Lesson 2
1 Nephi 1–7

Historical background for Lehi’s flight from Jerusalem (all years are BC)

837 Syria takes the border cities of Israel captive.

C. 795 Israel defeats Judah in battle and plunders the temple.

792–697 Isaiah prophesies in Judah.

732 Assyria defeats Syria.

730–722 Assyria conquers Israel; the end of the northern kingdom.

708 Judah rebels against Assyria’s domination, making an alliance with Egypt—against Isaiah’s advice.

670 Assyria defeats Egypt.

605 Nebuchadnezzar’s armies defeat Egypt, making Babylon the dominant power of the region. Babylon’s armies attack Jerusalem as an Egyptian ally and take thousands captive, including Daniel.

598 Concerned about rebellion, Nebuchadnezzar again sends his armies and confederate armies from Edom, Ammon, and Moab against Jerusalem. King Jehoiakim dies, and his eight-year-old son, Jehoiachin,
is placed on the throne. Jehoiachin reigns for three months, giving Nebuchadnezzar all of the temple treasures as tribute. Nebuchadnezzar takes thousands more into captivity, including Ezekiel and especially those from leading families, the artisans, and the government officials. Nebuchadnezzar appoints another son of Josiah, Mattaniah, as king, changing his name to Zedekiah. Lehi is called as a prophet and leaves Jerusalem with his family.

c. 590 In spite of his promise of loyalty to Nebuchadnezzar, Zedekiah forms an alliance with Edom, Ammon, Moab, Phoenicia, and Egypt, and they rebel against Babylon. Jeremiah prophesies that the rebellion will be unsuccessful and Babylon will continue to dominate Judah.

587 Under the personal leadership of Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian army lays siege to and conquers Jerusalem. Zedekiah flees and is captured at Jericho. One month after the fall of Jerusalem, Nebuchadnezzar’s army burns the city, destroying the temple and the palaces and tearing down the city walls. The ark of the covenant disappears. Much of the remaining population is taken into captivity; many flee to Egypt. But a significant portion also remain behind.

1 Nephi 1

Verses 6–15: Lehi has two visions, and the second begins with him seeing “God sitting upon his throne, surrounded with numberless concourses of angels in the attitude of
singing and praising their God” (verse 8). Why is that the way he sees the celestial kingdom, as a place of praise rather than a place of celestial work?

In verses 9–11, Christ appears to Lehi and gives him a book to read. Is it significant that this revelation occurs by means of a revealed book rather than by Christ speaking to Lehi or in some other way? (Compare Ezekiel 2:9; Revelation 5:1–5; 10:2, 8–10.)

Verse 13 tells of the woes that are to come to Jerusalem, and verse 14 follows immediately with Lehi’s praise of God. Then verse 15 tells us that Lehi’s heart was filled with joy because of the things he had seen. Since the only thing we are told about what he has seen is that Jerusalem will be destroyed, how do you explain his joy?

Verse 20: In the last sentence of this verse, Nephi stops to talk about why he is writing: to “show . . . 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.” The phrase “tender mercies” is from the Psalms. In them the phrase is almost always used to refer to salvation from sin. (See, for example, Psalm 51:1.) Is Nephi using the phrase differently here?

What does it mean to be chosen? Compare D&C 95:5–6; 105:35–36; 121:34–36; Matthew 20:16; 22:14; John 15:16; and Revelation 17:14. If we read the verb phrase, omitting the insertion, Nephi says “chosen . . . to make them mighty even unto the power of deliverance.” How would you paraphrase that in contemporary English? What does it mean to be chosen to be made mighty?
Who has the power of deliverance, those chosen or God? Presumably the answer is the latter, but if so, what does it mean to be chosen to be mighty “even unto the power of deliverance”? Is Nephi thinking about being chosen in the same way that the other scriptures I’ve referred to are?

What does it mean to say that people are chosen “because of their faith”? (Compare 1 Nephi 2:19.)

Ending as it does with the total destruction of the Nephites, how does the Book of Mormon show us that the tender mercies of the Lord are over all those chosen because of their faith “to make them mighty even unto the power of deliverance”?

1 Nephi 2

Verses 16–17: Did Nephi initially believe his father’s visions? If so, then what does it mean that his heart was softened, and why was he “crying unto the Lord”?

What is Nephi’s explanation for why he didn’t rebel against his father as his older brothers had done?

What is the difference between Nephi’s belief and Sam’s? Compare D&C 46:14. Does that difference necessarily say anything about the faith of either of them?

1 Nephi 3

Verses 7–8: Compare verse 7 to D&C 124:49. How do you explain the difference between the teachings of these verses?

Verse 8 tells us that Lehi knew that Nephi had been blessed. The suggestion is that he knew because of what Nephi said
in verse 7. How is Nephi’s statement in verse 7 evidence of having been blessed?

How is what we see in these verses connected to 1 Nephi 2:16?

**Verse 16:** What does it mean to be “faithful in keeping the commandments of the Lord”? What does the word *faithful* or *faithfully* add that is important? Why not just say “keeping the commandments”?

How is keeping the commandments faithfully connected to being chosen for deliverance because of faith (1 Nephi 1:20)?

1 Nephi 4

**Verses 1–2:** In verse 1, Nephi again exhorts his brothers to be faithful in keeping the commandments of the Lord. Then, in verse 2, he appeals to the experience of Moses, asking them to remember what the Lord did for Israel at the Red Sea. Book of Mormon sermons often begin in this way, by calling on the listeners to remember something from scriptural history or their own history and then basing their preaching of the gospel on that remembrance. Nephi is using a version of that pattern here. Why is remembering the Lord’s deeds in the past so important to keeping the commandments faithfully? How does the Book of Mormon call us to remember? What does it call us to remember?

1 Nephi 5

**Verses 20–21:** Lehi and Nephi have been faithful in keeping the commandments, and that has enabled them to ob-
tain the brass plates. How is that an example of what Nephi said he would show, namely, “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” (1 Nephi 1:20)?

They have found that the plates are “desirable; yea, even of great worth” because they will allow the people to “preserve the commandments of the Lord unto [their] children” (verse 21). If we were to change unto to for, would that change the meaning of that statement? In other words, is unto just an archaic usage, or does it mean something other than what we might expect?

The plates contain the five books of Moses, a chronicle of the history of Judah, and a collection of prophecies, including those of Jeremiah. How will those preserve the commandments for Lehi’s descendants?

1 Nephi 6

Nephi says that he intends to write “the things of God” (verse 3). In verse 4 he expands on that, saying that he intends to persuade people to come to the God of the patriarchs and be saved. Compare this description of his intent with what we saw earlier in 1 Nephi 1:20.

1 Nephi 7

Verses 11–12: Nephi again appeals to Laban’s and Lemuel’s memories to try to help them repent. One of those memories (verse 11) is quite specific, but the other is much more general: “the Lord is able to do all things according to his
will” (verse 12). What would make it possible for them to remember the second of these?

In both of these verses, Nephi asks how Laman and Lemuel could have forgotten. Does 1 Nephi 2:16 suggest an answer? At the end of verse 12, Nephi uses “exercise faith in him” and “be faithful to him” to mean the same thing. How does the second of these help us understand better what it means to have faith? What does it mean to be faithful to someone?

The scriptures often use the metaphor of betrothal or marriage to describe the relation of the faithful to Christ. Does that help us understand what it means to have faith in him?

My wife and I are faithful to each other, but it seems odd to think of either of us as obedient to the other.

How is obedience related to faithfulness? Does this way of thinking suggest a different way of thinking about obedience?