an iron rod (representing God’s word) leading to
the tree and extending along the bank of a river.
Many people pressing forward to reach the path
became lost in a mist of darkness (temptations);
some reached the tree and partook, only to be-
come ashamed and fall away; others, following the
rod of iron, reached the tree and enjoyed the fruit.
On the other side of the river Lehi saw a large
building (the pride of the world) whose inhab-

ants ridiculed those eating the fruit. LDS scholars
have pointed out that the features of Lehi’s dream
are quite at home in the desert in which Lehi was
traveling (CWHN 6:253–64; cf. Griggs; Welch).

Lehi’s prophecies concerned the future re-
demption of Israel. He spoke of the destruction of
Jerusalem (587 B.C.), the taking of the Jews to Bab-
ylon, and their subsequent return to Jerusalem.
He foretold the mission of John the Baptist and
the Messiah’s coming, death, and resurrection.
Finally, Lehi compared Israel’s eventual scattering
to “an olive-tree, whose branches should be bro-
ever broken off and . . . scattered upon all the face of
the earth” (1 Ne. 10:12; cf. allegory of Zenos).

In the wilderness Sariah bore two sons, Jacob
and Joseph (1 Ne. 18:7). Apparently the journey
was so difficult that she and Lehi aged substan-
tially. During the transoceanic voyage, their grief—
caused by the rebellion of their two eldest sons—
brought them close to death (18:17–18).

In the New World, Lehi gathered his family
before his death to give them final teachings and
blessings (2 Ne. 1–4). He taught them that he had
received a great promise regarding his descend-
ants and the land they now possessed. This prom-
ise was conditioned upon their righteousness: “In-
asmuch as ye shall keep my commandments ye
shall prosper in the land; but inasmuch as ye will
not keep my commandments ye shall be cut off
from my presence” (2 Ne. 1:20; cf. Abr. 2:6).

Lehi addressed his son Jacob about the plan of
salvation (2 Ne. 2). Instead of using imagery, he
explained it plainly and logically. He taught that
while all know good from evil, many have fallen
short. However, the Messiah has paid the debt if
men and women will accept his help with a con-
trite spirit. He further explained that a fundamen-
tal opposition in all things exists so that people
must choose. He reasoned that, as freedom of
choice allowed Adam and Eve to fall, it permits
each to choose between “liberty and eternal life,
through the great Mediator of all men, or to choose
captivity and death, according to the captivity and
power of the devil” (2 Ne. 2:27).

Before giving his final blessings to others in
the family (2 Ne. 4:3–11), Lehi spoke to Joseph,
his youngest (2 Ne. 3), mentioning two other Jos-
eph: Joseph who was sold into Egypt, and an-
other, of whom the first Joseph had prophesied—
Joseph Smith. He then set forth Joseph Smith’s
mission of bringing forth the Book of Mormon,
prophesying that “a cry from the dust” would sum-
mong Lehi’s seed (2 Ne. 3:19–25), and he promised
the sons and daughters of Laman and Lemuel, “in
the end thy seed shall be blessed” (2 Ne. 4:9).

After Lehi’s death, family dissentions forced
Nephi and others who believed the revelations of
God to separate from the group led by the two
oldest brothers, causing a rupture in the colony.
While Lehi lived, his family stayed together, a
demonstration of his leadership abilities.

[See also Book of Mormon: First Book of
Nephi.]

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LEVITICAL PRIESTHOOD

Levitical Priesthood is a rarely used term today,
and it is sometimes applied to the aaronic
priesthood (Heb. 7:11; D&C 107:1, 6, 10). Moses
and his brother Aaron belonged to the tribe of Levi. Latter-day revelation indicates that
before Moses died, the Melchizedek Priesthood
and the higher law of the gospel were withdrawn
from the Israelites because of their disobedience.
Aaron and his sons were then given a lesser
priesthood to administer the lesser Law of
Moses as priests in Israel (D&C 84:18–28; Ex.
28:1). To assist Aaron and his sons, other worthy
male members of the tribe of Levi were also given
authority in the lesser priesthood, although they
could not be priests. The keys of that priesthood remained with Aaron and his direct posterity (MD, pp. 9–10; Widtsoe, pp. 12–17). Hence, the lesser priesthood was called the Aaronic Priesthood, after Aaron, but is sometimes referred to as the Levitical Priesthood because all those who possessed it in ancient times belonged to the tribe of Levi (Num. 3:12–13). In the strict sense the Levitical Priesthood is a lesser part of the Aaronic Priesthood, held among those who were Levites, but not of the family of Aaron. The Doctrine and Covenants states that “there are, in the church, two priesthoods, namely, the Melchizedek and Aaronic, including the Levitical Priesthood” (D&C 107:1). It is anticipated that in the restoration of all things, the sons of Levi will once again function in the Levitical Priesthood on the earth (Mal. 3:2–3).

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LIAHONA

The Liahona was a compass or director “prepared . . . by the hand of the Lord” for the Book of Mormon prophet Lehi as he and his family traveled in the wilderness (2 Ne. 5:12). It was shown to the Prophet Joseph Smith and the Three Witnesses in 1829 along with the Book of Mormon plates (D&C 17:1). The Liahona was also understood as a symbol for the words of Christ: “For just as surely as this [Liahona] did bring our fathers, by following its course, to the promised land, shall the words of Christ, if we follow their course, carry us . . . into a far better land of promise” (Alma 37:45).

Described as a ball made of fine brass and “of curious workmanship,” it had two spindles, one pointing the direction Lehi’s family should travel (1 Ne. 16:10). The term “Liahona” appears only once in the Book of Mormon (Alma 37:38). It was usually referred to as “the ball” (1 Ne. 16:16, 26-27; etc.), “compass” (1 Ne. 18:12; Alma 37:43-44; etc.), or “director” (Mosiah 1:16; cf. D&C 17:1).

Lehi found the Liahona, provided by the Lord (Alma 37:38), outside of his tent door while camp-

Lehi and His People Discover the Liahona, by Arnold Friberg (1951, oil on canvas, 43” × 61”), in the South Visitors Center, Temple Square, Salt Lake City. While traveling in the wilderness south of Jerusalem, the Book of Mormon prophet Lehi and his family found the Liahona, a compass or director prepared by the Lord.