



3. Nephi's Records, 1 Nephi Intro, Lehi in Jerusalem

“For the fulness of mine intent is that I may persuade men to come unto the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, and be saved. Wherefore, the things which are pleasing unto the world I do not write, but the things which are pleasing unto God and unto those who are not of the world.” (1 Nephi 6:4–5)

“Praise to the Lord, the Almighty” (Hymn 72)

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>1. Praise to the Lord, the Almighty,
the King of creation!
O my soul, praise him, for he is
thy health and salvation!
Join the great throng,
Psaltery, organ and song,
Sounding in glad adoration!</p> | <p>3. Praise to the Lord, who doth
prosper thy way and defend thee.
Surely his goodness and mercy
shall ever attend thee.
Ponder anew
What the Almighty can do,
Who with his love doth befriend
thee.</p> |
| <p>2. Praise to the Lord! Over all things
he gloriously reigneth.
Borne as on eagle wings, safely
his Saints he sustaineth.
Hast thou not seen
How all thou needest hath been
Granted in what he ordaineth?</p> | <p>4. Praise to the Lord! Oh, let all
that is in me adore him!
All that hath breath, join with
Abraham's seed to adore him!
Let the “amen”
Sum all our praises again,
Now as we worship before him</p> |

Large Plates of Nephi

“First Plates,” “Other Plates”

- Started soon after arriving in the promised land (1 Ne 19:1; c. 588 B.C.)
- Included a copy of [Lehi’s record](#), [his genealogy](#), [his prophecies](#), and [many of Nephi’s prophecies](#) (1 Nephi 6:1,19:1)
- Continued with a full account of [the secular history of Nephi and his people](#)
 - “Upon *the other plates* should be engraven an account of the reign of the kings, and the wars and contentions of my people . . . *the other plates* are for the more part of the reign of the kings and the wars and contentions of my people.” (1 Ne 9:4)
 - This part was largely **temporal**
- [Mormon’s abridgment of the Large Plates was on the Plates of Mormon received by Joseph Smith](#)
 - The first 116 pages of the translation, containing “[the Book of Lehi](#)” and [the first part of the Book of Mosiah](#), was lost by Martin Harris
 - Today includes [Mosiah—Mormon](#)

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Small Plates of Nephi

“These Plates”

- Started **thirty years** after Lehi’s family left Jerusalem (2 Ne 5:28-33; c. 570 B.C.)
- Began with [an abridgement of Lehi’s record](#) and then [proceeded with an account of Nephi’s life](#)
- Continued with [succeeding prophets through Amaleki](#)
- Content was **primarily spiritual**
 - Focused on the ministry (1 Ne 9:3), the “more sacred things” (1 Nephi 19:5), and accounts of preaching, revelation, and prophesying (Jacob 1:2-4)
- Joseph Smith translated this directly
 - presently constitutes **1 Nephi—Omni**

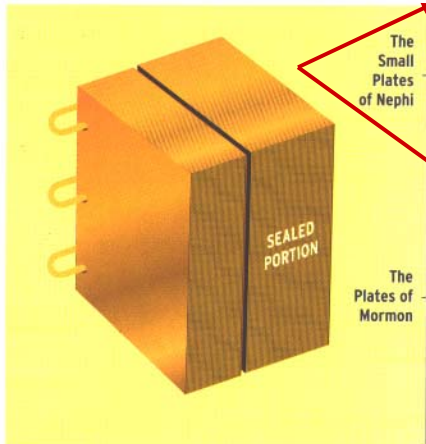
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Structure of the Book of Mormon

Book of Mormon plates delivered to Joseph Smith by the angel Moroni



The Small Plates of Nephi

The Plates of Mormon

Joseph Smith's translation of the plates—the Book of Mormon in its present form

Book of Lehi

- 1 Nephi
- 2 Nephi
- Jacob
- Enos
- Jarom
- Omni

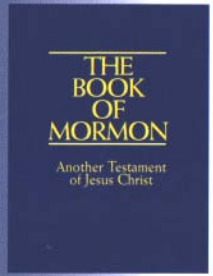
*Words of Mormon (Mormon's insert)

Book of Lehi (translated but lost)

- Mosiah
- Alma
- Helaman
- 3 Nephi
- 4 Nephi
- Mormon 1-7
- Mormon 8-9
- Ether
- Moroni
- Title Page

Moroni's additions to the Plates of Mormon

Sealed Portion
(not translated)



* It is unclear whether Mormon inscribed Words of Mormon in space remaining on the small plates of Nephi or on an additional plate or plates he inserted into his record.

From Book of Mormon Reference Companion, 17.

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.

