02 Book of Mormon 1 Nephi and Numerology

 Today we start the book of Mormon and actual text, but before we do I'd like to talk to you just a second about numbers and how the Lord uses numbers because it can be helpful in understanding symbols etc. There are certain numbers that God uses over and over. The number one number, perhaps the most holy and sacred number is 3. The number 3 points us to what is real, what is essential, what is perfect, what is substantial, what is complete, and what is divine. That's the number 3. So, whenever we see 3, or we see one thing happening, followed by the same thing happening a second time, then you can almost know that the third time is coming up, and that the Lord uses numbers.

Another important number besides 3 is the number 7. Seven is a traditional number of protection and completion. You can see the number 7 used in different places. We'll mention that as we go throughout the class. Another number is the number 12. 12 represents organizational perfection. So, whenever we have anything organized or an organizational situation, 12 represents the perfection of that. Another number is 70. 70 is another organizational number. Another number is 40. And so the Lord uses these numbers like: 40 days in the wilderness, it rained 40 days for Noah, and just on and on and on. It took 40 years to build the Salt Lake Temple, interestingly enough. So, these numbers come up all the time in the scriptures. Another number that we see that is used, not so much, but we have to pay attention to it, it's the number 8. Number 8 is the number the Lord uses to show accountability so that when his children are of 8 years of age he says they begin to become accountable before me. That's why we baptize our children at age 8. Another number that comes up is 5. This number represents the number of covenants we make in the temple. Five comes up over and over and over. These are all sacred numbers. Satan also uses numbers, so he'll use the number 13, just as a counterfeit. I wanted to go over those a little bit.

 Let's go back to the first book of Nephi, and as we turned right to the very first page, it says, the first book of Nephi. We skip over the first heading a bit, but it says: his reign and his ministry. Now, in the Book of Mormon we have a Priesthood order that is different than the Priesthood order we have in the Church. In the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, where there is an organized church, we have a Priesthood order that's different from these folks that had no organized church. There is no organized church at this time in the Book of Mormon. They have an order, and they have an organization, but it's based on the Priesthood and not on callings or positions or offices in an organization. The head of this order was a king and a Priest. Now, that king is not talking about how we see the King or Queen of England, it's not that. This is a Priesthood King, and when you go through the temple and you receive your initiatory ordinances, you're initiated into a new order of things. That what initiatory means. This means an introduction into something new. So, when you go to the temple, you're being introduced to something new--a new order of things, a new Priesthood order. In that, you are promised that if you are faithful, the day will come when men will be called and ordained and anointed as kings and priests and women will be called up and anointed as queens and priestesses. So, when we're talking about Nephi and his reign and ministry, we're not talking about a regular monarch type king. We're talking about a Priest hood king. So, when it says "his reign" you could put a little note out there and put "Priesthood Priest." so he is a Priest and a King in an order that the Book of Mormon calls "the Holy Order". These Priesthood kings can also function in a government or a societal position. See, there was no distinction at this time. That Priesthood King also functioned as a monarch in regulating the government affairs and the social interactions of his people. It carries both sides. He can rule and reign as a religious king and also as a society monarch, and they're all part of the same. So that's the kind of thing, and the order that he presides over is called "the Holy Order." You'll read this all through the B of M. It's everywhere. If we understand what the Holy Order is, we understand that it's an order of the Priesthood that's different than the order of the Priesthood that we have in the Church today. I guess we could say the order of the Priesthood in the organized Church today is called an ecclesiastical order, and this Holy Order is a patriarchal order, it has to do with families.

Student: Is one preparatory to the other? Mike: yes it is, as a matter of fact, you can see the preparation there before you go to the temple. You have to be a member of the Church, and you have to receive the ecclesiastical order of the Priesthood first. You have to be ordained to the Melchizedek Priesthood first, before you can be introduced into a higher order of the Priesthood. So, everything in the Gospel is designed to prepare us to go from one place to a higher place. Everything is preparatory. Even the Holy Spirit is preparatory to the function of the Holy Ghost. And you can receive the Holy Ghost and it's preparatory to the "Gift of the Holy Ghost", and that preparatory to the "fullness of the Holy Ghost", and so on.... everything prepares you to move up.

 Now, let's look at this account here, it says, written up at the top, this is an interesting thing. It says, "An account of Lehi and his wife Sariah, and his four sons, being called, (beginning at the eldest) Laman, Lemuel, Sam, and Nephi. The Lord warns Lehi to depart out of the land of Jerusalem, because he prophesieth unto the people concerning their iniquity and they seek to destroy his life. He taketh three days’ journey (start wondering right now why he taketh 3 days, why not 4 or 2 or 6, etc.) into the wilderness with his family. Nephi taketh his brethren and returneth to the land of Jerusalem after the record of the Jews. The account of their sufferings. They take the daughters of Ishmael to wife. They take their families and depart into the wilderness. Their sufferings and afflictions in the wilderness. The course of their travels. They come to the large waters. Nephi’s brethren rebel against him. He confoundeth them, and buildeth a ship. They call the name of the place Bountiful. They cross the large waters into the promised land, and so forth. This is according to the account of Nephi; or in other words, I, Nephi, wrote this record. "

