–10; cf. 3 Nephi 11–27)
 - Righteous Generations after Christ (12:11–12; cf. 4 Nephi)
- The “Far” History of Lehi’s Descendants (after the advent of Christ): The result of rejecting Christ—Nephi sees disbelief and war among Lehi’s descendants (12:13–23; cf. Mormon–Moroni)
 - *Interpretive Piece: The Great and Spacious Building—Pride—as the Cause of Their Fall (12:16–17)*
- **History of the Gentiles to the Restoration: The World Without Christ (13:1–42)**
 - The Great and Abominable Church (narrow, historical; 13:1–10)
 - The Gentiles Come to the Promised Land (13:10–19)
 - God’s Hand in the Discovery of the New World (13:12)
 - God’s Hand in Liberating the Gentiles (13:13–19)
 - The Word of the Lord Comes to the Gentiles (13:20–41)
 - The Record of the Jews (13:20–29)
 - Contents of the Record (13:20–25)
 - Plain and Precious Parts Removed (13:26–29)
 - Gentiles and the Seed of Israel, esp. Descendants of Lehi (13:30–34)
 - The Lehi Covenant (13:30b)
 - Record of Nephi’s People to Come unto the Gentiles (13:35–38)
 - Additional Records (13:39–41)
 - Lamb of God Shall Manifest Himself to All Nations (13:42)
- **History of the Last Days: Christ Comes Again to the New World (14:1–17)**
 - The Gentiles and God’s Great and Marvelous Work (14:1–8)
 - Gentiles Can Be Adopted into Israel (14:1–2)
 - Gentiles Must Repent (14:3–6)
 - The Choice: Peace and Life Eternal *–or–* Captivity of the Devil (14:7)
 - The Father’s Covenant with Israel (14:8)
 - The Great and Abominable Church (broad, typological; 14:9–17)
 - Only Two Churches (14:10)
 - The Church of the Devil Fights Against the Church of the Lamb (14:11–14)
 - The Great and Abominable Church Destroyed at the Return of Jesus Christ (14:15–17)
- **The Final Coming of Christ (14:18–30)**
 - The Other Apocalypse: the Mission of John the Revelator
- Nephi Teaches His Brothers (15:1–29) Nephi wrote this account, a narrative interrupted by quotations from his sermon, from memory or from his own records for his later readers
 - The Disputation over the Dream (15:1–11)
 - Nephi’s brothers dispute the meaning of Lehi’s dream (15:1–4)
 - Nephi preaches the necessity of inquiring of the Lord (15:5–11)
 - Nephi’s Teaching (15:12–20) Originally a sermon, Nephi recounts this largely in narrative format; his exhortation following his vision parallels Lehi’s sermon in chapter 10

- Nephi Explains the Allegory of the Olive Tree (15:12–20)
- Nephi Explains the Symbolism of the Tree of Life Vision (15:21–29)
- Nephi Explains the Justice of God: Judgment, Hell, and the Kingdom of God (15:30–36)

The Journey Resumed (16:1–18:25) Nephi wrote this narrative from his father’s records, his own records, and/or his recollections; the account includes illustrative stories of trials and lessons learned during their travel that Nephi intended to teach the reader valuable truths and principles

