

Chapter Seven

Podcast 07 1 Nephi 3-4

Greetings my dear brothers and sisters. It's good to be with you again. I have heard from many of you and the successes you're having with your one hour times spent with the Lord each day. It is so exciting to hear these experiences from you and to know how much the Lord loves each one of us and is anxious to reveal himself to us as we seek to speak with him and converse with him.

Some of you express a little discouragement that things are not happening the way that you think that they should. I would remind you that this is to be done in the Lord's own way and according to his will and in his own timing. The big obstacle that many of us have is that we seek these things but we seek them and want them to be accomplished according to our own expectations and forget that this is the Lord's gift to us and we don't determine how, when, or where he gives the gift. We simply make ourselves available. So don't be discouraged. Press on.

I remember one time when I was seeking to penetrate the veil and to interact with the powers of heaven that nothing I did seemed to go right and I walked into the bedroom to go to bed and Margie saw the disappointment on my face after a couple of hours that I had spent making the attempt and she said, "what's wrong?"

And I said, "Just nothing. I don't see anything. I don't hear anything. All I see is darkness behind my eyelids. It just isn't working for me."

And she asked me, "Mike, how long have you been at this?"

And I said, "Two weeks and nothing." And by the way this was two weeks of concentrated effort, daily. Sometimes several hours a day seeking to break on through.

And she said to me, "You're seeking to commune with and see the face of God the Eternal Father and his beloved son Jesus Christ and because it hasn't happened in two weeks you're ready to give up?"

Margie has a way of quickly putting things into their proper perspective. We both chuckled and I decided to pursue.

So don't be discouraged my friends. This is done in the Lord's timing because he knows perfectly well what is best for you and what will give you the greatest advantage in the world to

come. Press forward. Don't give up. There is no going back once you've started on this path. I pray the Lord will bless you and that you will obtain your heart's fondest desires; I have.

I'm excited about going into 1 Nephi chapter 3 today and studying this great story about the sons of Lehi obtaining the brass plates of Laban. Let me just give you a few interesting facts about the plates.

First of all, never in the Book of Mormon are they referred to as the brass plates. They're always referred to as "the plates of brass." This seems to fit into what is referred to as Hebrew syntax. We would say, the brass plates, but **Hebrews** would say, the plates of brass.

It's the same as we would say, a stone altar, but in the Hebrew and in the Book of Mormon it would say, and altar of stone.

Another place we would say a river but in the Hebrew it would say a river of water. Small things, but also small evidences that the Book of Mormon is of ancient Hebrew/Egyptian origin. These plates of brass play a very important part in the early part of the history of the Lehi colony.

Let's begin now with 1 Nephi chapter 3. You can see that in verse two that Lehi has a dream. He was told in this dream that Nephi and his brethren should return to Jerusalem and to obtain the record of the Jews and also a genealogy of my forefathers and they are written upon plates of brass.

1 Nephi 1:2-3

[2] And it came to pass that he spake unto me, saying: Behold I have dreamed a dream, in the which the Lord hath commanded me that thou and thy brethren shall return to Jerusalem.

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

There are several instances that we see where Lehi has dreams and seems to be instructed more fully through this process in the things that he's to do in order to guide and direct his little colony.

We live in a day when dreams will become more and more prevalent along with visions and other manifestations. According to latter-day prophets the prophecy in Joel chapter 2 starting in verse 28 is being fulfilled in our very day. Verse 28:

Joel 2:28

[28] And it shall come to pass afterward, (that afterword always has reference to the latter days) that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh;

One of the mistakes that we have in the church is thinking that only Latter-day Saints have access to these divine gifts and promises and that the Lord only speaks to our prophets and to those who have received the gift of the Holy Ghost. I want you to notice in that in that verse the Lord says, “I will pour out my spirit” (which is the Holy Spirit), “upon all flesh.”

That Holy Spirit and our Christian brothers and sisters who are not members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints refer frequently to the Holy Spirit and what a blessing it is in their lives. The Lord will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, not to just upon Christians, but upon all flesh.

Joel 2:28-29

[28]... and your sons and your daughters (that means all of your sons and daughters) shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions:

[29] And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days (again, referencing the latter days) will I pour out my spirit.

It is a sign of arrogance among us as members of the church to feel that we have an exclusive reserved right to the spiritual blessings and gifts of God the Eternal Father for all of his children. Joseph Smith defined Mormonism as finding and embracing the all truth no matter where it comes from. We need to get past the idea that we somehow have reserved rights on dreams, visions, prophesyings, revelations and to the gifts of the spirit. They are available to all of God’s children who seek Him, who love him and strive to keep his commandments.

I listen to some of our brothers and sisters who are not members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as they testify of Jesus Christ and of his gifts that are poured out upon them and I feel the power of the spirit and know that what they’re testifying of is true.

Now returning to Jerusalem after they had journeyed three days into the wilderness must have seemed like quite a folly to Laman and Lemuel. And verse five says that they murmured and said that this is a hard thing which I’ve required of them. But Lehi says, “I’ve not required of them but it is a commandment of the Lord.”

1 Nephi 3:5

[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.

And then he admonishes Nephi to take the lead and to go and fulfill the requirements that the Lord has given Lehi. You can see already that Lehi is giving pre-eminence to Nephi to rule and reign over his brethren. This refers back to chapter 2 verse 17 when Nephi is speaking to Sam he says:

1 Nephi 2:17

[17] And I spake unto Sam, making known unto him the things which the Lord had manifested unto me by his Holy Spirit.