 Now, in that, if you're looking, you can find the whole plan of salvation. You can find leaving the pre-mortal life, passing through the veil, descending down into mortality, you can see being in mortality up to a certain age (8), where you can join the Church and are taken into a safe place, you can see your trials in mortality, you can see being led by the Holy Ghost, you can see building a ship, crossing the great waters, the ship becomes a great atonement symbol, the great waters are the great dangers and the fallen world, and on the other side of the great waters, is the promised land--which is the Celestial Kingdom of God and exaltation. Wilderness always represents a wild place, so the wilderness is a good representation of mortal worlds, see, the mortality, the telestial world. The waters that separate us from the mortal world and the promised land represent all the trials and tribulations, tests and travails in the fallen world. How do you get across from the Telestial World/wilderness to the promised land/Celestial Kingdom? We have to get in a boat that takes you safely across the waters. So, the boat represents the Atonement of Jesus Christ, the only way to safely pass over these dangerous waters. Can you die in these waters? Yes, you can and many do. The reason why they die in these waters is because they don't have access to that saving ship, the saving vehicle, that will carry them safely across these waters, and land their souls on the right hand of God. So right up there you can see lots of different things. You can see the necessity of taking lives, you can see the necessity of marriage, you can see the necessity of the scriptures, the Brass Plates, and everything. So, the whole Plan of Life (the whole Plan of Salvation) is right there in that statement.

Student: They have the Liahona and other things to guide them, yes, they have the whole Plan of Salvation)

Mike: And, when they leave Jerusalem-- and Jerusalem represents a "holy place". So, leaving Jerusalem and going down into the wilderness, and you literally do go down, it's leaving the pre-mortal life and coming down into this life. It's interesting that from the time they leave Jerusalem to when they set sail on the waters of the ship, do you know how many years it had been to make that travel? Eight years! There's that "8" again. And, what happens? You're not accountable before the Lord for your sins until you reach 8 years old. At 8 years old, you better be accessing the ship! You better be getting on board the vessel, because if you don't get on the ship, you're going to die in the waters.

Student: How long did it take them to cross?

Mike: I don't know. The time the Jaredites took was nearly a year, and I think it was substantially shorter, but I don't know if there is a number associated with that.

 So, if you look at numbers, then numbers take on a whole new meaning. When I first starting seeing this, I was studying symbols. Well, the wilderness always represents the fallen world. Jerusalem is a heavenly place. Oh, they go from a heavenly place down into the wilderness, and I said, oh, "that's birth".

From a pre-mortal life down into a fallen Telestial world. When I saw that, I started looking closer. I thought, "they crossed the waters", "they build the ship", and everything started to come into place for me. And, in the ship they have light, especially the Jaredite barges, you know, "the Savior's presence"-- the divine light, and there is just all kinds of wonderful symbolism here.

 One of the things in the Church that we hear that I've heard almost all my life, is concerning the word "mysteries". I can't tell you how many times over my life I've heard people in the Church, older and well-meaning people, who I respect, and had a lot more knowledge of the Gospel than I did, a lot more experience, would tell me something like this: "You need to leave the mysteries alone." So, we grow up in the Church, somewhere I think that's a false tradition that's been plugged in, and Satan's been very, very successful in implanting that in the minds of the Latter-day Saints.

 Another one that you'll hear of is, if you don't understand something, people will say: "Well, it's not important to my salvation anyway". And they kiss it off. These are 2 common things that you will hear. I'm glad that we aren't hearing it as much as we used to. As a matter of fact, there is a commandment that you'll see through here, you are commanded to search out the mysteries. So, let's just get a definition of what a mystery is, first of all. A mystery is a "divine truth that can only be known through revelation".

Another one I like is "a sacred secret". I like that one a lot!

 So, right in verse 1 we see some interesting things. Lets go ahead and read that: 1. I, Nephi, having been born of goodly parents, therefore I was taught somewhat in all the learning of my father; and having seen many afflictions in the course of my days, nevertheless, having been highly favored of the Lord in all my days; yea, having had a great knowledge of the goodness and the mysteries of God, therefore I make a record of my proceedings in my days.

Now, does that sound like Nephi hid from or was afraid of the mysteries?

Student: It sounds like he was blessed by them.

Mike: He was blessed by them, and he had a great knowledge of the mysteries of God. What are some mysteries? Let's just take a couple of minutes here. What are no mysteries to Latter-day Saints are mysteries to the rest of the world. Let's take for example: the character of God. Let's just take his character. Let's say, if you were to go out to any Christians anywhere in the world, and say: "Tell me everything you know about God". They would really be hard-pressed to come up with an answer. They may say things like, "well, He knows all, He knows everything, He has all-power (and those are true), He's so big He can fill the whole universe, and yet so small He can dwell in my heart. So, I just ask this question, "Is God a man?" That right there starts to be a mystery for most people. I've asked this of Priests and Ministers, "Is God a man?"

They'll say things like, "Well, He's a man, but not a man like us." I say, "Well, would you explain what that means? Does He have a body? I'm a man with a body, does He have a body?"

All Christians will tell you "No, He's a spirit." And right there, without going any farther, on the basis of one thing, the character of God, the whole Christian world, is off-base and walking the wrong path.

Sis. Stroud: It's off 1 degree, one concept, and by the time it gets down to here and now, you're miles apart.

