

Come, Follow Me: January 27 - February 2

1 Nephi 16 – 22

“I Will Prepare the Way before You”

By Third Hour



The need for food and direction and the trial of faith (1 Nephi 16):

In 1 Nephi 16, Nephi has finished explaining the meaning of Lehi's vision to Laman and Lemuel. The brothers seem to be repentant, increasing Nephi's hopes for them (verses 1 – 5).

The sons of Lehi and Zoram take brides from among the daughters of Ishmael (verse 7). The Lord then instructs Lehi to resume his journey into the wilderness. When the family arises in the morning, Lehi finds "a ball of curious workmanship" on the ground outside his tent (verse 10). The "Liahona" was not only a compass but messages from the Lord later appeared on it from time to time.

A compass "has a magnetic needle or a card that can rotate freely, and if positioned horizontally it will align itself with the magnetic field of the Earth and point Magnetic North-South" (historyofcompass.com).

Historians say it was invented in China between 200 and 100 B.C. and was used for fortune-telling for a very long time before it was ever used for navigating. The first compasses were very crude and nothing like the one Lehi found. If this is true, there

was no way for another group of people to gift this instrument to Lehi, no matter how advanced they were. This was a gift from God and astounding to Lehi and his family.

Lehi's family and friends began to journey further into the wilderness along the shores of the Red Sea, hunting for food with bows and arrows, stones, and slings. The Liahona directed them in the more fertile parts of the (now named) Arabian wilderness. In verse 18 we find the account of Nephi breaking his bow, which was made of "fine steel." Critics have said that this is impossible. A metallurgical engineer [left the following comment](#) on a discussion about the problem of fine steel at that time and location:

First some basic metallurgy. We call iron containing less than 0.1% carbon – Iron. We call iron containing 0.1 to about 1.5 to 1.8 Steel. Above that, we call it iron again. The early iron age did not start at 500 BC but possibly as early as 1000 BC and was though the working of Hematite, a very high-grade iron ore, through the bloom process. This produced high carbon iron which was like present-day cast iron – brittle and hard, but much better than any bronze weapon.

Damascus Steel was low carbon irons containing considerable amounts of vanadium which formed local areas of iron carbide leaving most of the matrix with carbon low enough to be considered a steel. So you had a matrix of steel with lots of hard bits of carbides which were great for sharpening.

But I digress. If you had a piece of meteoric iron, (less than 0.1% carbon), you would have to work it by softening the iron in a hot fire. The material of choice would be charcoal as it produces the hottest flame and can be made by incomplete burning of wood under a dirt blanket. As the metal is heated, and beaten, and reheated, it will absorb carbon from the charcoal. We do this today and call it case hardening. The bow itself would probably not be a single piece but consist of two "springs" of steel connected together by the handgrip. That would be a lot easier to make than one long spring.

Finally, this bow would be a princely item—found only among the rich—and would take a beast of a man to pull it. I find the references to Lehi's wealth sufficient to own such a prize, and it appears that Nephi may have had the powerful build necessary to pull it. Common bows had a pull of 20 to 30 pounds, but this bow could have had an 80 to 100-pound pull. Breaking it would have been a very sore loss.

The account of Nephi's broken bow was written by him when he recorded these chapters later in his life. Knowing that these accounts were written later helps us see what he considered (and the Lord considered) important to write about. This was a life-or-death emergency that tested the faith of everyone in the group, even Lehi's faith. How did Nephi show his "go-and-do" personality? How did he solve this problem and save his family? What lesson is there in the situation for us to learn from (verses 18 - 32)?

During this trial, messages began to show up on the Liahona. Why might these messages cause even Lehi to "fear and tremble" (verse 27)? After this, the group received instructions according to the "heed" which they gave to the Lord and to the Liahona. If the travelers were righteous, humble, and attentive, the Liahona showed the way and educated them in the ways of God. If they were lax, it ceased to work. What things in your own life function this way?

At the end of this chapter, Laman and Lemuel and others want to kill Lehi and Nephi and are rebuked by the voice of God. How could Laman and Lemuel so quickly forget their spiritual experiences once their logic told them they were being cheated? After they did humble themselves there began to be enough food for the family. What is the connection?

Nephi is commanded to build a ship (1 Nephi 17):

The group begins to see obvious blessings from God as they proceed in their journey. They are strengthened even though they are eating raw meat. Note that the Lord suspended some of the dietary laws in this case. Under the Law of Moses, animals must be slain humanely and then salted and bled out. Jews notoriously were and are non-hunters because it's so difficult to kill humanely.

The group had been in the wilderness for 8 years before they reached the area they called Bountiful. Look at 8-year stretches of your own life. Do you see any big changes or decisions?

Nephi immediately responds when he is commanded to build a ship, but it takes divine intervention to bring around his brothers to helping him. Starting in verse 23, Nephi responds to their complaining and refusing to help like any Jewish person of the time. The miracle of the Exodus from Egypt was the go-to story to rally people to faith and action. Nephi's recitation of the miracles of the Exodus is identical to the one found in the Passover recitation of deliverance.

The group sails toward the Promised Land (1 Nephi 18):



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With Laman and Lemuel's help, the ship is eventually finished and the family boards with supplies, honey, food, and seeds they had brought from Jerusalem. Laman and Lemuel and the sons of Ishmael and their wives become complacent and begin to behave coarsely, which greatly concerns the righteous among them. When Nephi rebukes them and calls them to repentance, they take him and bind him with cords (verse 11). In movies and art about the event, we see Nephi bound to a mast of the ship, battered by storm and waves. But the account only says he was bound. He may have been tied up in the hold of the ship.