And that refers back further up into verse 16 where Nephi says

1 Nephi 2:16

[16] ...I did cry unto the Lord; and behold he did visit me, **and did soften my heart...**

Lehi knows all about this, and as a result of this softening and this belief and faith that Nephi now has, you can see that Lehi is giving Nephi opportunities to advance in that knowledge and to obtain greater power through the challenges that now face them.

Because of this Lehi says in:

1 Nephi 3:6

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

Let's talk for just a minute about this being favored of the Lord. There are two terms that are used in the Book of Mormon, one is favored of the Lord as we just read here in verse six, and the other is a term that says highly favored of the Lord. And you can see that term back in the very first verse of 1 Nephi chapter 1 where Nephi says that he has been highly favored of the Lord in all of his days.

1 Nephi 1:1

[1]...having been highly favored of the Lord in all my days;

I'd like to present to you like anything else in the gospel of Jesus Christ things begin from small and moved to large. They go from portions to fullnesses, they go from lesser to greater, and so it is with this concept of being favored of the Lord. It begins out with being favored and can end up being highly favored of the Lord.

What do you think that means? Favored of the Lord. Let's go over to 1 Nephi chapter 17 and let's look at verse 35. Speaking of the Canaanites who were in the land of promise that were driven out by Joshua under the direction of Moses. Nephi asked this question in verse 33

1 Nephi 17:33-34

[33] And now, do ye suppose that the children of this land, who were in the land of promise, who were driven out by our fathers, do ye suppose that they were righteous? Behold, I say unto you, Nay.

[34] Do ye suppose that our fathers would have been more choice than they if they had been righteous? I say unto you, Nay.

You see that statement right there that refers back to this idea that the chosen people somehow have a corner on everything that God has for his children. Read that again, verse 34 were talking about the Canaanites who were wiped out by Joshua.

1 Nephi 17:34

[34] Do ye suppose that our fathers (the Israelites that came out of Egypt) would have been more choice than they if they had been righteous?

And the Nephi answers this and says:

1 Nephi 17:34

[34]...I say unto you, Nay.

Here we go, verse 35:

1 Nephi 17:35

[35] Behold, the Lord esteemeth all flesh in one; (this part right here) he that is righteous is favored of God. But behold, this people (the Canaanites) had rejected every word of God, and they were ripe in iniquity;

And I say, brothers and sisters, that applies to God's house of Israel, his chosen seed, but if they reject every word of God that he also has the ancient Canaanite counterparts become ripe in iniquity.

1 Nephi 17:35

[35]...and the fulness of the wrath of God was upon them; and the Lord did curse the land against them, and bless it unto our fathers; yea, he did curse it against them unto their destruction, and he did bless it unto our fathers unto their obtaining power over it.

The Latter-day Saints have no promises unless they are faithful in keeping the commandments of God. Right now there are many who are not member of this church that have a closer relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ and know him and converse with him and have seen him than those who have been baptized members of the church.

Baptism and gift of membership and the gift of the Holy Ghost open up an increased flow of gifts of the spirit, revelation, manifestations, but they are of no value to you simply because you've been baptized. You must be righteous in order to be favored of God.

Now righteous simply means – take the first word in righteous – the righteous person is a person who chooses right over wrong. That is the most basic definition of righteousness. You choose the right over wrong. It goes back to the Garden of Eden: where the Lord says to Adam and Eve, “We will allow Lucifer our common enemy to tempt them and try them, that they may learn from their own experience to distinguish good from evil.” When you choose good over evil you're considered righteous.

Now this favored of God, let's not make it complicated, let's keep it simple. If you're favored of God you can ask him for a favor and he will grant it. That in its most basic understanding is what it means to be favored of God. You can build on that now to where you become highly favored and you can ask the Lord for exceeding great and precious promises that are reserved for the elect and he will grant you those favors. That's highly favored because he's favoring you with highly prized and highly desirable gifts, privileges, ordinations and ordinances and covenants. Those are the basic meanings of this.

And Nephi is already proving that he favored of the Lord by Lehi trusting him with this mission over his other brethren. Remember that Nephi is the youngest of the four brothers. This would also add to the murmuring that's going on not only to return back another three days – one way – back to Jerusalem to fulfill this mission, but also to be led by their younger brother. This must gall Laman and Lemuel exceedingly. And we'll see that it does in subsequent verses.

Now one of the most important verses in all of the Book of Mormon, and probably the one verse that is memorized by more members of the church than any other verse is verse seven.

1 Nephi 3:7

[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.

What a powerful Scripture that is. We can referred back to that over and over in the Book of Mormon as we see people receive ministries and callings from the Lord, and to step forward in faith, knowing and exercising faith in the concept in this seventh verse.

Receiving an assignment from the Lord can come many different ways. It doesn't have to come through recognized priesthood authority nor institutions. The Lord can call his children and give them assignments and ministries in any way that he deems important and necessary.

As we seek for personal revelation and to draw nearer to the Lord you will hear his voice calling you and striving with you to do things you have not thought of previously. There is a verse in section 4 of the Doctrine and Covenants verse three that says:

D&C 4:3

[3] Therefore, if ye have desires to serve God ye are called to the work;

Notice that the calling is preceded only by the desire for the call. If your mind rests upon and you find yourself continually contemplating certain things that seem to just stay with you and that have been with you for years you maybe need to consider that as a call to do something, a call to action.