Mike: So, to us, that's no mystery. Before Joseph Smith restored the "key" of knowledge, that was as big of mystery to the people before the restoration as it continues to be for people who are not members of the Church. So, there are many things in the Church that we just say, "well, I'm surprised that everybody doesn't know this". But, the fact is, most don't. The great mysteries of the "Plan of Salvation": Who am I, where do I come from, why am I here, where am I going after death? None of them can answer those questions, and you and I sit here and we're blessed with that knowledge. So, what's a mystery to one, isn't a mystery to another, and Nephi knows great mysteries. He's had a knowledge of great mysteries of God and challenges us to do the same thing.

 Let's go back to where it says, "having been taught somewhat in **all** the learning of my father", okay, what do you suppose that means? It was important enough for him to list here and he put here that that was an important thing. His father taught him in ALL of his learning. What do you think that might be?

Student: I think that means that he was taught something that his father knew, maybe he didn't have the fullness at that point in his life, but I think that his father taught him everything that his father knew, whether it was secular, whether it was religious, whether it was scriptorial, for instance. So, everything that his father could teach him, he tried to teach him.

Mike: So, whether it was commerce/secular, religious, a little bit of everything, well-rounded education? Okay, I agree with that. Now go over to verse 2: 2 Yea, I make a record in the language of my father, which consists of the learning of the Jews and the language of the Egyptians.

 Now, at this time in 600 B.C., the greatest world power at that time was Egypt. There was another one coming up that was competing with it, and that was the Babylonian Empire. So, you had 2 great world powers that were coming up, one to the south of Jerusalem in Egypt, and up to the northeast of Jerusalem in what we call today, modern Iraq--which is Babylon. Down here you have an Egyptian King by name of Sheshonq, a pharaoh. And up here you have a man by the name of Nebuchadnezzar. In between is this little place called Jerusalem in that little area "there". Go from this place down to Egypt, or to Babylon, you have to pass through this little narrow corridor. On one side, to the west, you have the Mediterranean Sea, and on the other you have these huge trackless deserts, just no-man's-land. So, this becomes a natural land bridge between these 2 areas. That's one reason why Jerusalem's been fought over and bled over, and it's the site of many wars and destructions, because it's a natural, fertile bridge, where nations can pass from the south to the north, and then spread all over into the area we call Russia, and up into Turkey, and places like that.

 The business language of the people at this time was Egyptian. That was the language of commerce. they didn't have a lot to do with the Babylonians, but they did trade a lot with the Egyptians. The religious language was Hebrew. So, Nephi says, "I make a record in the language of my father, and later on we find out that this was called "reformed Egyptian", which I can only assume that this is some kind of a mixture between Hebrew and Egyptian. The B of M was written in that language, so kind of a mixture of those 2 things.

 Down in vs. 4, the King of Jerusalem at this time, is a man by the name of Zedekiah, he's a puppet king. What he tries to do, is the Babylonians came down and conquered Jerusalem and installed Zedekiah as a vassal king, which means they give him authority to "act" as a king, but he's really under the direction of the Babylonian Empire, and they're taxing them pretty good. They lost some people in that first war, and now what they're doing is they're going south and they're making alliances with Egypt, saying, "if you'll help us throw off the yoke of the Babylonians, then we will ally with you, and we'll have good trade and commerce, etc. The Babylonians hear about that, and that's what prompts them to come down and destroy Jerusalem. So, Zedekiah had a chance, and some of the prophets that are there in vs. 4 it says, "(my father, Lehi, having dwelt at Jerusalem in all his days); and in that same year there came many prophets, prophesying unto the people that they must repent, or the great city Jerusalem must be destroyed."

Let me give you the name of some of these prophets, you'll recognize them, they're written in the Old Testament: the most famous of them is Jeremiah. Lehi is a prophet, and there are other prophets working with him in Jerusalem. Another is called Nahum. You can find these in your O.T. there are books in O.T. named after these prophets. Zephaniah, Habakkuk, and Ezekiel. Now, Ezekiel was taken north, so I don't know if he is in Jerusalem at this time, but he is a contemporary. These men all lived at the same time. And Uriah. So, these are some of the O.T. prophets that you can read about, you can read their books. They were contemporary with Lehi and Zedekiah at this period of time.

Student: What about Daniel, was he up in...

Mike: He was up in Babylon. He had been carried away, but he was a contemporary. So these are the ones who are prophesying down south, before Jerusalem is destroyed, as far as I can tell. So, let's go to vs. 5.

5 Wherefore it came to pass that my father, Lehi, as he went forth prayed unto the Lord, yea, even with all his heart, in behalf of his people.

6 And it came to pass as he prayed unto the Lord, there came a pillar of fire and dwelt upon a rock before him; and he saw and heard much; and because of the things which he saw and heard he did quake and tremble exceedingly.

Mike: What do you think that he was shown in this pillar of fire? And, I think it's interesting that Lehi has a vision, and in this vision there's a pillar of fire. Does that sound familiar to something that we might know?

Student: Sure, it sounds like a burning bush, it also sounds like ?? surrounded by fire.

Mike: What about 1820?

Student: There was a bright light that came down.

Mike: "I saw a pillar of light, brighter than the sun at noonday. And it came down and I saw two personages."

Interesting that the pillar comes down and dwells on a rock. We teach ourselves to look at symbols, we can sometimes see the symbols. Was there a person in this pillar? "and because of the things which I saw and heard I did quake and tremble exceedingly."