- **Superscription** part of the text?
 - Nephi's own summary of the account!
- **"Reign and Ministry"** reflect the realization of the Lord's promise that he would be a **"ruler and teacher"** over his brethren (e.g., 1 Ne 2:22)
 - **Most details of his reign would have been on the Large Plates**
 - **1 Nephi was intended largely as a spiritual text**

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Historical Questions

Authorship

- Family of Nephi¹ (c. 615-544 B.C.)
 - Fourth son of Lehi¹ and Sariah
 - Elder brothers Laman, Lemuel, and Sam; some sisters
 - Lehi was a wealthy resident of Jerusalem shortly before its final capture by the Babylonians
 - “goodly parents” probably refers to social, economic, and educational status (see Millet & McConkie, *DCBM* 1:19)
 - We know nothing of his religious life or commitment before his vision and call in 1 Nephi 1!
 - Sariah is one of only six women named in the Book of Mormon [Sariah, Isabel, Abish; from Bible: Eve, Sarah, Mary]
- Nephi’s Conversion
 - **Not explicit until after the family has left Jerusalem (c. 600 B.C.; see 1 Nephi 3:16)**

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Historical Questions

When and Why Was 1 Nephi Written?

- As part of the Small Plates collection, 1 Nephi was written about 570 B.C.
 - Remember that the events of 1 Nephi are being recorded *long after-the-fact*, when Nephi understands the eventual results of his brothers’ rebelliousness and has experienced the warfare that arose between his descendants and the Lamanites
- Stated reasons for writing the record
 - “. . . 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” (1 Ne 1:1b)
 - Elsewhere we are told directly that the Lord commanded Nephi to write this record (e.g., 1 Ne 9:3; 1 Ne 19:3; 2 Ne 5:30-32)
- Dual Audience
 - His descendants
 - The Gentiles (here us, the future readers) who would receive the record

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Literary Questions

What Kind of Writing is This and What Is Its Purpose?

- “. . . a record in the language of my father, which consists of the **learning of the Jews** and **the language of the Egyptians.**” (1 Nephi 1:2)
 - Learning of the Jews included not only the language but **the scriptural and literary tradition** (sc. “prophecy after the manner of the Jews”)
 - Hebrew has a phonetic alphabet; **presumably more could be written in less space with Egyptian glyphs** (characters/symbols)
- A **historical narrative** organized chronologically
 - Interrupted by **dramatic episodes, personal reflections, editorial comments, dream and vision reports, psalms** (poetry of praise or reflection), and **sermons**
- Literary Aim or Purpose
 - “For the fulness of mine intent is that I may **persuade men to come unto the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, and be saved.**” (1 Nephi 6:4)

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Literary Questions

Structure of 1 Nephi

- Nephi's record on the Small Plates was divided into 2 books, 1 and 2 Nephi
 - Lehi's family arrives in the Promised Land in 1 Nephi 18:23 and Lehi dies in 2 Nephi 4:12
 - Why does he split them where he does?
- **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 (16:1–19:21)**
- **Nephi Quotes and Interprets Isaiah (19:22–22:18)**
- **“Chiastic” structure puts the Tree of Life dreams and visions in the center!**

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Theological Questions

Themes

- **Deliverance**
 - “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**.” (1 Ne 1:20b)
 - Physical or temporal deliverance is often a *type of spiritual deliverance*—coming unto God brings salvation
 - *TPP* (Title Page Purposes): great things the Lord has done, *a type of Christ’s salvation*
- **Revelation and Divine Guidance**
 - *TPP*: great things the Lord has done
- **Obedience and Consequent Blessing**
 - *TPP*: know the covenants of the Lord

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Lehi’s Jerusalem Ministry (1:4–20)

- Lehi’s Visions and Call (1:4–15, *vision report* and *call narrative*)
- Nephi abridges the Book of Lehi (1:16–17; Nephi’s *first editorial digression* for his readers explaining his record keeping practices)
 - *Note where he places them . . . Usually when he has just recorded, or is about to record, something important*
- Lehi prophesies to the Jews (1:18–20a, *Nephi’s summary narrative*)
 - Lehi’s record probably had the prophecies recorded complete
- Nephi’s *reflection* (1:20b)
 - “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**.”
 - Again stress the themes of 1 Nephi: *the Lord’s tender mercies* and *his ability to deliver his people*

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Lehi in Jerusalem







Historical Context of His Ministry

- “For it came to pass in the commencement of the first year of the reign of **Zedekiah**, king of Judah . . . there came many prophets, prophesying unto the people that they must repent, or the great city Jerusalem must be destroyed.” (1 Nephi 1:4)
 - Zedekiah had been installed as a puppet king by the Babylonians c. 597 B.C., taking the place of his nephew, King Jehoiachin (2 Kings 24)
 - He was one of a long string of **evil kings** of Judah (see next slide)
 - Many prophets—including **Jeremiah, Habakkuk, and Ezekiel**—preached that the Babylonians would finally destroy Jerusalem if the residents did not repent

