

## Rel A 304 Reading Questions for Tuesday, November 28

Book of Mormon title page

“Lehi Counsels with His Family to Leave Jerusalem | 1 Nephi 2:1–3” [video], Book of Mormon Videos, [https://youtu.be/-2n\\_ERqcSw0](https://youtu.be/-2n_ERqcSw0).

“Nephi Prays for Laman and Lemuel | 1 Nephi 2:8–24” [video], Book of Mormon Videos, <https://youtu.be/QMKsWlOd1Lo>.

“Lehi Sees a Vision of the Tree of Life | 1 Nephi 8” [video], Book of Mormon Videos, <https://youtu.be/IBRiC1slfTw>.

Joseph M. Spencer, “The Remnant of Israel,” in *1st Nephi: A Brief Theological Introduction* (Provo, UT: Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, Brigham Young University, 2020), 26–30.

“Nephi Sees a Vision of Future Events | 1 Nephi 10–15” [video], Book of Mormon Videos, <https://youtu.be/h7BEDHHxKh0>.

Spencer, “Remnant of Israel,” 30–37.

In your Isaiah papers you wrote earlier in the semester, several of you said that your motivation for taking this class was to understand the Book of Mormon better. Going through the ancient context of Isaiah the past two months has prepared you to understand Isaiah the way Nephi understood Isaiah, because Nephi definitely knew about Hezekiah and Assyria and Jerusalem and Babylon and all that stuff. With that content mastery, you’re ready now to see how Nephi likens Isaiah to the last days. Today we’ll set the stage by reviewing the history of Nephi’s family and the vision Nephi had about how God is going to save them.

### Book of Mormon title page

The title page of the Book of Mormon (the page that begins with “The Book of Mormon: An account written by the hand of Mormon ...”) was written by Moroni, who was Mormon’s son and the last of the Nephite record-keepers. No other author or editor had such a clear picture of what the Book of Mormon would look like in its final form, its contents combining the small plates, Mormon’s abridgment of the large plates, Moroni’s abridgment of the Jaredite records, and Moroni’s own writings. The title page, then, gives us a window into how Moroni, at the very end of the project, understood the Book of Mormon’s role and significance.

1. In the title page, Moroni writes that the Book of Mormon is written to three audiences. The first audience is who, and is identified as a what?

2. In the title page, Moroni indicates that the Book of Mormon will “come forth in due time” through the efforts of a person or people. Is that person or people who will bring the Book of Mormon forth Israelite or Gentile?
3. In the title page, Moroni outlines two purposes for the Book of Mormon. The first begins with, “Which is to ...” The second continues with, “And [which is] also to ...” What are these two great purposes?

**“Lehi Counsels with His Family to Leave Jerusalem | 1 Nephi 2:1–3” [video], Book of Mormon Videos, [https://youtu.be/-2n\\_ERqcSw0](https://youtu.be/-2n_ERqcSw0).**

The Book of Mormon opens in Jerusalem “in the commencement of the first year of the reign of Zedekiah, king of Judah” (1 Nephi 1:4), that is, 597 BC. The prophet Lehi has been joining other prophets in predicting that Jerusalem will fall to the Babylonians.



**“Nephi Prays for Laman and Lemuel | 1 Nephi 2:8–24” [video], Book of Mormon Videos, <https://youtu.be/QMKsWlOd1Lo>.**

Early in their journey, a spiritual divide manifests within Lehi and Sariah’s family. All of them are Israelites and heirs of the covenant, but some are disposed to follow the prophets along the covenant path while others are not.

**“Lehi Sees a Vision of the Tree of Life | 1 Nephi 8” [video], Book of Mormon Videos, <https://youtu.be/IBRiC1slfTw>.**

In Lehi’s vision, he sees that “Nephi and ... Sam ... and also many of their seed, will be saved,” while the future is not so bright for “Laman and Lemuel” and their seed (1 Nephi 8:3–4). Hoping

to avoid their being “cast ... off,” Lehi bids them “to keep the commandments of the Lord” (1 Nephi 8:37–38).

**Joseph M. Spencer, “The Remnant of Israel,” in *1st Nephi: A Brief Theological Introduction* (Provo, UT: Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, Brigham Young University, 2020), 26–30.**

The twelve-volume book series [\*The Book of Mormon: Brief Theological Introductions\*](#) was published by the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship at Brigham Young University in 2020. You are reading the second chapter of volume 1, but notice you’re not reading the entire chapter today, so pay attention to the page numbers.

### *Lehi’s dream*

4. Traditionally, most people have read Lehi’s dream of the tree of life in 1 Nephi 8 as a spiritual allegory describing all human beings as they make their individual journey to find eternal life. While that remains a perfectly valid way to interpret the vision, Dr. Spencer suggests that Nephi may have actually intended us to read it as a historical overview previewing the destiny of what group of people?