Student: I don't know if there was a person in that but I kind of get the idea that Lehi was shown what was going to be happening.

Mike: What do you think he was shown? The destruction of Jerusalem? (yes) Very good. After this experience he was so wiped out that he goes to his house and collapses on his bed. Who does that sound like? Go back to the history of Joseph Smith, after Moroni appears to him 3 times in one night, the next morning he goes out to work in the field with his dad, and Moroni appears one more time in the middle of the day, and as he goes to cross over a fence, he collapses. As he wakes up, here's this Moroni standing there and delivers this same message. After that, his father comes up and says, "you look like you're awfully tired, why don't you go back to the house." So, he's excused from work that day because he was overcome and was sent back.

Let's go to verse 8: 8 And being thus overcome with the Spirit, he was carried away in a vision, even that he saw the heavens open, and he thought he saw God sitting upon his throne, surrounded with numberless concourses of angels in the attitude of singing and praising their God.

What just happened to Lehi here? Remember that Lehi is also a Priest and a King in the "Holy Order". His position has certain advantages, there's certain rights and privileges that go along with that. Here in vs. 8 is one of the privileges of the "Holy Order". What happens in vs. 8?

Student: He pierces the veil.

Mike: Right, he pierces the veil. He sees God in a vision. So we have a face to face visitation here. "I saw God surrounded with numberless concourses of angels." Interesting that God is sitting on a throne and there are people surrounding Him. Do we see that anywhere? Do we see people in sacred places, surrounding a circle? Sure. Things we think of in the temple. Let's go to vs. 9.

9 And it came to pass that he saw One descending out of the midst of heaven, and he beheld that his luster was above that of the sun at noon-day.

Mike: Notice that "One" is capitalized, so it's talking about a person, okay. And the one he saw decending is who? Jesus Christ. So, here Lehi has had a vision where he has seen the Father and The Son in a pillar of fire. Sound familiar? Let's go to vs. 10.

10 And he also saw twelve others following him, and their brightness did exceed that of the stars in the firmament.

Who are these? That's going to be the 12 Apostles. Verse 11:

11 And they came down and went forth upon the face of the earth; and the first came and stood before my father, and gave unto him a book, (Mike: It's interesting that when these people have these experiences, they are given something to read, for instance, Moses was given stone tablets, Ezekiel was given round, ancient scrolls, John the Revelator received sealed books, and Joseph received plates) and bade him that he should read.

So this is an interesting pattern of things that when you have this interview with God, you can probably expect to receive something that's in writing, something to read, if this is a pattern that goes through. So, when it comes time for us to have our experience with The Savior, and talk to Him, I suspect if the pattern's true, we'll be given or shown something that needs to be read, something that's in writing.

Student: Maybe we'll get the sealed portion of the B of M. Mike: Okay, the sealed portion of the B of M.

12 And it came to pass that as he read, he was filled with the Spirit of the Lord.

Mike: Now, lets go to vs. 13.

 13 And he read, saying: Wo, wo, unto Jerusalem, for I have seen thine abominations! Yea, and many things did my father read concerning Jerusalem—that it should be destroyed, and the inhabitants thereof; many should perish by the sword, and many should be carried away captive into Babylon.

Mike: Now, if you want a date on that, look at the bottom of the page. This is about 600 b.c. the destruction of Jerusalem took place in 586 b.c. So, we're 14 years away from that time, the fulfillment of that prophecy. Any questions or comments?

Let's go down to vs. 16.

16 And now I, Nephi, do not make a full account of the things which my father hath written, for he hath written many things which he saw in visions and in dreams; and he also hath written many things which he prophesied and spake unto his children, of which I shall not make a full account.

Nephi says that he isn't going to write all these things down, because my father already made a record of them. I'm going to abridge his record. Keep in mind that when Nephi is writing this, he's already in ancient America. He's look back, he's already writing these kinds of things. So, he is now abridging his father's record, later on. Most of these things he's talking about have already taken place. Let's skip on down to vs. 19.

19 And it came to pass that the Jews did mock him because of the things which he testified of them; for he truly testified of their wickedness and their abominations; and he testified that the things which he saw and heard, and also the things which he read in the book, manifested plainly of the coming of a Messiah, and also the redemption of the world.

Mike: skipping to the last part of this vs., what was in the book that Lehi saw? Go to the bottom of vs. 19. "the things which he read in the book, manifested plainly of the coming of a Messiah, and also the redemption of the world." Not only did he see about the destruction but he also saw about the coming of Jesus Christ. He knew His name, there's no question about it. All the prophets knew it. One of the things, what it said in vs. 9, "he saw One descending out of the midst of heaven," and he had the vision, you can bet he knew the "One", and it was Jesus Christ. Now let's go to vs. 20 and take a look at that.

20 And when the Jews heard these things they were angry with him; yea, even as with the prophets of old, whom they had cast out, and stoned, and slain; and they also sought his life, that they might take it away. But behold, I, Nephi, will show unto you that the tender mercies of the Lord are over all those whom he hath chosen, because of their faith, to make them mighty even unto the power of deliverance.

Mike: You want to make a statement on "tender mercies" Sister Stroud? (anything that comes to your mind).