Now that does not mean that you are going to step in now in the place of a bishop in a ward or a stake president of a stake. You're not going to take a stewardship that the Lord has revealed belongs after a certain order and assume it upon yourself. Many have tried that in the past and that is not the Lord's way.

But each of you have a plan that you entered into before you came here. In some places it's referred to as a life's plan. The pattern for schooling in the Telestial world is a pattern of eternal things. Remember that all things take place spiritually before physically.

Before you came here you entered into a counseling session with heavenly counselors, those who had been on earth before you and knew what the experience of a mortal life was like. You were able to counsel with them and to form a life's plan. Your heavenly father wants for you to obtain the maximum benefit and advantage that you can while you're here for this short period of time in this Telestial world.

This was not done in a random way but was carefully planned out, directed by your heavenly father and by those who work with him to help you formulate this plan. You will look

back on your life and see that each step in this mortal existence has been carefully guided and planned for you to obtain these great benefits.

If you have desires that seem to dwell upon you move forward with those, take close to the Lord and act upon those desires. Move forward. Don't be afraid. God does not upbraid. Ask him for wisdom on the things that seem to dwell in your mind and upon your heart, ask him for wisdom and then move forward with faith and trust in him. Don't be afraid of being deceived. Don't be afraid of doing the wrong thing. Move forward acting without being acted upon.

Seek for the guidance and direction of the Holy Spirit. Seek to be instructed and informed and taught by the Holy Ghost and by angels who speak by the power of the Holy Ghost and move forward. As you do this our father and his son will provide additional witnesses to you in their own way and in their own time that will testify that you are on the correct path, that you are on the way that the Nephi talks about when he says, "God will prepare a way that you may accomplish the things which are in your mind and in your heart."

Just move forward and have faith, I think that we are too timid. I think that were bound down by too much by fear. I think that we have a misunderstanding of the scriptures. I think that we haven't had enough experience in learning to recognize the promptings and the impressions of the Holy Ghost. But there's only one way to become more experienced and more perfected in this and that is to step out and to do it.

Don't wait for someone to tell you what to do. Just step out. Don't continue to remain in a state of being acted upon and not doing anything until someone gives you permission or commands you to do it. Remember that God does not upbraid. If you've stepped out and you've done something you shouldn't, you will know that it's the wrong thing to do, or you're not doing it at the right time because our father and his son will simply take from your mind and from your heart the inclination to do that again.

You don't have to worry about being wrong. Don't worry about being deceived. Step out. Have faith. Trust them. If you do something in this manner and it's not quite correct then they will gently correct you through the whisperings and impressions of spirit that will say something like this, "Good for you. Good for you for stepping out. Now, the next time just tweak this a little bit. Just try this a little bit differently. Do this a little bit differently. Do that a little bit differently. And in that process, through ongoing revelation, they will correct your course and your path, guide you along the prepared way so that you can become perfected in that.

Know this that the Lord would not prompt you, he would not give you these feelings, these impressions, these longings, these strivings – which I believe are a call to action – he would not

give these things to you if he had not prepared a way for you to accomplish what's necessary for the fulfillment of it.

God bless us all in this sacred concept. This is something we need to constantly practice at. Remember, he does not curse, he does not condemn, he does not criticize, he does not accuse, he does not (as James says), upbraid.

James 1:5

[5] If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

The next verse in James:

[6] But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.

Move forward, boldly, humbly, meekly, with lowliness of heart, in a state of grace, having a broken heart and a contrite spirit, and you will become highly favored of the Lord. Those who wait to be told what to do will never obtain the status of highly favored of the Lord. It is not the godly way. It is the satanic way where Satan says, "Don't you make any decisions because the danger of you making incorrect decisions and the consequences are too great, let me take care of you. Let me make your decisions. Don't do anything until I tell you to." And there was a war fought over that and that work continues on in this very day. God bless us to see the deceptive traps and the snares set up by the evil ones to continue this war and the destruction of fathers children.

Well this little group of brothers, at least half of them reluctantly concede to return back to Jerusalem and in verse 11, 1 Nephi three they cast lots who should go to the house of Laban. Interestingly, it falls upon the oldest, the firstborn. And this is trip number one. You are going to see that there are three trips. There's that number three again. Three trips to the house of Laban, with three different attempts and approaches to obtain the plates of brass.

1 Nephi 3:11

[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.

The first trip in verse 11 is a trip that attempts to reason with Laban as Laman talks to him in his house.

Verse 13 says that he was angry and thrust Laman out of his presence and would not that he should have the records, calls him a robber, seeks to slay him, and Laman flees out of the presence of Laban.

1 Nephi 3:13

[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.

I don't picture Sam murmuring. But I do get the feeling that when it says my brethren were about to return to my father in the wilderness, that Sam was willing to go at that point.

1 Nephi 3:14

[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.

He's learning. He's just not had the experiences that Nephi has that gives Nephi this courage and this determination. I love verse 15 where Nephi says:

1 Nephi 3:15

[15] ...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. [26:12](#)

This statement as the Lord giveth and as we live is a form of ancient oath making that was typical of the people of the house of Israel. You can also see this over in chapter 4 verse 32 where Nephi is placing Zoram, Laban's servant under covenant and he says in verse 32:

1 Nephi 4:32

[32] And it came to pass that I spake with him, that if he would hearken unto my words (here we go), as the Lord liveth, and as I live, even so that if he would hearken unto our words, we would spare his life.