**“Nephi Sees a Vision of Future Events | 1 Nephi 10–15” [video], Book of Mormon Videos, <https://youtu.be/h7BEDHHxKh0>.**

After sharing his vision of the tree of life, Lehi sets their family’s story in a larger historical context. After the Babylonians destroy Jerusalem and carry many of its citizens into captivity, the Jews would eventually “return again, yea, even be brought back out of captivity” (1 Nephi 10:3). You are familiar with how the Persians helped that happen. Lehi needs to explain that Jerusalem will be rebuilt because that sets the stage for the birth of the Messiah hundreds of years later (1 Nephi 10:4). That Messiah will be “slain” and then “rise from the dead,” after which He would manifest Himself to the Gentiles—not in person, but “by the Holy Ghost” (1 Nephi 10:11).

Lehi then explains more about the scattering and gathering of Israel, comparing Israel to “an olive tree, whose branches should be broken off and should be scattered upon all the face of the earth” (1 Nephi 10:12). In fact, the journey of Lehi’s family to the New World is part of this greater process of scattering (1 Nephi 10:13). This physical and spiritual scattering will someday be reversed through a process of physical and spiritual gathering. “The remnants of the house of Israel” will be “grafted in,” meaning they will “come to the knowledge of the true Messiah, their Lord and their Redeemer.” However, something else has to happen before Israel can be gathered: “the Gentiles [will receive] the fulness of the Gospel” (1 Nephi 10:14).

Lehi's historical overview leaves several questions unanswered. If the Messiah was manifested to the Gentiles shortly after His rising from the dead, why then do they still need the fulness of the Gospel given to them later on? And why do these later-on Gentiles need to receive that Gospel *before* Israel can be gathered? Nephi's brothers were left unsettled by these questions (see 1 Nephi 15:7), but Nephi sought his own revelation to find answers.

5. Nephi sees that the Gentiles will carry "a book" among them, which we would identify as the Holy Bible. When the angel asks Nephi what is the "meaning" (=purpose) of the book, Nephi does not know. The angel then explains that the Bible is a *container* ("which contains" / "it also containeth" / "they contain") for what? (See 9:56–10:12 in the video.)
6. Nephi sees that Gentile Christianity will take away "plain and precious things" from the gospel. The angel links these precious things as "the covenants of the Lord." Given the context of the angel's teachings, which specific covenants became misunderstood? (Compare 1 Nephi 13:26 with 1 Nephi 13:23; see also 1 Nephi 14:5, 8, 17.)
7. Nephi sees that after the Gentiles share "the book of the Lamb of God" (=the Bible) with Lamanite descendants in the last days, then "other books" will come forth, first to the Gentiles and then to the Lamanite descendants (1 Nephi 13:38–39). What truths do these new scriptures convince the Gentiles and Lamanite descendants of (1 Nephi 13:40)? (See 11:40–12:15 in the video.)
8. After Nephi's vision, he returns to discuss what he has learned with his brothers. Nephi confirms what Lehi had hinted in his vision: sometime between the Messiah's birth and the latter days, "our seed [will] dwindle in unbelief" (1 Nephi 15:13). But the story of Lehi's wayward descendants will have a happy ending, because in the last days those descendants will rediscover that "they are of the house of Israel, and that they are the covenant people of the Lord; ... they shall come to the knowledge of their Redeemer and the very points of his doctrine, that they may know how to come unto him and be saved" (1 Nephi 15:14). This restoration of Lehi's family involves the Gentiles, which explains why Lehi brought up the Gentiles so much back in 1 Nephi 10. Remember that Lehi had said that "the Gentiles [will receive] the fulness of the Gospel" and *then* the remnants of Israel would be gathered (1 Nephi 10:14). Nephi now fills in the missing details to explain how these two stories connect. What does "the fulness of the gospel of the Messiah com[ing] unto the Gentiles" (1 Nephi 15:13) have to do with the restoration of Lehi's family? (See 1 Nephi 15:13, or 13:49–14:09 in the video.)

**Spencer, “Remnant of Israel,” 30–37.**

*Nephi’s vision*

9. When the Spirit gives Nephi a preview of what super important event to watch out for in his vision, the Spirit says to watch out for the Son of God “descending out of heaven.” However, Nephi’s vision of Jesus’s life (birth, mortal ministry, death and resurrection) passes without that happening. When Nephi finally does see Jesus “descending out of heaven,” what event in history is Nephi seeing?
  
10. Unfortunately, the descent of the Son of God to minister to Lehi’s descendants does not solve all the problems: within a few generations, they descend into warfare and apostasy. And so it turns out that, like Lehi’s dream, Nephi’s vision is about getting whom back into God’s presence?
  
11. Nephi sees that Israel’s remnants have forgotten their covenant status and Christian Gentiles are blind to some of the Bible’s core messages. What solution does the Lord prepare that will restore the latter-day remnant to an understanding of the covenant and also prompt Gentile Christians to recognize what they misunderstood?