Sis.Stroud: I think our lives are filled with tender mercies and don't even realize it. Any time that good things happen in our life, it's a tender mercy from the Savior, whether it's finding a lost pen or it's a thought to go help somebody who needs us. Everything that's in line with the Holy Spirit which we receive is a tender mercy.

Mike: Bro. Bednar had a great talk on tender mercies. I think it was his first talk as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in General Conference. You may want to look that up and read it under David A Bednar, Tender Mercies. The bottom of vs. 20 shows us one of the main purposes of the "tender mercies", if not THE MAIN purpose. It's to make us "mighty, even unto the power of deliverance". All of the "tender mercies", even if it's finding a lost pen, or the slightest little direction that comes through the Spirit. The purpose of that, ultimately, is to give us power so we can be delivered. Delivered from what?

Student: From the powers of Satan, from the Telestial World that we live in.

Mike: Exactly, and the word deliverance is a word that is used all throughout the O.T., all through the N.T., interesting word. In fact, one of the names of Christ is "The Deliverer". That might be a fun word to look up in a dictionary, a thesaurus, and see what the ramifications of that are.

Student: Another name for Satan is "the devourer".

Mike: Okay, interesting. "The devourer", and "the deliverer". Very good. Shall we go to Chapter 2? We're not going to read every verse, so we just want to skip down and look at a few things. Let's look at vs. 2. Here's something that, for lack of a better term, I call a "call-out". Now, a call-out is when the Lord takes his people, and they're in danger, this is part of the tender mercies and the deliverance of the Lord, and he removes individuals, or even whole societies from one place to another place, so that they can escape danger, distruction, and be delivered from a dangerous place to a place of safety.

Student: Just like he did for the LDS back in the 1800's. Mike: Yea. that's a classic example of a modern day call-out. He removed them right out of the United States. The Prophet was murdered, the consti-tutional rights were not honored at all, and so he took them right out of the United States, he took them into Mexico, Utah was Mexico at that time. Can you think of any call-out examples in the scriptures? The O.T., the N.T., our day, any other ones?

Student: You'd really have to wrap your mind around it, but in a way Adam and Eve were called-out of the Garden of Eden, so that they could progress from there. The Israelites were more or less rescued from Egypt. (Mike: that's a call out) But first they were more or less called out from where they were to get into Egypt by Joseph and his brothers, and of course we're talking about a call out right here where the family of Lehi is called-out from Jerusalem before that destruction.

Mike: What about the Jaredites, was there a call out there? And Noah and the flood. So, there's lots of places where people are called out from their society, called into a safe place so they can be delivered spiritually and physically. So, look at vs. 2.

2 And it came to pass that the Lord commanded my father, even in a dream, that he should **take his family and depart into the wilderness**. Now vs. 3:

 3 And it came to pass that **he was obedient unto the word of the Lord**, wherefore he did as the Lord commanded him.

Let's go down to vs. 4 and see what they take. There's some interesting things there. In vs. 4 we find out what kind of a man Lehi was and what kind of influence he had. Let's take a look:

**4 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.**

What can we learn in vs. 4 about Lehi?

Student: They have a lot of stuff/wealth.

Student: You can see that he is a wealthy, successful man, he was industrious, he accumulated a lot of nice luxuries, but he didn't praise them as his Gods, so to speak. He only took the things that were practical and would be needed for his family as they traveled in the wilderness.

Mike: Very good.

Sis.Stroud: I think it shows that he knew he wasn't coming back, because out in the wilderness, none of those things have any value. If he thought he was coming back, he would have taken valuable things to help establish himself later on.

Mike: A lot of LDS Book of Mormon scholars think he was a caravaneer, in other words, he transported and had a caravan business where he could transport trade goods from Egypt, on up into Jerusalem. The fact that he spoke Egyptian, the business language of the day and the language of the large civilization of the day, at that time, also tells us that he was very successful, maybe a trader of sorts. Now go and look at vs. 15 and compare what you just read with vs. 15.

15 And my father dwelt in a tent.

Isn't that interesting? We go from, we can assume a pretty nice house, with a land of inheritance with gold and silver and precious things and goes to live in a tent! Now, what can we learn from that? We can also learn that that's a great symbol of something we'll hear about latter called "condescending". Notice that this is all voluntary. Did his children all feel about this the same way he did?

Student: Absolutely not! Mike: Absolutely not! So, we've got problems right there, and some of his children are centered on the wealth, and the property, and the prosperity, and they don't believe, even his wife has a hard time, you'll see here. This was not easy on Sariah. Lehi seems to be the one to say, "I'm going to do this, and we're all going to go." Even Nephi struggles with it, as we'll see. He has to have a special experience in order to have the same faith and trust that his father has. That's what we'll see in just a minute. This ends up being quite a bit of a test. You put yourself in the same situation and ask. So, here is this family going from a high place of wealth and prosperity and prestige, and going from this, down to a tent!

Student: I don't know what kind of sins Lehi had, but I don't think being humble was one of them. And, I think if Lehi was not humble, this would have been a serious problem, like for Laman and Lemuel. But, if you are humble, then it isn't a challenge at all, you just follow God, and just do what you're asked.

Mike: Would it be easier for you to just be obedient this way, if you had talked with God face-to-face and seen Him and Christ and had open visions about what's happening in Jerusalem and you knew what was going to happen in 14 years? Would it make it easier for you to be obedient and leave everything behind?

Student: Absolutely.

