

**Class Member Reading: 2 Nephi 1 - 2**

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**2 Ne. 1**

1 And now it came to pass that after I, Nephi, had made an end of teaching my brethren, our father, Lehi, also **spake many things** unto them, and rehearsed unto them, how great things the Lord had done for them in bringing them out of the land of Jerusalem. [Lehi and Nephi are always “speaking many things” to Laman and Lemuel.](#)

2 And he spake unto them concerning their **rebellions** upon the waters, and the **mercies of God** in sparing their lives, that they were not swallowed up in the sea. [Could a different response from Nephi allowed for an even more merciful response from God?](#)

3 And he also spake unto them concerning the land of promise, which they had obtained – how **merciful** the Lord had been in warning us that we should flee out of the land of Jerusalem.

4 For, behold, said he, I have seen a vision, in which I know that **Jerusalem is destroyed**; and had we remained in Jerusalem we should also have perished. [This happened in 587 after a terrible siege.](#)

5 But, said he, notwithstanding our afflictions, we have obtained a land of promise, a land which is choice above all other lands; a land which the Lord God hath covenanted with me should be a land for the inheritance of my seed. Yea, the Lord hath covenanted this land unto me, and to my children forever, and also all those who should be led out of other countries by the hand of the Lord.

6 Wherefore, I, Lehi, prophesy according to the workings of the Spirit which is in me, that there shall none come into this land save

they shall be brought by the hand of the Lord. Challenge the scriptures: Problematic theology. I tend to assign this to Joseph's worldview. Thinking your own land is the very most special is a normal human thing to do. Why would America (or the Americas?) be intrinsically more sacred and special than any other land?

7 Wherefore, this land is consecrated unto him whom he shall bring. And if it so be that they shall serve him according to the commandments which he hath given, it shall be a **land of liberty** unto them; wherefore, they shall never be brought down into captivity; if so, it shall be because of iniquity; for if iniquity shall abound cursed shall be the land for their sakes, but unto the righteous it shall be blessed forever.

8 And behold, it is wisdom that this land should be kept as yet from the knowledge of other nations; for behold, many nations would overrun the land, that there would be no place for an inheritance. What about indigenous peoples?? This is a very concerning framing. If we knew more about the people who were already there when Lehi and his family arrived it would help (it makes sense that the Nephites would be endogamous, only marrying each other, and the Lamanites not, which explains why there were so many more Lamanites, but we need to connect the dots ourselves. Of course, according to Mormon theology this also functions as a powerful condemnation of those who destroyed the descendants of Lehi. But even that reading is taken away later in the chapter).

9 Wherefore, I, Lehi, have obtained a promise, that inasmuch as those whom the Lord God shall bring out of the land of Jerusalem

shall keep his commandments, they shall prosper upon the face of this land; and they shall be kept from all other nations, that they may possess this land unto themselves (again, this train of thought should make us uncomfortable I think). And if it so be that they shall keep his commandments they shall be blessed upon the face of this land, and there shall be none to molest them, nor to take away the land of their inheritance; and they shall dwell safely forever.

**10** But behold, when the time cometh that they shall dwindle in unbelief, after they have received so great blessings from the hand of the Lord – having a knowledge of the creation of the earth, and all men, knowing the great and marvelous works of the Lord from the creation of the world; having power given them to do all things by faith; having all the commandments from the beginning, and having been brought by his infinite goodness into this precious land of promise – behold, I say, if the day shall come that they will reject the Holy One of Israel, the true Messiah, their Redeemer and their God, behold, the judgments of him that is just shall rest upon them.

**11** Yea, he will bring other nations unto them, and he will give unto them power, and he will take away from them the lands of their possessions, and he will cause them to be scattered and smitten. From Joseph Smith’s standpoint, this also functions to justify why the Europeans overtook the Native Americans.

**12** Yea, as one generation passeth to another there shall be bloodsheds, and great visitations among them; wherefore, my sons, I would that ye would remember; yea, I would that ye would

hearken unto my words.

**13** O that ye would **awake**; awake from a deep sleep, yea, even from the sleep of hell, and **shake off the awful chains** by which ye are bound, which are the chains which bind the children of men, that they are carried away captive down to the eternal gulf of misery and woe.

**14 Awake!** and arise from the dust, and hear the words of a trembling parent, whose limbs ye must soon lay down in the cold and silent grave, from whence no traveler can return; a few more days and I go the way of all the earth.

