

THE PROMISED LAND




WHEN I THINK about Joseph Smith translating this work, the golden plates, using the Urim and Thummim, and discovering Nephi making that journey and meeting those challenges year after year, day after day, I think he must have resonated to this man. He may have had a glimpse of his future, of meeting difficulties, day after day, and sensing within himself this grand mission that the Lord had for him, just as he had for Nephi.

Virginia Pearce

I think, in examining the story of Lehi, that we have to understand the price that they were willing to pay. It is a tremendously inspiring story, as Nephi says, to go forward not knowing beforehand what he is supposed to do, believing he would be told by the Lord (1 Nephi 3:7).



Coast of Guatemala.



That's the story. It is a leap of faith to move forward confident that the Lord is going to see things through for you, but not knowing exactly how it will happen. And in a way that's a metaphor for our lives. We have confidence in the Lord, not because we have specific data on *how* it will work out, but that it *will* work out.

Now I believe what they felt on that arrival day wasn't just that here is solid land as promised. I believe they also felt the very presence, approval, and even benediction as it were, almost like that hand of heaven is saying, "Yes, my sons, my daughters, we are now bound together in fulfillment."

—Truman G. Madsen

We have to be willing to follow; we have to be willing to step out. It is also a metaphor I suppose for faith and works. If Lehi had simply said, "Yes, I believe all this. Thank you," it wouldn't have taken him very far, literally and metaphorically. He would have been there when the destruction of the city happened. He would have been

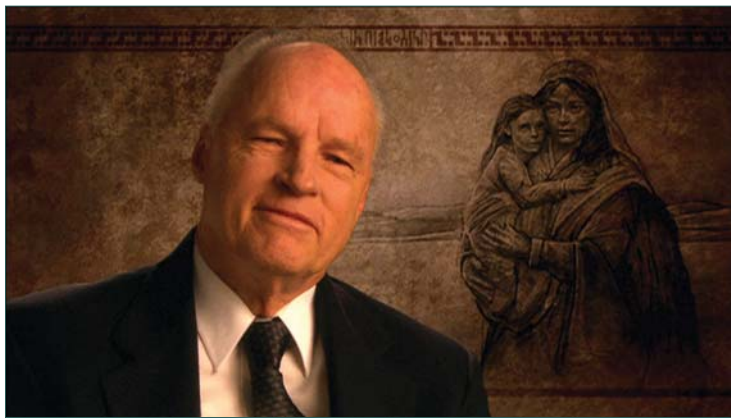
carted off. He might have been killed. He had to not only believe, he had to take a step, and it was a drastic step in his case. But there's inspiration for us in that too—that you have to believe what the Lord says; you have to believe his promises; you have to act on them. And then the result of that is tremendously great blessings. Lehi gets a land, a promised land above all other lands. He would not have qualified if he hadn't stepped out into the desert for a long time and taken his family out into really uncomfortable circumstances. They had to cross the ocean, something they never imagined doing, and then they were given the land of promise, but not before.

Daniel Peterson

The very phrase *Promised Land* carries the point that it is not here yet. It is still a promise. Once you are there, it is the *arrived* land. Lehi not only envisions the outcome and the prophetic destiny of the land, but he also has a vision of those who will inhabit it. He even prophesies that no one will come to it unless they are led to it by the hand of God (2 Nephi 1:5–6). On the other hand, he prophesies that if they will not have as their God the God of the land—the promised and choice land—who is Jesus Christ, then the very promises will become a curse. And the people will, when they ripen in iniquity, be swept off (2 Nephi 1:7). Well, all that had to be written in Lehi's heart. And he knows that they had been led by the hand of God, and not only led, they had been protected and preserved against all odds (2 Nephi 1:24). So there







Truman G. Madsen.

is the contrast again between apprehension and anxiety, and, will we make it? and then, we have made it. The promises are now underway and in fulfillment.

Lehi dies without the complete sight of the fulfillment of his vision. But his children must have wanted to kiss the very ground, sensing not just deliverance from the raging sea or from all the prior struggles, but, now we are here.

How many times is the word *prosper* used in these visionary glimpses? We take the word *prosper* to mean “wealth.” It usually includes that, but the contrast is, if you keep my commandments you will prosper. Or, if you don’t, you will be cut off from the presence of the Lord. Now I believe what they felt on that arrival day wasn’t just that here is solid land as promised. I believe they also felt the very presence, approval, and even benediction as it were, almost like that hand of heaven is saying, “Yes, my sons, my daughters, we are now bound together in fulfillment.” I like the word *fulfillment*. It, I believe, on the one hand means, fulfilling in the sense of the completion. But it also means full-ment: they were filled with the joy of the Lord. Nephi uses that expression for himself. He, meaning Christ, had filled me with his love unto the consuming of my flesh

(2 Nephi 4:21). The burning and transformation feeling of divine approval.

Truman Madsen

The family arrives finally in their promised land. They are so happy to get off that ship that we don’t read of anything in the account that has to do with maritime activity for centuries. They seem to have completely lost their interest in sailing, at least the first and second generations. They had had enough of water travel.

Now the family is in their promised land, and for a while they must have been euphoric. They find wild game in the forest which fit their rules for animals that they can eat. They plant the first crops, which come up and do well (1 Nephi 18:24). We do not know what the second planting yielded them, but the first one was terrific. Then one senses that the tensions that were with them at various stages of the journey now are rearing their heads, and this problem presses down on Lehi and Sariah to keep a lid on this sort of thing.

In my mind’s eye, I see these people coming off that ship, falling on their knees on the sand, and thanking the Lord for bringing them to this place. They are now ready to start a new people of God.

Kent Brown

Having left the Middle East under more or less desert conditions—Bountiful in south Arabia may have been relatively moist and forested, but it certainly was not a



tropical jungle—they are still basically desert-oriented, arid-oriented, when they get off the ship, regardless of what experiences on islands they might have had on the way across the ocean. When they came ashore they would have been in a very different, dramatically disjunctive environment.

Landing on a tropical coast was just the other side of the coin from what they had to do when they went into the Arabian wilderness from Jerusalem. It is a repetition of a kind of instruction from the Lord: “You cannot count on culture. Culture will not hack it. You have to follow me.”

John Sorenson

As I think of Lehi and his family, I wonder how they must feel today as they recall the vicissitudes of their lives, the misery that they suffered, their obedience and sometimes disobedience and then obedience again, to the God that they worshiped and loved. How do they feel, when they realize that this is their story—a book about them—that has become such a magnificent witness for the Lord Jesus Christ in our day. This family who had a Liahona and finally learned that it worked by faith, have much to teach us. Their history becomes a tool in our lives to get through our wilderness—to find our way back to the tree of life that Lehi saw and the presence of a Heavenly Father who loves all his children.

Ann Madsen





The Prophet Joseph Smith