These oaths in ancient time were so sacred that those who made them would easily, and readily forfeit their lives rather than break this oath. We have come a long way away from anything that faintly resembles that in our day, where in order to bind a promise it takes thousands of papers of legal documents and an army of attorneys to secure a promise and to protect it once it's been made. Not so in these early days.

Verse 16:

1 Nephi 3:16

[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 (Lehi) left gold and silver, and all manner of riches. And all this he hath done because of the commandments of the Lord.

Isn't it interesting that Lehi was commanded to leave all of those things and to take nothing with him but his family, some provisions, and his tent. Here is the great foreknowledge of the Lord, knowing before Lehi and any of his family knew it, that that gold and silver and precious things would need to be a resource to offer to Laban in order to obtain the plates.

So they gather up their gold and their silver and their precious things and make the second attempt. This time when they go, they go altogether as the four brethren. Perhaps Laman was not there, I don't know, but in verse 23 it says:

1 Nephi 3:23

[23] And after we had gathered these things together, we went up again unto the house of Laban.

This time and they offer to purchase the plates from Laban. In verse 25 Laban sees their property that it was exceeding great, he lusted after it, thrust them out, since his servants to slay them, and again they flee into the wilderness.

1 Nephi 3:25

[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.

And the result of this second attempt to obtain the plates of brass is that they are thrust out and hide themselves somewhere south of the city in the cavity of a rock.

Let's go to verse 28:

1 Nephi 3:28

[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.

Here you can see that it's not just Nephi that's bringing upon himself the ire of Laman and Lemuel but also Sam. Sam has that faith. Sam leans towards believing. In fact I wouldn't say he leans toward believing, I believe that he knows that what Nephi has told him is true. He's received that witness. And because of that he finds himself now also being persecuted.

Verse 29:

1 Nephi 3:29

[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.

Now I remember when I first read the Book of Mormon, and subsequent times after that, that I wondered to myself, "Why is it that an angel of the Lord would appear to these rebellious sons of Lehi who are in the process of beating their younger brothers?"

Well the obvious reason is to stop them from doing that. I believe that this angel appearing in this cave has not so much to do with Laman and Lemuel, Samuel and Nephi, as it does with Lehi. Lehi is highly favored of the Lord. That means that he can ask the Lord for favors and because of his standing with the Lord those favors will be granted. I'm sure that he asked for protection upon his sons.

I believe that this angel appears there because of Lehi's status with the Lord. This is one of the advantages of becoming highly favored of the Lord, that you can ask the Lord for favors on behalf of your family members, and the Lord will grant those favors that otherwise would not be granted. He honors the person who has this state of spiritual excellence, knowing that that person would not ask anything that was contrary to God's will anyway.

By the time you come to the point where you're highly favored, you are experienced and perfected in that you do not ask things to consume it upon your lusts, but the things you ask the Lord are given to you by revelation, therefore you cannot ask amiss.

Well we have two attempts to obtain the plates of brass, one by persuasion, and the second one by purchase. I think that we can learn something from this as we go into chapter 4. In chapter 3 we have learned that there are at least two reasons as to why it is important for Lehi to obtain these records.

Back in verse 19 he says, number one, the first reason is to

1 Nephi 3:19-20

[19] ...preserve unto our children the language of our fathers;

As we've talked about before this is not so much the language of words as much as it is the sacred verbiage of the holy order, the rites and ordinances and covenants and privileges that would be handed down from father to son in the patriarchal order that are now written upon the plates of brass.

Number two in verse 20:

[20] ... that we may preserve unto them the words which have been spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets,

It's important that they obtain a written record. There are examples of people who did not have a written record in the book is Omni chapter 1, verses 14-18. You can see an example of people of Zarahemla who had no written record. And verse 17 says this:

Omni 1:17-18

[17] And at the time that Mosiah discovered them, they had become exceedingly numerous. Nevertheless, they had had many wars and serious contentions, and had fallen by the sword from time to time; (this part right here) and their language had become corrupted; and they had brought no records with them; and they denied the being of their Creator; and Mosiah, nor the people of Mosiah, could understand them.

18 But it came to pass that Mosiah caused that they should be taught in his language.

And you can bet that that was more than just the language of everyday interaction in life, that he also taught them the language of the scriptures. He taught them the language of the holy rites and ordinances, not only of the law of Moses, but at the higher laws that the Nephites had amongst them at that time of being alive in Christ. Back to verse 18:

[18]...And it came to pass that after they were taught in the language of Mosiah, Zarahemla gave a genealogy of his fathers, according to his memory; and they are written, but not in these plates.

So there is a great example of what happens to a group of people that the Lord leads out and away from their civilized environment and they take no records with them, they have no written language, they don't have any records concerning their sacred rites and privileges and their religion. They dwindle in unbelief.

1 Nephi chapter 3 verse 30 and 31:

1 Nephi 3:30-31

[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?

This always struck me as amazing, that these two men have just beheld a heavenly messenger who rebuked them, and they know that he's come from God, they know this isn't some stranger that just walked into the cave from the wilderness, they know that this is a heavenly being, and yet, say, "How is this possible?"

The Angel's told them that God would deliver Laban into your hands and yet they questioned how's this possible, Laban being the powerful and mighty man that he is.

First Nephi chapter 4 verse one. Nephi admonishes his brethren:

1 Nephi 4:1

[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?