**15** But behold, the Lord **hath redeemed** my soul from hell; I have beheld his glory, and **I am encircled about eternally in the arms of his love**. This verse touches me deeply. I love how in Mormonism, salvation is a state of being that we can experience during this life as well.

**16** And I desire that ye should remember to observe the statutes and the judgments of the Lord; behold, this hath been the **anxiety of my soul** from the beginning.

**17** My **heart hath been weighed down** with sorrow from time to time, for I have feared, lest for the hardness of your hearts the Lord your God should come out in the fulness of his wrath upon you, that ye be cut off and destroyed forever;

**18** Or, that a cursing should come upon you for the space of many generations; and ye are visited by sword, and by famine, and are hated, and are led according to the will and captivity of the devil.

**19** O my sons, that these things might not come upon you, but that ye might be a choice and a favored people of the Lord. But behold, his will be done; for his ways are righteousness forever.

**20** And he hath said that: 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.

**21** And now that **my soul might have joy in you**, and that **my heart might leave this world with gladness** because of you, that I might not be brought down with grief and sorrow to the grave, **arise from the dust**, my sons, and be men, and **be determined in one mind** and in **one heart, united** in all things, that ye may not come down into captivity; *We can imagine how much Laman and Lemuel’s status weighed on Lehi. What legacy will we leave? How can we influence others for good? At the same time, we must allow each person to have their own journey.*

**22** That ye may not be cursed with a sore cursing; and also, that ye may not incur the displeasure of a just God upon you, unto the destruction, yea, the eternal destruction of both soul and body.

**23** **Awake, my sons**; put on the **armor of righteousness**. **Shake off the chains** with which ye are bound, and come forth out of obscurity, and arise from the dust. *It is quite possible that armor or chains are our only choices. We either strengthen and protect ourselves by living correct principles, or we are made captive by the natural consequences of poor behavior and limiting thoughts.*

**24** Rebel no more against your brother, whose views have been glorious, and who hath kept the commandments from the time that we left Jerusalem; and who hath been an instrument in the

hands of God, in bringing us forth into the land of promise; for were it not for him, we must have perished with hunger in the wilderness; nevertheless, ye sought to take away his life; yea, and he hath suffered much sorrow because of you. (Yes, though we also need to look more closely at the ways Lehi and Nephi made this dynamic worse)

**25** And I exceedingly fear and tremble because of you, lest he shall suffer again; for behold, ye have accused him that he sought power and authority over you; but I know that he hath not sought for power nor authority over you, but he hath sought the glory of God, and your own eternal welfare.

**26** And ye have murmured because he hath been plain unto you. Ye say that he hath used sharpness; ye say that he hath been angry with you; but behold, his sharpness was the sharpness of the power of the word of God, which was in him; and that which ye call anger was the truth, according to that which is in God, which he could not restrain, manifesting boldly concerning your iniquities.

**27** And it must needs be that the power of God must be with him, even unto his commanding you that ye must obey. But behold, it was not he, but it was the Spirit of the Lord which was in him, which opened his mouth to utterance that he could not shut it. (Lehi is strongly defending Nephi, which would have been intensely shameful in this culture where "primogeniture" was valued highly).

**28** And now my son, Laman, and also Lemuel and Sam, and also my sons who are the sons of Ishmael, behold, if ye will hearken unto the voice of Nephi ye shall not perish. And if ye will hearken

unto him I leave unto you a blessing, yea, even my first blessing.

**29** But if ye will not hearken unto him I take away my first blessing, yea, even my blessing, and it shall rest upon him. No wonder things split so violently after Lehi died. He tied everything up in how Nephi was treated, clearly designating him as his heir.

**30** And now, Zoram, I speak unto you: Behold, thou art the servant of Laban; nevertheless, thou hast been brought out of the land of Jerusalem, and I know that thou art a true friend unto my son, Nephi, forever.

**31** Wherefore, because thou hast been faithful thy seed shall be blessed with his seed, that they dwell in prosperity long upon the face of this land; and nothing, save it shall be iniquity among them, shall harm or disturb their prosperity upon the face of this land forever.

**32** Wherefore, if ye shall keep the commandments of the Lord, the Lord hath consecrated this land for the security of thy seed with the seed of my son. According to Middle Eastern inheritance norms and also the tradition of a “testament”, or final blessing (see Genesis 49-50), these words would have really hurt Laman and Lemuel to hear. They as the eldest were being snubbed while Nephi was being praised and treated as the new patriarch.

