

BoM 03: 1 Nephi 8–11, 15: Vision of Tree of Life

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‘Though argument does not create conviction, lack of it destroys belief. What seems to be proved may not be embraced; but what no one shows the ability to defend is quickly abandoned. Rational argument does not create belief, but it maintains a climate in which belief may flourish.’ (Austin Farrer) We can and should be articulate believers. (Elder Maxwell, *But for a Small Moment*, 56)

1. Hebraisms in the Book of Mormon

- a. **And it came to pass** (אָהָרַךְ or אָהָרַךְ = *vayehi*)
- b. **Many “ands”** (וְ) and repeated pronouns (e.g., his)
And it came to pass that he departed into the wilderness. **And** he left **his** house, **and** the land of **his** inheritance, **and his** gold, **and his** silver, **and his** precious things, **and** took nothing with him, save it were **his** family, **and** provisions, **and** tents, **and** departed into the wilderness. (1 Ne 2:4)
- c. I *dreamed a dream* (not: I dreamed), *build buildings*
- d. *plates of brass* (not: brass plates), *rod of iron* (not: iron rod)
- e. *sword of Laban* (not: Laban’s sword)
- f. *sixty and five* (not: sixty five)
- g. *with patience* (not: patiently), *with gladness*
- h. *precious above* (not: more precious than)
- i. *by the mouth of* (not: by)
- j. **No punctuation marks** in Original Manuscript or Hebrew
“And i beheld a river of water and it ran along and it was near the tree of which i was partaking the fruit and i looked to behold from whence it came and i saw the head thereof a little way of and at the head thereof i beheld your Mother sariah and Sam and nephi and they stood as if they knew not wether they should go and it came to pass that ...” (Original Manuscript of 1 Ne 8:13–14)
- k. **Chiasmus**: related words on each line ^A (1 Ne 8:10–12)
^AI beheld a tree, whose fruit was desirable
^Bto make one happy.
^CAnd it came to pass that I did go forth and partake of the fruit thereof;
^Dand I beheld that it was most sweet, above all that I ever before tasted.
^DYea, and I beheld that the fruit thereof was white, to exceed all the whiteness that I had ever seen.
^CAnd as I partook of the fruit thereof
^Bit filled my soul with exceedingly great joy;
^Awherefore, I began to be desirous that my family should partake of it also; for I knew that it was desirable above all other fruit.

2. Purpose: Teach Truth or Wisdom?

“*Truth is knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come*” (D&C 93:24)

Joseph: “if any person needed *wisdom* from God, I did; for *how to act I did not know*, (JS—H 1:12)

Wisdom: (1) capacity of judging rightly in matters relating to life and conduct; *soundness of judgment in the choice of means and ends*. (SOED=Shorter Oxford English Dictionary)

Marion G. Romney: The way to magnify your calling and to be one is “to learn the will of the Lord and then to do it.”

“Teach me all that I should *do*” (“I am a child of God”)

“A man would get nearer to God by abiding by [Book of Mormon] *precepts*, than by any other book” (Preface)

“He that *keepeth his commandments* receiveth *truth and light*, until he ... *knoweth all things*.” (D&C 93:28)

3. From Jerusalem to the Valley of Lemuel



4. Lehi’s Vision of the Tree of Life (1 Nephi 8)



Shibam (Hadramaut), the “desert Manhattan”

5. Nephi’s Vision: Interpretation and Examples (1 Ne 11–15)

Tree of Life = Love of God

Mary and the birth of Christ (11:13–22)

Fruit of the Tree = eternal life

4 generations of righteousness (12:10–12)

Strait and narrow path = path to tree of life

Understand, make, and keep covenants (13; 14)

Rod of iron = word of God

Son of God teaching and healing (11:24–25)

Apostles preaching (11:34)

Great and spacious building= pride/wisdom of world

Persecution of Christ and apostles (11:26–36)

Great and abominable church (13:1–9, 20–29)

Church of the devil (14:10).

Fountain/river of Filthy Water = Hell and its depths

Wickedness and war (12:13–15)

Mist of Darkness = temptations of the devil

Apostasy, wickedness, war (12:19–23; 13:1–9, 20–29)

Terrible Gulf = justice of God

Separates wicked from tree and saints. (12:18; 15:28)

Destruction of wicked before Millennium (14:18–28)

6. Two Ways: Death or Life

Alone in Dark and Dreary Wilderness	
Large and Spacious Field	
Gate to Way of Death	Gate to Way of Life
Heed temptation (mists) Blind eyes, Harden heart	Faith, Repentance Baptism, Holy Ghost
Church of the Devil	Church of the Lamb
Broad path	Strait and Narrow Path
Eat, drink, be merry Mock, despise, persecute	Seek and do God's will (rod), covenants, commandments
Consequences	Blessings
Depths of Hell (river) Captivity of Devil Cast out of presence of God	Eternal Life (fruit) Love of God (tree) Redeemed by Christ

What did the 4 groups of people do in the vision?