I think verse two is interesting:

1 Nephi 4:2

[2] Therefore let us go up (now look what he does here –he refers back to a scriptural character and experience that takes place that they read about in their own scriptural canon); 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...

This is one reason that the prophets tell us to remember – a very important word, remember – the stories from the scriptures and these ancient heroes whether it be Moroni or Nephi or Moses or the Lord Jesus Christ, refer back to them, draw upon these stories to give us courage and strength, to fulfill the missions and destinies that we have ahead of us.

We would do well to draw upon the stories and strength and courage from these Book of Mormon characters, liken them unto ourselves for the stories are speaking of our very day. And asked the Lord to bless the these ancients and delivered them, so he will bless us and deliver us in our day.

As we move into this story of Nephi obtaining the plates from Laban, I'd like to read to you a quote out of the history of the church, volume 4, page 128 and 129. The prophet Joseph Smith said this:

<https://www.lds.org/manual/teachings-joseph-smith/chapter-28?lang=eng>

On May 14, 1840, Joseph Smith wrote from Nauvoo to Elders Orson Hyde and John E. Page, who were on their way to a mission in the Holy Land: "Do not be discouraged on account of the greatness of the work; only be humble and faithful, and then you can say, 'What art thou, O great mountain! before Zerubbabel shalt thou be brought down.'Zechariah 4:7.]

...He who scattered Israel has promised to gather them; therefore inasmuch as you are to be instrumental in this great work (now think about 1 Nephi 3:7), He will endow you with power, wisdom, might, and intelligence, and every qualification necessary..."

What a great cross reference to 1 Nephi 3:7, go and do things the Lord will prepare the way to accomplish.

The Jerusalem of Lehi's time is what they call today the city of David. It's an ongoing archaeological dig just south of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. Archaeological findings that are coming to light today are now pointing more and more to the fact that Solomon's Temple was not upon that we call Temple Mount and was not at the place where the Dome of the Rock, **Haram esh-Sharif**, now stands. But it was south of there between the southern wall of the old city and what's called the city of David, is now being pointed to as the more likely place of Solomon's Temple.

And then the city of Jerusalem would have been south of that. It's interesting that as ornate and beautiful as Solomon's Temple was, it was not as ornate and beautiful as Solomon's palace. In the building of the temple and his own personal residence, you can see the seeds of pride and seeking after the honors of men that are already deeply served within the heart of Solomon.

Even his own palace stood on higher ground than the house of the Lord and his own palace look down upon the temple and its courtyards. If this is true, and more and more evidence daily is pointing to that fact, then there is no conflict with the temple that the Jews want to build,

what they call the third Temple, and the place of the Dome of the Rock. Both can stand independently of each other.

It's been taught that in order to build the third Jewish temple that to the Dome of the Rock would have to come down and that that would begin Armageddon and World War III. Current archaeological evidence is suggesting otherwise. It will be interesting to see how this plays out in coming days and months.

As Joseph Smith was translating this particular part, and verse five, it says:

1 Nephi 4:5

[5] And it was by night; and I caused that they should hide themselves without the walls.

There's an interesting story from the David Whitmer interviews that said this:

Edmund C. Briggs, "A Visit to Nauvoo in 1856," *Journal of History*, Jan. 1916, p. 454
While Emma was acting as Joseph's scribe for the book of Mormon (at this particular point in 1 Nephi 4:6) Emma said, One time while he was translating he stopped suddenly, pale as a sheet, and said, "Emma, did Jerusalem have walls around it?" When I answered "Yes," he replied "Oh! I was afraid I had been deceived."

What a fascinating little story about where Joseph Smith was in his understanding, his formal education and the massive undertaking that he was undertaking.

Verse six:

1 Nephi 4:6

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

This spirit that he's talking about is the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit guides and directs. The Holy Ghost gives further guidance and direction and fills in the blanks by giving teachings and instructions and information. I will place with this podcast one of the earlier podcasts on the Holy Spirit versus the Holy Ghost so that you can refer to that more fully.

I love the faith of Nephi.

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

We should follow that example. We should let that be an ongoing example to our asking, seeking and knocking. He didn't know exactly what to do. He just stepped out in faith, trusting in the Lord. He'd had enough experience with the Lord's spirit, and with conversing with the Lord through the veil, that he could have the confidence to move forward in this task doing as he's done.

These walls that surrounded the ancient City of David only remnants of those walls are left. The original inhabitants before David conquered the city were the Jebusites and they had built massive walls around their city.

One night while I was in Jerusalem I had the opportunity with my friend to go exploring outside the walls of Jerusalem and we met some Arab people who befriended us because we were Latter-day Saints and they knew about the BYU Department of Archaeology and some of the professors. When they found out that we were members of the church they took us on a closed tour of these ancient walls that surrounded the Jebusites' city and later the city of David.

We were able to stand upon these ancient walls and I thought about Nephi where he says that he went up, crept into the city and went forth toward the house of Laban when he got up over the walls -- and there we were standing on those walls. It is quite an interesting feeling as we stood there and contemplated this verse.

As he goes forth he finds a man lying in the street, passed out, and drunken with wine. And as he looks closer in verse eight he sees it's Laban:

1 Nephi 4:8

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

And then verse nine and interesting thing:

1 Nephi 4:9

[9] And I beheld his sword,

This is a man's view of things. If this had been a woman who had found Laban lying in the street, passed out and drunk, her nurturing side would have kicked in and she would've stopped, "oh poor man, what can I do, I'll go get help, I'll make sure he's protected and nobody takes advantage of him."