\*Fascinating\* question: Why did Nephi leave out his own blessing? (Hardy offers a sophisticated and compelling reading of Nephi in his *Understanding the Book of Mormon*: “I suspect that Lehi’s deathbed instructions to Nephi may have included a last, desperate plea to keep the family together”. Thus Nephi would have left his blessing out to avoid feeling like a failure and also likely because Lehi was not vindicating his frustrations – Lehi

carried to his grave a more positive view of his elder sons than Nephi did.

**2 Ne. 2**

**1** And now, Jacob, I speak unto you: Thou art my firstborn in the days of my tribulation in the wilderness. And behold, in thy childhood thou hast **suffered afflictions and much sorrow**, because of the rudeness of thy brethren. Jacob’s writings really do reveal a particularly sensitive soul. Lehi’s family clearly has lines that alienated all involved.

**2** Nevertheless, Jacob, my firstborn in the wilderness, thou knowest the greatness of God; and **he shall consecrate thine afflictions for thy gain**. YES. I have such a firm testimony of this. We will suffer, but God can help good come from that suffering. There are important limitations to this (life can irreparably break us for example), but I firmly believe in the general principle.

**3** Wherefore, thy soul shall be blessed, and thou shalt dwell safely with thy brother, Nephi; and thy days shall be spent in the service of thy God. Wherefore, I know that thou art redeemed, because of the righteousness of thy Redeemer; for thou hast beheld that in the fulness of time he cometh to bring salvation unto men.

**4** And **thou hast beheld in thy youth his glory**; wherefore, thou art blessed even as they unto whom he shall minister in the flesh; for the Spirit is the same, yesterday, today, and forever. And the way is prepared from the fall of man, and salvation is free. What does Lehi mean by “salvation is free”? Accessible to all I am

guessing, as in “freely distributed”.

5 And men are instructed sufficiently that **they know good from evil** (some far more than others). And the law is given unto men. And by the law no flesh is justified; or, by the law men are cut off. Yea, by the temporal law they were cut off; and also, by the spiritual law they **perish from that which is good**, and become miserable forever. *What evocative wording! Perish from that which is good.*

6 Wherefore, redemption cometh in and through the Holy Messiah; for he is full of grace and truth.

7 Behold, he offereth himself a sacrifice for sin, to answer the ends of the law, unto all those who have a **broken heart** and a **contrite spirit**; and unto none else can the ends of the law be answered. *Yes, because of natural consequence – if we don’t have this frame of mind/soul, we simply cannot grow in the ways we need to.*

8 Wherefore, how great the importance to make these things known unto the inhabitants of the earth, that they may know that there is no flesh that can dwell in the presence of God, save it be through the merits, and mercy, and grace of the Holy Messiah, who layeth down his life according to the flesh, and taketh it again by the power of the Spirit, that he may bring to pass the resurrection of the dead, being the first that should rise.

9 Wherefore, he is the firstfruits unto God, inasmuch as he shall **make intercession** for all the children of men; and they that believe in him shall be saved.

10 And because of the intercession for all, all men come unto God; wherefore, they stand in the presence of him, to be judged of him **according to the truth and holiness which is in him**. Wherefore,

the ends of the law which the Holy One hath given, unto the inflicting of the punishment which is affixed, which **punishment that is affixed is in opposition to that of the happiness which is affixed**, to answer the ends of the atonement— [Another Plan of Salvation/Plan of Damnation](#) verse.

**11** For it must needs be, that there is an **opposition in all things**. If not so, my firstborn in the wilderness, righteousness could not be brought to pass, neither wickedness, neither holiness nor misery ([interesting pairing](#)), neither good nor bad. Wherefore, all things must needs be a compound in one ([I have always been a bit perplexed at this wording](#)); wherefore, if it should be one body it must needs remain as dead, having no life neither death, nor corruption nor incorruption, happiness nor misery, neither sense nor insensibility.

**12** Wherefore, it must needs have been created for a thing of naught; wherefore there would have been no purpose in the end of its creation. Wherefore, this thing must needs destroy the wisdom of God and his eternal purposes, and also the power, and the mercy, and the justice of God.