- Traveling for Eight Years through the Wilderness (16:1–17:4)
 - Reaction to Nephi’s Preaching in Chapter 15 (16:1–6) Narrative Transition Report
 - Daughters of Ishmael Marry (16:7–8)
 - Traversing the Wilderness with the Liahona (16:9–17)
 - the Broken Bow (16:18–32)
 - Death of Ishmael (16:33–39)
 - Rebellion and Repentance (16:37–39)
 - Traveling in Faith, Sustained by the Lord (17:1–4)
- The Land Bountiful (17:5–18:7) Narrative with Dramatic Scenes
 - Description of the Land (17:5–6)
 - Nephi Commanded to Build a Ship (17:7–16)
 - Nephi’s Brothers Refuse to Help (17:17–22)
 - Nephi Admonishes His Brothers (17:23–55)
 - Nephi Recounts History of Israel (17:23–47) Historical Paraphrase
 - Psalm on the Lord’s Relations with His People (17:35–40) Song or Poem
 - The “Shocking” Power of the Spirit of the Lord (17:48–55)
 - Building the Ship (18:1–6) returns to narrative
 - Jacob and Joseph Born (18:7) narrative report
- Sailing to the Promised Land (18:8–22) narrative with dramatic scenes
 - Setting forth (18:8)
 - Rebellion on the sea (18:9–21)
 - Nephi Bound (18:9–11)
 - Liahona ceases to work, storm arises (18:12–19)
 - Nephi’s lament over his parents’ sorrow (18:18) song or poem
 - Temporary repentance (18:20–21)
 - Nephi Guides Ship to the Promised Land (18:22)
- Arriving in the Promised Land (18:23–25)

Nephi’s Quotation and Interpretation of Isaiah (19:1–22:18) Prophecy “after the manner of the Jews” (poetic and highly symbolic) < Nephi quotes the written prophecies from the Brass plates for his brothers and then records them on the Small Plates for his eventual readers < originally directed towards the Kingdom of Judah in Isaiah’s day but with a view towards Israel in all ages

- Two Sets of Plates (19:1–7a) Nephi’s fourth editorial digression for his readers explaining his record keeping practices
- Setting the Stage for Isaiah: Prophecies of Christ (19:7b–21)
 - ***Clear Prophecies from the Brass Plates*** (19:7b–17 < Zenock, Neum, Zenos)

- Scattering a Result of the Rejection of Israel's God (19:7b–14)
 - The Passion, Crucifixion, and Burial of God of Israel (19:7b–10)
 - Visitations By His Voice and By Destructions (19:11–12)
 - Jews at Jerusalem to Be Scattered for Despising the Holy One of Israel (19:13–14)
- Gathering Results from Turning to the Holy One of Israel (19:15–17)
- **Nephi's Audience: He Writes These Things to All Israel (19:18–21)**
- Nephi's Quotation and Interpretation of Isaiah (19:22–22:18)
 - Introduction to Isaiah (19:22–24) Formula Quotation Introduction
 - ***Symbolic Prophecies from the Brass Plates (20:1–21:26)***
 - Isaiah 48: God and Israel poetic prophecy
 - God Loves Israel Despite Her Unworthiness (20:1–11)
 - » Israel Broke the Covenant (20:1–11)
 - » Israel Will Not Be Cast off for the Lord's "Name's Sake" (20:9–11)
 - God Proclaims the Redemption of Israel (20:12–22)
 - » Israel's God Can Save His People (20:12–17)
 - » God Will Save Repentant Israel as He Did in the Past (20:18–22)
 - Isaiah 49: God and the Servant poetic prophecy
 - The Suffering Servant of the Lord (21:1–4)
 - The Servant Will Gather Jacob (21:5–12)
 - The Song of Israel's Redeemer (21:13–21)
 - The Gentiles Will Aid the Gathering of Israel (21:22–23)
 - The Lord Will Deliver His People with Power (21:24–26)
 - **Nephi Interprets Isaiah (22:1–28)** Formula Quotation Explanation < Nephi's sermon to his brothers, eventually recorded on the Small Plates for his readers
 - Temporal and Spiritual Applications of the Scattering and Gathering of Israel (22:1–12)
 - The Fall of the Great and Abominable Church and the Destruction of All Wicked (22:13–16a)
 - The Preservation of the Righteous (22:16b–20)
 - The Messiah Will Overthrow the Wicked and Gather the Righteous (22:21–28)
- Conclusion of 1 Nephi: Lehi, Nephi, and the Brass Plates as Witnesses (22:29–31)
 - ***The Brass Plates (esp. the quoted Isaiah passages) support and are the authority for Lehi and Nephi's teaching***