That the first thing a man does is he looks at this weapon, and it must have been quite a weapon:

1 Nephi 4:9

[9]... 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.

Let's talk for just a moment about this interesting sword. It has quite an extensive history throughout the book of Mormon. Nephi's younger brother Jacob relates that Nephi wielded the sword of Laban in the defense of the Nephite people.

We are also told that Nephi used Laban sword as a model to construct other swords. Later in the Book of Mormon, King Benjamin used the sword to help defend his people. King Benjamin later gave the sword of Laban, the brass plates, and the Liahona to his son Mosiah. After being handed down by the Nephites through generations the sword of Laban, as well as other items, were buried by Moroni with the gold plates. Joseph Smith saw them when Moroni led **them** to their location.

In the Doctrine and Covenants the three witnesses of the Book of Mormon, David Witmer, Oliver Cowdery, and Martin Harris are promised that they would be privileged to see the sword of Laban along with some other records and relics.

David Witmer said that he and the other of the three witnesses were shown the sword of Laban as well as other items in a cave. In section 17 of the Doctrine and Covenants the promise was made to Oliver Cowdery, David Witmer and Martin Harris:

D&C 17:1

[1] ... you must rely upon my word, which if you do with full purpose of heart, you shall have a view of the plates, and also of the breastplate, the sword of Laban, the Urim and Thummim...

[3] ...after that you have obtained faith, and have seen them with your eyes, you shall testify of them, by the power of God;

<https://www.lds.org/study/manual/revelations-in-context/the-experience-of-the-three-witnesses?lang=eng>

Days later, the prophecy was dramatically fulfilled. "It was in the latter part of June, 1829," David Whitmer wrote. "Joseph, Oliver Cowdery and myself were together, and the angel showed them [the plates] to us. ... [We were] sitting on a log when we were overshadowed by a light more glorious than that of the sun. In the midst of this light, but a few feet from us, appeared a table upon which were many golden plates, also the sword of Laban and the Directors. I saw them as plain as I see you now, and distinctly heard the voice of the Lord declaring that the records of the plates of the Book of Mormon were translated by the gift and power of God."

Here is a great record from the Journal of discourses, Brigham Young speaking, this was on 17 June 1877.

<http://josephsmithfoundation.org/hill-cumorah-cave/>

“Oliver Cowdery went with the Prophet Joseph when he deposited these plates. Joseph did not translate all of the plates; there was a portion of them sealed, which you can learn from the Book of Doctrine and Covenants. When Joseph got the plates, the angel instructed him to carry them back to the hill Cumorah, which he did. Oliver says that when Joseph and Oliver went there, the hill opened, and they walked into a cave, in which there was a large and spacious room. He says he did not think, at the time, whether they had the light of the sun or artificial light; but that it was just as light as day. They laid the plates on a table; it was a large table that stood in the room. Under this table there was a pile of plates as much as two feet high, and there were altogether in this room more plates than probably many wagon loads; they were piled up in the corners and along the walls. The first time they went there the sword of Laban hung upon the wall; but when they went again it had been taken down and laid upon the table across the gold plates; it was unsheathed, and on it was written these words: “This sword will never be sheathed again until the kingdoms of this world become the kingdom of our God and his Christ.” I tell you this as coming not only from Oliver Cowdery, but others who were familiar with it, and who understood it just as well as we understand coming to this meeting. . . . [Don] Carlos Smith was a young man of as much veracity as any young man we had, and he was a witness to these things. Samuel Smith saw some things, Hyrum saw a good many things, but Joseph was their leader.”

Well, all of this points to the fact that the sword of Laban was very powerful and symbolic that was used throughout the warfare and the peace times of the great Nephite kings, leaders and prophets. The day will come when we will see that sword ourselves, along with many, many other plates and records that have yet to be translated, will come forth in our day, as well as the other sacred objects and relics – the urim and thummim, various seer stones and the Liahona.

These relics are all objects of great faith and are symbolic of the Lord and his atoning sacrifice, of the victory of good over evil, of light over darkness, and the eventual victory of Christ as he puts all enemies under his foot – the last enemy of which is death.

Back to 1 Nephi chapter 4, verse 10:

1 Nephi 4:10

[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.

See, they have access to the 10 Commandments of Moses, and they understand one of those 10 Commandments, thou shalt not kill. I don't get the feeling that Nephi has been involved in any kind of warfare or in any kind of violence up to this time. So he's now facing the great test to see if he will be obedient in all things whatsoever the Lord will command him. This becomes the test of 1 Nephi 3:7 to see if Nephite is willing to abide by the statement he made to his father.

It's interesting the processes that go through Nephi's mind as he's standing there with the sword in his hand, looking over the prostrate form of Laban. I have never killed anybody, this violates the sixth Commandment, thou shalt not kill.

And the Spirit says to him again, the Lord has delivered him into your hands, no explanation. Notice that the spirit first of all just simply says, kill him. Then the second time he says, the Lord has delivered him into your hands. These statements invite Nephi to further ponder and consider what's taking place before him.

Notice in verse 11 after the Lord said he delivered him into his hands, Nephi says

1 Nephi 4:11

[11] ...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.

Look at the processing that's going on here. Verse 12:

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

But now the spirit, which I believe is the Holy Ghost, now gives further instruction, information, teachings.