The compass stops working, the ship is beaten back by violent storms, and Lehi and Sariah mourn nearly unto death. After 4 days, when the ship was about to be lost. Laman and Lemuel release Nephi and the weather calms. Counsel from Lehi to the rebellious does not really soften their hearts much, even though they realize the storms and lack of progress were because they had sinned and needed to repent. Even when the ship reaches the Promised Land, we don't see that Laman and Lemuel and the rebellious children of Ishmael had humbled themselves.

They arrive in the Promised Land (verse 23) and immediately begin to plant the seeds they had brought. The land is fertile and they harvest in abundance. Verse 25 lists some of the resources they discovered—a variety of metals and animals good for eating and for carrying burdens.

Nephi mentions the horse. This is an "anachronism" (out of place for the times and location) brought up by critics of the Book of Mormon. **Very new** discoveries have indeed found horse bones that date from the period, but an absence of evidence doesn't mean that horses didn't exist then. Notice as you read the Book of Mormon that no one mentions riding a horse and they are often included in lists of animals that are used for food or carrying burdens.

Nephi is commanded to make plates of ore (1 Nephi 19):

It's really interesting in the Book of Mormon to see various prophets, especially Mormon himself, mention that they don't exactly know why they are keeping certain records, abridging certain records and recording certain events. God is guiding them, but they don't have a full view of the power of what they are doing for the future. You will see in your own life, times when the Spirit has instructed you to do something when you don't know why. Later the reason becomes clear. Can you think of any events and relate them to your children or study partners?

One thing Nephi doesn't realize is that 116 pages of the translated Book of Mormon would be lost. He seems to be recording information that already exists, but the Lord in His wisdom knew that would be necessary.

In verse 7 we see Nephi's concern about their weakness in writing, probably due to the use of Hebrew combined with reformed Egyptian. He says, "Yea, even the very God of Israel do men trample under their feet; I say, trample under their feet but I would speak in other words—they set him at naught, and hearken not to the voice of his counsels." Do we see this happening today? How?

Nephi has received revelation as he has functioned as a prophet to his people and he has seen the coming of Christ and when that would happen. Nephi also quotes Zenos and Zenock, whose records we don't have. Why don't we have them? What are the possible reasons?

Nephi saw in vision the crucifixion and the dispersal of the Jews, their suffering at the hands of the Gentiles. In verse 16 he talks about the gathering of Israel. Note that all the chapters of Isaiah repeated in the Book of Mormon have to do with this promise of being gathered back. Nephi and his descendants always felt like exiles from their homeland, wanderers, and strangers. These chapters of Isaiah gave them hope.

In verse 20 Nephi says the Lord has shown him the captivity and sacking of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. Many emotions assault Nephi, grieving for the captive and dead of his people there, but also gratitude for being saved from this terrible event. His descendants would not receive a first-hand witness until they encounter the Mulekites, descendants of those who directly experienced the siege.

In verses 22 - 24 Nephi relates how he taught his family from the brass plates they brought from the House of Laban. "...for I did liken all scriptures unto us, that it might be for our profit and learning." How do you do this when you study the scriptures? Do you have a certain experience you can share?

Israel will go forth from Babylon (1 Nephi 20):

Here we have the first chapter in the Book of Mormon that repeats the writings of Isaiah with certain variations. It begins with the idea that God has continually revealed truth to Israel but has been rejected. He has had to chasten them for their wickedness but He will regather them from Babylon. Thus, the theme of wickedness, scattering, regathering. Nephi also sees that his people are a branch growing over the wall, as prophesied.

Israel will be gathered (1 Nephi 21):

Related to Isaiah 49, chapter 21 begins by speaking of Christ as the light to both Israel and the Gentiles. All the rest of the chapter refers to the gathering of Israel in the last days. The physical gathering, wherein kings and queens bear the Israelites on their shoulders, was fulfilled before Israel became a nation in 1948. It was the kings of Europe who headed the idea that the Jews should return to the Holy Land. It sounds altruistic but wasn't necessarily so. Many, many people hated the Jews and were happy to have them leave Europe.

Israel will be gathered and saved (1 Nephi 22):

Israel is still gathering physically to the Holy Land. When the scriptures say that they will begin to believe in Christ, this is also happening. Jews in America have a very low activity rate in their faith, and it is the same in Israel. About 16% of American Jews attend synagogue each Sabbath. In Israel, about 80% of Jews are secular or "non-observant." Many Jews marry outside the faith and many "assimilate," or become part of their local society and remain Jews in a traditional, but not a religious sense. Many are also becoming Christians.

Because of the Holocaust, the world population of Jews is less than the number of worldwide Latter-day Saints. The late Harold Bloom, a Jewish scholar who studied The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and considered Joseph Smith a prophet, said that the Jews and the Latter-day Saints are the only religions who are also peoples. The fact that the Church is so "young" makes this truly remarkable and a fulfillment of prophecy.

Nephi has been reading from the brass plates to his people and teaches them that everything from God is both temporal and spiritual. Nephi predicts the scattering of the descendants of his people by the Gentiles and then the "marvelous work and a wonder" that will come forth the restoration and the "translation" of the Book of Mormon. He predicts the destruction of all nations that fight against Zion.

Nephi predicts the Second Coming with the wicked being burned as stubble and the righteous being saved. In verse 26 he prophesies of the millennial reign of Christ. He closes with a testimony that the scriptures on the plates of brass (the Bible, including much of the teachings of Jeremiah, who was contemporary with Lehi) are true.

Book of Mormon videos for this lesson:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aZ-6BtQzo4A>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4TK6SE1s6IM>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KoRdKhCuj_w

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sqtfn0Fs68>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K8OzpTa-1og>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VQhu-s2YHGA>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nG35iDoraos>