**13** And if ye shall say there is no law, ye shall also say there is no sin. If ye shall say there is no sin, ye shall also say there is no righteousness. And if there be no righteousness there be no happiness. And if there be no righteousness nor happiness there be no punishment nor misery. And if these things are not there is no God. And if there is no God we are not, neither the earth; for there could have been no creation of things, neither to **act nor to be acted upon**; wherefore, all things must have vanished away. [Lehi's logic may get a bit sketchy here, but his underlying points about](#)

opposition are powerful. I also appreciate similar points made in the temple.

**14** And now, my sons, I speak unto you these things for your profit and learning; for there is a God, and he hath created all things, both the heavens and the earth, and all things that in them are, both things **to act and things to be acted upon**. I think this idea of "acting" vs. being "acted upon" is one of the most important ideas in scripture.

**15** And to bring about his eternal purposes in the end of man, after he had created our first parents, and the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air, and in fine, all things which are created, it must needs be that there was an opposition; even the forbidden fruit in opposition to the tree of life; the one being sweet and the other bitter.

**16** Wherefore, the Lord God gave unto man that **he should act for himself**. Wherefore, man could not act for himself save it should be that he was **enticed** by the one or the other. **Profound verse. We cannot act for ourselves unless we live in an environment of opposition, and I would add an environment of challenge and suffering.**

**17** 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.

**18** And because he had fallen from heaven, and had become miserable forever, he sought also the misery of all mankind. **(Evil seeks the misery of others rather than addressing its own flaws)** Wherefore, he said unto Eve, yea, even that old serpent, who is the

devil, who is the father of all lies, wherefore he said: Partake of the forbidden fruit, and ye shall not die, but **ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil.** *Knowing and discerning not just in theory, but in practice, experientially.*

**19** And after Adam and Eve had partaken of the forbidden fruit they were **driven out of the garden of Eden**, to till the earth.

**20** And they have brought forth children; yea, even the family of all the earth.

**21** And the days of the children of men were prolonged, according to the will of God, that they might repent while in the flesh; wherefore, their state became a state of probation, and their time was lengthened, according to the commandments which the Lord God gave unto the children of men. For he gave commandment that all men must repent; for he showed unto all men that they were lost, because of the transgression of their parents. *(functions as an explanation for the longevity of those who lived before the flood)*

**22** And now, behold, if Adam had not transgressed he would not have fallen, but he would have remained in the garden of Eden. And all things which were created must have remained in the same state in which they were after they were created; and they must have remained forever, and had no end.

**23** And they would have had no children; wherefore they would have remained in a state of **innocence, having no joy**, for they knew **no misery**; doing **no good**, for they knew **no sin**.

**24** But behold, **all things have been done in the wisdom of him who knoweth all things.**

**25** Adam fell that men might be; and **men are, that they might**

**have joy.** What a marvelous summary. We exist that we might have joy. Not will, but might. The amount of joy we experience is largely up to us.

**26** And the Messiah cometh in the fulness of time, that he may redeem the children of men from the fall. And because that they are redeemed from the fall they have become **free forever, knowing good from evil; to act for themselves and not to be acted upon**, save it be by the punishment of the law at the great and last day, according to the commandments which God hath given. Another absolutely vital verse. Freedom is linked to knowledge, and knowledge allows us to act for ourselves rather than to be acted upon.

**27** Wherefore, men are free according to the flesh; and all things are given them which are expedient unto man. And they are **free to choose liberty and eternal life**, through the great Mediator of all men, or to **choose captivity and death**, according to the captivity and power of the devil; for he seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself.

**28** And now, my sons, I would that ye should look to the great Mediator, and hearken unto his great commandments; and be faithful unto his words, and **choose eternal life**, according to the will of his Holy Spirit;

**29** And **not choose eternal death**, according to the will of the flesh and the evil which is therein, which giveth the spirit of the devil power to captivate, to bring you down to hell, that he may reign over you in his own kingdom.

**30** I have spoken these few words unto you all, my sons, in the last days of my probation; and I have chosen the good part, according

to the words of the prophet. And **I have none other object save it be the everlasting welfare of your souls.** Amen. A noble motivation. But it can also function as a line if we don't mean it in an informed, open way. We need to be careful that what we have in mind truly is for the “welfare of their souls”, present as well as future. We can use this motivation to push people in a direction that we think is good for them or that we think will benefit their souls. If we let others teach us what they need, we will be able to advocate for their welfare.

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