1 Nephi 4:13

[13] ...the Lord slayeth the wicked to bring forth his righteous purposes. It is better that one man should perish than that a nation should dwindle and perish in unbelief.

How about that statement where it says the Lord slays the wicked to bring forth his righteous purposes. Following down the sequence in verse 14:

1 Nephi 4:14-18

[14] And now, when I, Nephi, had heard these words, I remembered the words of the Lord which he spake unto me in the wilderness, saying that: Inasmuch as thy seed shall keep my commandments, they shall prosper in the land of promise.

[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.

[17] And again, I knew that the Lord had delivered Laban into my hands for this cause—that I might obtain the records according to his commandments.

[18] Therefore I did obey

Now let's go back to verse 11, the fourth line down, you see a little sequence here, notice he said:

1 Nephi 4:11

[11]...I also knew that he had sought to take away mine own life;

Go down to verse 14, second line:

[14] I remembered the words of the Lord which he spake unto me in the wilderness...

Verse 16:

[16]... I also knew that the law was engraven upon the plates of brass.

Seventeen:

[17] ...I knew that the Lord had delivered Laban...

Therefore because of this knowing and remembering, Nephi obeys. Do you see that sequence there? Interesting sequence. What can we learn about that from our lives? You see the processing of his thoughts as he's asked to do the most difficult thing he's ever done in his life. He's now facing that. And notice the processes that he goes through.

It's okay to process these things. When the Lord asked us to do something difficult he's prepared the way for you to accomplish it. All of these things, his knowing, his remembering,

and his obeying are all given to him by personal revelation. He's being impressed and inspired by the spirit of the Lord to follow this exact sequence that we read about here.

This slaying the wicked that the Lord may bring about his righteous purposes, we see all throughout the scriptures. The slaying of Laban here is a great stumbling block to many people. They realize that the spirit of the Lord is commanding Nephi to kill this man. They also realize the 10 Commandments forbids that. What they don't realize is that this contradiction, this paradox takes place throughout all of the scriptures.

For example, Noah in his day is surrounded by evil, gross evil, evil that we can't even comprehend and the Lord slays the wicked to bring to pass his righteous purposes. All through that period of time while Noah is building the ark, there are men and women who've obtained a level of faith and excellence to where they're literally taken up off the earth, translated from the Telestial world and carried up into the city of Enoch. That's a righteous purpose. Those people who are in that city of Enoch will return again to the earth in the latter days and fulfill the covenant made to Enoch concerning the New Jerusalem and the Jerusalem above meeting with the Jerusalem below.

The killing of the wicked at the time of Noah for the purpose of righteousness in that it saved eight people and brought them over the flood to become the Adam and Eve and the seed for all of mankind from there to the end of the world. In order for these righteous purposes to be brought to pass, that had to be many who were ushered in mass into the spirit world.

You can see where when Joshua was commanded to go into the Canaanite lands and literally wipe out everything that had the breath of life and it, man, woman, child, animal – you can read about that, you just pick up the book of Joshua and start reading and you'll see that the spared none. And when they did spare any contrary to God's command there **was** severe consequences.

Slaying the wicked to bring to pass his righteous purposes was to cleanse the land of the most gross evil, immorality and horrible practices that have ever been upon the face of the earth that were being committed by these people. They needed to be removed. Slay the wicked in order for God's covenant people to come in, inherit, bless, anchor the land, remove the curses and let it become a promised land, a land flowing with milk and honey.

This principle of Nephi being told to slay Laban is as ancient as written Scripture. Our brothers and sisters who are troubled by this chapter and 1 Nephi also don't have access to the Doctrine and Covenants, section 56, where the Lord says this:

D&C 56:3

[3] Behold, I, the Lord, command; and he that will not obey shall be cut off in mine own due time, after I have commanded and the commandment is broken.

So God says thou shalt not kill, you better obey that. However, in another place he says kill.

Verse four:

D&C 56:4

[4] Wherefore I, the Lord, command and revoke, as it seemeth me good; and all this to be answered upon the heads of the rebellious, saith the Lord.

He can do what he wants with his perspective. He who creates and gives life is the only one that can command that it be taken. I know people who're investigating the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and reading the book of Mormon, come to this part in 1 Nephi chapter 4, and they stop because this becomes a stumbling block to them.

If we understand that life and death as viewed by us in comparison to those who view it in the heavenly realms see things in a different way. That life and death become steps of progression in one's journey. Sometimes it is necessary for a person to be taken from this life in order for them to have a chance to obtain a better advantage in the world to come. It just becomes impossible for them to escape their circumstances in this life and it becomes a blessing for them to be transferred into a another realm.

If we were to know the rest of the story of Laban, we might feel differently about this whole experience. And in spite of this all of this is playing out a plan that was foreordained and known in advance.

Nephi takes Laban sword and cuts Laban's head off with his own sword.

There's another thing that the ancients understood and is carried over into many indigenous societies in that the mutation of a fallen foe, the mutating of an enemy's body was not just a vicious, brutal and uncivilized, in their minds it had a deeper meaning. The taking of a person's head, in ancient times, represented the total loss of that person's identity – not only in this world but in eternity. Let's based upon the idea that everything from the neck up controls everything from the neck down. When you took a person's head you literally made it impossible for the rest of the body to function or to provide any kind of danger or challenge to you at any time in the future. A cut throat or a decapitated body represents annihilation of that person

completely. The heart torn out of the body represented, anciently, the loss of that which was closest to you – your wife, your husband. And disembowelment represented the loss of posterity. So a cut throat or a severed head, a torn out heart, and disembowelment represented the loss of identity, loss of a spouse, and a loss of posterity. In essence, you've lost it all in those three moves-- now and in eternity. These were ancient penalties for violation of oaths and for and unrighteous acts.