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	Manasseh	(697-642)	Evil	
	Amon	(642-640)	Evil	Lehi born c. 640-635
	Josiah	(640-609)	Good	Nephi born c. 615
	Jehoahaz	(609-609)	Evil	
	Jehoiakim	(609-597)	Evil	
	Jehoiachin	(597-597)	Evil	
	Zedekiah	(597-587)	Evil	Book of Mormon opens

Slide courtesy of Brother Terry Szink

Josiah and the Deuteronomic Covenant

2 Kings 22:1–23:3

- During the righteous reign of **King Josiah**, a “book of the law” was discovered during a repair of the Temple (see 2 Kings 22:8–10)
 - 📖 Deuteronomy identifies self as “Book of Law” (Deut. 28:61; 29:21; 30:10; 31:26)
- Josiah and his advisors realized that they had not been keeping the covenant that Moses had Israel, as a group, make with the Lord (2 Kings 22:11–20)
- **Josiah instituted sweeping religious reforms**
 - 📖 Reforms enacted by Josiah similar to regulations set out in **Deuteronomy**
 - **Lehi was born about this time!**

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Theme of Deuteronomy

If the Children of Israel do good, they are blessed.
If they do evil, they will be cursed.

Deut. 28:1–14 Blessings

Deut. 28:14–68 Cursings

Theme of Book of Mormon

Inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments ye shall prosper in the land; but inasmuch as ye will not keep my commandments ye shall be cut off from my presence.

(2 Nephi 1:20; Jarom 1:9; Omni 1:6; Mosiah 1:7; Alma 9:13; 36:30; 37:13; 3 Nephi 5:22)

Lehi's Call (1:4–15)

Initial Exegetical Questions

- **Historical**
 - **Event:** Lehi responded to the preaching of prophets in sixth century Jerusalem; upon praying, he had his own powerful set of visions
 - **Sources:** Lehi kept his own record, where this and other aspects of his ministry were recorded in more detail. Nephi “abridged” this into his small plates, which Mormon placed with his own record
- **Literary**
 - Lehi’s account of his vision and dream are both **vision reports** and a **call story** very similar to other prophets in his era (and in others, too).
 - *Uses powerful and familiar images and symbols*
 - Naturally the account of Lehi’s call (1:4–15) falls at the beginning of the brief account of his ministry (1:4–20)
 - *Why is it so much longer and detailed than the summary of his public preaching (1:18–20a)?*
 - It falls at the beginning of the Book of First Nephi, forming the beginning of its chiasmic structure and balancing Nephi’s quotation of another great Jerusalem prophet, Isaiah (19:22–22:18)
- **Theological**
 - Establishes Lehi’s prophetic authority and the need for his family’s escape
 - Provides an interesting example of “praise in the midst of judgment (1:14)

Lehi's Call (1:4–15)

Vision Report and Call Story

- Call echoes those of Isaiah, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, **John the Revelator**, **Joseph Smith**
- Vision: “. . . as he prayed unto the Lord, there came a **pillar of fire** . . .” (1:6)
 - **Pillar of fire imagery:** glory of God, presence of Deity (e.g., Exodus, First Vision)
 - **Christ as the rock?**
- Dream: “. . . he was carried away in a vision, even that he saw the heavens open, and **he thought he saw God sitting upon his throne**, surrounded with numberless concourses of angels in the attitude of singing and praising their God.” (1:8)
- Witness: “. . . **he saw One descending out of the midst of heaven, and he beheld that his luster was above that of the sun at noon-day.**” (1:9)
 - Christ known anciently!
 - *TPP:* witness that **Jesus is the Christ**

Lehi's Psalm of Praise (1:14, poetry)

"And it came to pass that when my father had read and seen many great and marvelous things, he did exclaim many things unto the Lord; such as:

Great and marvelous are thy works, O Lord God Almighty!
 Thy throne is high in the heavens,
 and thy power, and goodness, and mercy
 are over all the inhabitants of the earth;
 and, because thou art merciful,
 thou wilt not suffer those who come unto thee
 that they shall perish!" (1:14)

- How did we get this quote?
- What does it teach about God and the function of praise?
- How did it affect Lehi's interpretation of the vision of destruction that preceded it?
- Is praise part of our "vocabulary of prayer?"

Lehi's Mission

- Commission: ". . . the first came and stood before my father, and gave unto him a book, and bade him that he should read" (1:11; cf. Ezekiel and John)
 - Cf. Ezek. 2:10, Rev. 5
- Lehi's message to Jerusalem
 - Preached to them of their wickedness (1:18)
 - Testified of the Messiah (1:19)
- Response: "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. . ."