Mike: Absolutely. Did the rest of his family have this vision at this time?

Student: No Mike: No, he's the only one. So, they're having to operate strictly on the word of Lehi. I really think that after what Lehi saw here, that it was not difficult for him to drop everything and leave. So, he knew that in 14 years, it was all going to be confiscated and taken away anyway. Even the great temple of Solomon, which was built there, the temple of Solomon, that's the temple that Lehi worshipped at. It's there. Lehi even saw in vision the destruction of that temple. The Arc of the Covenant is behind the veil of the Holy of Holies still. It's after the Babylonians come down and destroy Solomon's Temple that the Arc goes into this mysterious exile. We don't know where it went. So, the symbol of God's presence among His people, which is the Arc of the Covenant, at this point in history, is going to be removed. Among the Israelites it's being removed for the next 2000 years. It's still gone. The symbol of God's presence among God's people, the House of Israel, was removed. So, this was a total removal of every-thing, and they go away into the wilderness, with nothing but relying on Lehi's vision. He says, "I've seen this, I know it's going to happen." But, Nephi hasn't seen it yet and that's the key. Let's go over to the page. They obey the Lord and travel, in vs. 5, but they travel with different attitudes. Everyone in this group has a different attitude. No two attitudes are the same. You're going to find out that Sariah has some struggles. Laman and Lemuel really do, and Nephi, you'd think that Nephi is always there, but we're going to find out in this chapter that he's also struggling. Now look at vs. 6:

6 And it came to pass that when he had **traveled three days in the wilderness**, he pitched his tent in a valley by the side of a river of water.

Mike: There's that 3 days, symbolic of complete separation of Lehi's colony from the wickedness of the Jews.

Student: What about Sam? It shows that he was a good kid, and supported his brother and father. There's not much written about him.

Mike: There is not much written about him.

Student: Was he just like a casual type...

Mike: I don't know. It's interesting. And later on we're going to hear about Jacob, who wasn't even born yet. Jacob and Joseph were born during the 8 years in the wilderness. Jacob becomes a mighty prophet. But, we don't hear much about Joseph either. So, Sam and Joseph are 2 that we don't know much about, and by the way, they also have sisters. Student: Right.

Mike: There's some sisters in here that we don't know anything about, except that they end up marrying some of the sons of Ishmael. So, there's some missing points in here that we don't know, and I assume that they would be on the larger record--the large plates, and especially the records of Lehi that Nephi is going to abridge now. So, there's a couple of books being kept here. Lehi is writing his own record, and Nephi starts writing his own record, then he's told to abridge Lehi's record, and so on. So, there's lots of different things happening.

 So, 3 days, then, becomes a symbolic separation, a complete separation of Lehi's colony with the wickedness of the Jews: completeness, three days is complete. When you read that, you ask yourself, "why didn't they go 4 days, why did they stop at 3 days?" The Lord told them: "This is far enough. You're far enough away that you can be safe". But, the Lord also says, "You're going back there." They are about to make several trips back. So, 3 days is far enough, but not too far. So, that number, then, becomes symbolic.

Okay, we've got some blessings on Laman and Lemuel here. I don't know that I'm going to spend any time in there, but I'd like to go over to vs. 16. Now, here's Nephi, and we see all these things going on, they're down in the wilderness. Let's look at vs. 16 and see what it says.

 16 And it came to pass that I, Nephi, being exceedingly young, nevertheless being large in stature, and also having **great desires to know of the mysteries of God**, wherefore, I did cry unto the Lord; and behold he did visit me, and did soften my heart that I did believe all the words which had been spoken by my father; wherefore, I did not rebel against him like unto my brothers.

Mike: Okay, stop right there. Now, there's something right there that we can really learn in that verse. First of all, he says, "I've been blessed with great desires". I think that's one of Nephi's great gifts. I think "having great desires" is one of the great Gifts of the Spirit. His desire is to know the mysteries of God. Now, if the B of M is for us, then we should also have that same desire. We should know what these mysteries are. There are things that the Lord has in reserved that can only be learned through revelation, and we need to know what those things are.

So, here's a pattern: #1: he has great desires. Let's see if we can find a list. The B of M has lists. The B of M has a great thing going: 1,2,3,4. 1,2,3,4,5. It's better than the Bible or anything, and here we have a little 5-step list.

#2: I did cry unto the Lord

#3: He did visit me.

Student: It says "mighty prayer".

Mike: Oh yea, absolutely. You could say the 6 steps to turn a potential rebel into an obedient pupil, and how to receive the 2nd Comforter. Ask yourself this question: Would Nephi have been a murmurer like Laman and Lemuel if he did not follow these 6 steps? The potential was there, but because of these steps he said, "I did not rebel". Which probably means if I hadn't done this, I probably would have rebelled.

Student: It says, "He did soften his (Nephi's) heart." Which means that it wasn't soft to begin with. It started out hard.

Mike: Good point. #4: Soften my heart. #5: I did believe all the words which had been spoken by my father, wherefore I did not rebel against him, like unto my brothers.

There's a great little list on how to obtain the great mysteries. If we're wishing to obtain the mysteries, he just gave us a 5-step list on how to do it. Let's go over to Section 46 of D&C for just a minute. Let's look at some of the Gifts of the Spirit here. Let's look at vs. 13.