The next few verses talk about Nephi dressing himself in Laban's clothing, his armor, girding on his sword. I know there's some questions about, what about the blood that would've been there with the decapitation. I have no idea. Perhaps at some future day will have the rest of the story in greater detail but as for now we only have a thumbnail sketch of what took place there.

He goes to the treasury dressed in Laban's armor. Zoram sees him, Nephi is able to disguise his voice so that he sounds like Laban, goes with Nephi to the treasury, removes the plates, and goes with him to carry him outside of the walls of Jerusalem.

When Laman and Lemuel and Sam see Nephi and Zoram coming, verse 28:

1 Nephi 4:28

[28] And it came to pass that when Laman saw me he was exceedingly frightened, and also Lemuel and Sam. And they fled from before my presence;

Interesting. Laban must've been a formidable warrior because at this point the odds are two against three and yet they flee for their lives. Nephi says:

1 Nephi 4:29

[29] ... I called after them, (a great symbol of the Lord calling after us) and they did hear me...

We need to hear the voice of the Lord calling after us.

[29]...wherefore they did cease to flee from my presence.

That's what we need to do when we hear the voice of the Lord we need to humble ourselves and turn to him instead of continuing away from him.

Now Zoram knows that something's wrong here and he begins to flee but Nephi in verse 31 says:

1 Nephi 4:31

[31] And now I, Nephi, being a man large in stature, and also having received much strength of the Lord, therefore I did seize upon the servant of Laban, and held him, that he should not flee.

You see we estimate that Nephi is around 17, 18 years of age and even if he was a strapping young man, it's the strength of the Lord that he receives that allows him to seize upon Zoram so that he cannot flee – absolutely cannot move.

Here Nephi enters into an oath with him in verse 32 that we talked about earlier:

1 Nephi 4:32

[32]...as the Lord liveth, and as I live ...if he would hearken unto our words, we would spare his life.

Here's the power of that oath:

[33] And I spake unto him, even with an oath, that he need not fear; that he should be a free man like unto us if he would go down in the wilderness with us.

Zoram is a servant. He's a bonds servant. He does not have the freedom of liberty that others have. He's bound to Laban. If we know the rest of the story it'd be interesting to find out how that took place.

Nephi makes some significant promises in verse 34, he says:

[34]...if thou wilt go down into the wilderness to my father thou shalt have place with us.

Returning to the tent of my father is a great symbol of returning to our heavenly father--safety in the family.

Verse 35:

[35] ...Zoram did take courage at the words which I spake. Now Zoram was the name of the servant; and he promised that he would go down into the wilderness unto our father. Yea, and he also made an oath unto us that he would tarry with us from that time forth.

Here's the power of oath taking and making in these days, in the Old Testament, in ancient times, verse 37:

[37] And it came to pass that when Zoram had made an oath unto us (this part right here), our fears did cease concerning him.

They gave no more concerned about him. That was the power of that oath.

Verse 38:

[38] And it came to pass that we took the plates of brass and the servant of Laban, and departed into the wilderness, and journeyed unto the tent of our father.

Great symbols there – the wilderness being this world and the adversity of it; the tent of her father being the presence of God the father; returning to that place of life and safety and light, refuge – great symbols there of salvation.

Now it's interesting, brothers and sisters, that three attempts were made to obtain the plates. One was made by persuasion, that failed. The other was made by purchase, and that failed. And the third one was by the shedding of blood and only that was successful.

I might and tonight's lesson by sharing with you some scriptures from the New Testament about the power of the blood of Christ. Remember that the number three has significance. It represents completion, perfection. These three times down to obtain the plates, why did it take three? Why not two? Why not four? Why three? And the third one is only successful through the shedding of blood.

The obtaining of the plates of brass for the Lehi colony represent salvation. They represent having the record of the language of their forefathers, having the prophecies of all of the prophets from Adam all the way down to Jeremiah. Without which there is no salvation, there is no redemption.

I'm reminded of the Scripture in Hebrews chapter 9 talking about the ancient sacrifices performed under the law of Moses where they sprinkled blood upon the altars. Verse 22 it says:

Hebrews 9:22

[22] And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.

Could it be that these three times down to Jerusalem to obtain the plates is teaching us something about the blood of Christ and its power to redeem and save God's children?

In first John chapter 1 verse seven, John said this:

1 John 1:7

[7] But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

Another beautiful Scripture is found in the very first chapter of the Revelation of John verse five, talking about Christ he said:

Revelation 1:5

[5] And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. (this part) Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,

And last of all in Revelation chapter 12, verse 11, speaking about overcoming the power of the devil, it says:

Revelation 12:11

[11] And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.

Well brothers and sisters, truly it is the blood of Christ that sanctifies and redeems us from all sin, makes it possible to be reunited and reconciled with our father in heaven. I testify to you of the efficacy of the atoning sacrifice and the bloodshed in Gethsemane and upon the cross for each of us.

I love my Savior and Lord Jesus Christ and I know that he has redeemed me from death, has forgiven me of my sins, and that I am made clean as I wash my garments in the blood of the lamb. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.