7. Four groups in the Parable of the Sower (Mt 13:4-8)

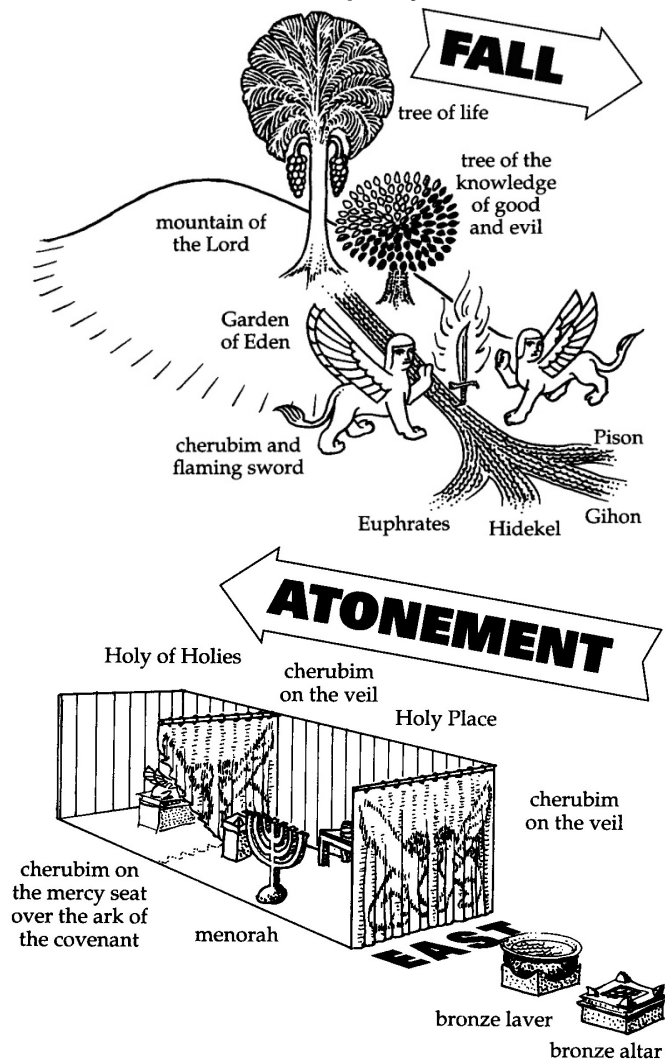
⁴ ... some seeds fell by *the way side*, and the fowls came and devoured them up:

⁵ Some fell upon *stony places*, where they had not much earth: ... And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.

⁷ And some fell *among thorns*; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them:

⁸ But other fell into *good ground*, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold.

8. Garden of Eden and Temple Symbolism



9. Pondering: a Path to Revelation

Nephi: As I sat pondering *in mine heart* I was caught away in the Spirit of the Lord (1 Ne 11:1)

Joseph: And while we *meditated* upon these things, the Lord touched the *eyes of our understandings* and they were opened, and the glory of the Lord shone round about. (D&C 76:19)

Holy Ghost Reveals to Mind and Heart

"I will tell you in your *mind* and in your *heart*, by the *Holy Ghost*, which shall come upon you and which shall dwell in your heart. Now, behold, this is the *spirit of revelation*." (D&C 8:2-3)

"The power of the Holy Ghost *carrieth it unto the hearts* of the children of men." (2 Nephi 33:1)

"The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, ... shall teach you all things, and *bring* all things to your *remembrance*, whatsoever I have said unto you." (Jn 14:26)

"You must *study it out in your mind*; then you must ask me if it be right, and if it is right I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall *feel that it is right*." ⁹ But if it be not right you shall have *no such feelings*, but you shall have a stupor of thought that shall cause you to forget the thing which is wrong..." (D&C 9:8-9)

Examples of pondering, feeling, remembering

Joseph F. Smith: "I sat in my room *pondering* over the scriptures; ² And *reflecting* upon the great atoning sacrifice... ⁵ While I was thus engaged, *my mind reverted to the writings* of the apostle Peter, ⁶ ... and as I *read* I was greatly impressed, ... ¹¹ As I *pondered* over these things which are *written*, the *eyes of my understanding* were opened, and the Spirit of the Lord rested upon me, and I *saw* the hosts of the dead. ... ²⁵ I *marveled*, ... ²⁸ And I *wondered* at the words of Peter... ²⁹ And as I *wondered*, my *eyes* were opened, and my *understanding quickened*." (D&C 138:1-29)

Years before the First Vision, what was Joseph pondering or studying out in his mind?

How did feelings guide him in what to do and not to do?

What did the Holy Ghost carry to his heart?

What did the Holy Ghost bring to his remembrance?

10. A Purpose of the Scriptures

Bruce R. McConkie: I sometimes think that one of the best-kept secrets of the kingdom is that the *scriptures open the door* to the receipt of *revelation* (*Doctrines of the Restoration*, 243).

Dallin H. Oaks: A scripture is not limited to *what it meant when it was written* but may also include *what that scripture means to a reader today*. Even more, scripture reading may also lead to current revelation on *whatever else the Lord wishes to communicate to the reader at that time*. ... By this means, we obtain access to what our Heavenly Father would have us *know and do in our personal lives today*. That is one reason Latter-day Saints believe in *daily* scripture reading. (*Ensign*, Jan. 1995, 7-9)

Dallin H. Oaks: As a result of [continuing revelation], when we read a scripture, we do not just ask ourselves, "What does it mean?" We ask ourselves, "What does it mean to me at this time and this circumstance?" (BYU Devotional, 1995)

Ezra Taft Benson: The Book of Mormon ... was *written for our day*. ... We should constantly ask ourselves, "Why did the Lord inspire Mormon (or Moroni or Alma) to include that in his record? What lesson can I learn from that to help me live in this day and age?" (*Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 6).

¹¹⁸ And as all have not faith, *seek ye diligently and teach one another words of wisdom*... out of the best books... by study and also by faith. (D&C 88:118; 109:7 [Kirtland temple dedication])