13 To some it is given by the Holy Ghost to know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that he was crucified for the sins of the world.

Mike: So, there's a gift there, to know certain things through revelation. Look at vs. 14:

 14 To others it is given to believe on their words, that they also might have eternal life if they continue faithful.

You have 2 groups of people here. You have people who have direct revelation from the Holy Ghost, to where they **know Christ** (not to just know about Him) and then vs. 14 is a gift for others to just believe on the words of others who **know**. Now lets go back and see what we've got here. I think Nephi's gift was to Know, but look at Sam in vs. 17 of 1 Nephi 2: " 17 And I spake unto Sam, making known unto him the things which the Lord had manifested unto me by his Holy Spirit. And it came to pass that he believed in my words."

See, Sam's gift is vs. 14 in Section 46, "and to others it is given to believe on the words of those that know."

And it also says that they might have eternal lives. So believing in the words of the prophets, believing in those who know is also powerful. It's not a small gift.

Student: But it looks like Nephi maybe had the same gift. Maybe he had both, because he believed in the words of his father.

Mike: Excellent, good point. Then vs. 18-19 Laman and Lemual absolutely reject it all.

 18 But, behold, Laman and Lemuel would not hearken unto my words; and being grieved because of the hardness of their hearts I cried unto the Lord for them.

Next, this is one of the first times we see one of the great Gifts of the Spirit, and I think this is a sixth step in receiving the Second Comforter.

 19 And it came to pass that the Lord spake unto me, saying: Blessed art thou, Nephi, because of thy faith, for thou hast sought me diligently, with lowliness of heart. One of the greatest Gifts of the Spirit, I think, is "lowliness of heart". When you find that in the B of M, it's mentioned over and over, you are always going to find the "higher blessings" of the gospel. Student: Does "lowliness of heart" and "humble" mean the same thing?

Mike: I think they're all related. I think it's tied in with a "broken heart", with "meekness" and with "lowliness of heart", but they're all mentioned separately. So, it shows that even though there are similarities, there are also some differences. A lot of times with "lowliness of heart" it's also mentioned in conjunction with "meek and lowly of heart". That combination is almost always used together. Sis. Stroud, any comments on that?

 Sis. Stroud: It sounds to me like humility. Mike: Okay.

Now, for the first time we're going to find a promise that's mentioned I don't know how many times, it would be interesting to see. But, it's mentioned throughout the B of M and vs. 20:

20 And inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments, ye shall prosper, and shall be led to a land of promise; yea, even a land which I have prepared for you; yea, a land which is choice above all other lands.

Mike: Now, symbolically we could say "that's ancient America that they were brought to", but ultimately, the land that is choice above all other lands, that the Lord has prepared, a land where there will be eternal prosperity, will be exaltation in the highest degree of the Celestial Kingdom. So, there's these great symbols. Vs. 21:

 21 And inasmuch as thy brethren shall rebel against thee, **they shall be cut off from the presence of the Lord.**

That last part is the back side of the promise. Now, we've got a problem here because the patriarchal order, they seem to have trouble. This Patriarchal Order of the Priesthood, the "family order", and the right to be a King and a Priest traditionally belongs to the firstborn righteous son of a father who is a King and a Priest. So, in the B of M, you'll find that certain sons, by right, can inherit the position and power and blessing of the father. Some of them don't want to do it. You get to Mosiah's sons, like Aaron, was apparently the oldest of all of those, and when it came time to choose a new king, it was Aaron's right to be that king. We can assume it was his right, because he was the firstborn, but he refused. He didn't want it. You see the same thing in Ether when it comes time for the sons Jared to become the king, some of them wanted it, and it goes down the line to about the third or fourth son, and Jared's just scared to death, and says "surely evil cometh of this thing". You know, they want a king, they want a king. So, the problem here is that those who are the firstborn latch on to the idea that it's my right to preside and rule and reign, and they miss the part that it's your right, if you are righteous. That's the part that they miss over and over. So, we have Abraham and his sons, we have Isaac and his sons, and we have Jacob and his sons, and NONE of the firstborns of those 3 patriarchs were worthy to rule and reign in the place of their father. So, remember that the right of rulership as a king and a priest belong to the firstborn son, by right, if they are worthy. If they are not, it passes to the first worthy son, to do that. This right here, in vs. 22, look what the Lord says:

 22 And inasmuch as thou shalt keep my commandments (he's talking to Nephi, here), thou shalt be made a ruler and a teacher over thy brethren.

Why? Because, look at vs. 21. They rebelled against the Lord. Laman had the right of the firstborn in the patriarchal order, but he lost it. Lemuel, the next one lost it, and so it fell to Nephi.

Student: What about Sam? Mike: Sam is apparently the 4th son. Student: in the beginning, Sam is listed before Nephi. Mike: I don't know. Good question. Student: maybe he just said "thanks, but no thanks". Mike: Who knows? Okay, vs. 23:

23 For behold, **in that day that they shall rebel against me, I will curse them even with a sore curse**, (and we're going to see that) and they shall have no power over thy seed except they shall rebel against me also. Now, vs. 24 is interesting, ancient, and in our day.

24 And if it so be that they rebel against me, they shall be a scourge unto thy seed, to stir them up in the ways of remembrance.

The word scourge in Hebrew means "whip". That's a scourge. So, here the Lord is telling them that there is going to be 2 groups of people, societies, that are going to come out of these brothers, out of Nephi and Sam, and later, out of Jacob and Joseph, you're going to have a group of people that are called Nephites. Then, out of Laman and Lemuel, you're going to have a group of people called Lamanites. Vs. 24: If the they (the Nephites) rebel against me, they (the Lamanites) will be a scourge unto thy seed (the Lamanites) to stir them up in the ways of remembrance. So, the Lord's going to use these people--back and forth--to be a whip. Sometimes these scourges are scourged unto death and ultimately they are scourged into annihilation and extinction, in the case of the Jaredites and the Nephites. Okay, now lets look and see how a scourge is used. Let's go to Helaman 12 real quick and you can see a scourge at work in vs. 3:

3 And thus we see that except the Lord doth chasten (scourge) his people with many afflictions, yea, except he doth visit them with death and with terror, and with famine and with all manner of pestilence, they will not remember him.

So the Lord uses nations to scourge other nations to bring them into remembrance, and, hopefully bring them into a state of humility where he can bless them. The whole purpose behind scourging and chastening is to change people to where the Lord can bless them. If they're in a condition where they can't be blessed, he uses this process of chastening and scourging to bring them through the process of humility and repentance, to where he can bless them.

Student: Do you remember that guy we were talking to over in ?? where the guy said 9-1-1 was a way the Lord was trying to get people to repent?

Mike: exactly, and I believe that. Interestingly, all through the B of M history, not once will the Nephites ever outnumber the Lamanites. Not once, they are always lesser in number and there's a reason for that. The people of the Lord, in this situation, are always lesser in number. God people, those who love Him and keep his commandments, are always less numerous. Never, they are always smaller. Why do you think that is? Because, they're numerically, out-gunned, out-manned in every way. So why does the Lord use that pattern, that formula, that His people are always numerically inferior to their enemies? What's behind that?

Student: I'm not sure. I don't know if it's a reversal from Heaven where the third part rebelled and the 2 parts came down to earth, and on the other part, how we save people, we teach people and bring them into the Church one at a time, where Satan takes whole families away. I don't know if it has something to do with that?

Mike: Good thought. Go back to the bottom of vs. 24. He "scourges them to stir them up in the ways of remembrance". Remembrance of what?

Student: To remember what God is and what his commandments are.

Mike: Are you going to get through this life without Him? Student: No

Mike: Are you going to get across the great waters without a ship? Absolutely not! And, if you are going to be delivered, you have to know that the only reason you ARE delivered is because of the Deliverer, because, you're not going to make it on your own. At points where the Nephites win the battle by the strength of their arm, they give no credit to God. They assume the credit and strength on their own. So, there's no remembrance, no recognition of divine help. I think that the numbers are always superior on the enemies' side so that it's easier for the Children of God know that if we're protected, if we're blessed, if we prosper, surrounded by numerous hosts that want to destroy us, it's because of the goodness, the mercy, the grace, and the tender mercies of the Messiah.

Student: Bro. Stroud, you see this other places also. For instance, when the Israelites are battling, and Moses has to keep his staff and arms raised to win the battle, and if he puts it down, he starts losing the battle. Clearly, they are winning because of the power of God through the Prophet.

Mike: Ever wondered why he's told to hold the rod up, and they have to support his hands?

Student: What we learned is that it's to show that we sustain our Prophet.

Mike: Let's go a little bit farther, watch. His hands up is a symbol of the crucifixion. All through the O.T., the Deliverer says you are delivered with an "outstretched arm". Christ's arms were outstretched. He was nailed to a cross. So, this whole thing with Moses' hands, Moses becomes a Christ symbol, and his hands out has become a symbol of his crucifixion and the atonement. It's the only power of deliverance. So this all becomes great symbols. Another one is: "the mighty arm of the Lord". You think of arms, and you think of outstretched arms and nailed hands, it all becomes just graphic symbols. Without the atonement, we can do nothing. Let me give you one more on a national level. On a national level, the scourging, the United States of America is the "promised land". The people who have lived in the Americas are definitely the "promised people". There are promises there, that as long as they worship the God of the land, which is Jesus Christ, they'll be protected and prospered. So, back to the question. Vs. 20:

20 And **inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments, ye shall prosper**, and shall be led to a land of promise; yea, even a land which I have prepared for you; yea, a land which is choice above all other lands.

First of all, they'll be led to it. Then, it says you'll prosper in the land. I'll keep you safe. You'll be my people. You'll dwell in safety, even though you're surrounded by numerically superior enemies, you don't have anything to worry. All you have to do is keep my commandments. If you don't, then what does He do? He lowers the barriers, He lowers the shields, and the enemies come in. Look what's happening in America right now. We are kicking God out of everything. We are removing Him out of everything, and guess what? We have never been more threatened or vulnerable to outside enemies. The Lamanites of the latter days are about to come in and **scourge** the Nephites of the latter days. America is about to be beat up bad. Why? Because we expel the God of the land, who is Jesus Christ. So, there's another symbol. We are about to be scourged. It will be a heavy one, but we will survive. After the scourging, the country will come out cleansed, purified, and willing and able to be able to stand in the presence of the Lord. Okay, any questions or comments? So, there's some things in the first 2 chapters to look at. It will move a little quicker from here on out, because we've set some stages on some things as we've talked about it.