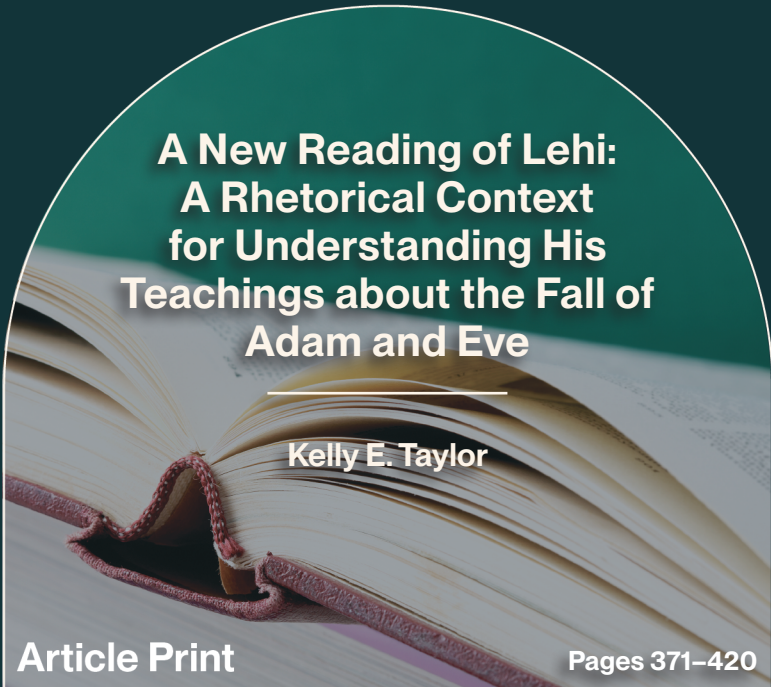


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A Rhetorical Context  
for Understanding His  
Teachings about the Fall of  
Adam and Eve**

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# A New Reading of Lehi: A Rhetorical Context for Understanding His Teachings about the Fall of Adam and Eve

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Kelly E. Taylor

**Abstract:** *Based on Lehi's teachings in 2 Nephi 2, many Latter-day Saints conclude that it was necessary for Adam and Eve to partake of the forbidden fruit to acquire the ability to have children. While this appears to be a straightforward reading of the text, it sets up the dilemma of conflicting commandments—obedience to one of the two commandments they were given in the Garden of Eden would require that they disobey the other. In this article, the author argues that the larger rhetorical context presents a different framework in which these teachings may be read—one that does not raise this dilemma. Lehi presents his teachings on the consequences of the Fall in two parallel chiasms. The rhetorical links within and between these chiasms (and with the other sections of Lehi's teachings) suggest that God's purposes for mankind may not have been frustrated if Adam and Eve had obeyed him. While their Fall was likely inevitable, it may not have been a required element in God's eternal plan for his children. Rather, it might have been something he expected and for which he prepared.*

**T**here are two ways to understand why Latter-day Saints believe that the Fall was necessary in order for Adam and Eve to have children. Both are based primarily on Lehi's teachings in 2 Nephi 2. Lehi's statement, "Adam fell that men might be" (2 Nephi 2:25), is paraphrased in current temple teachings where patrons learn that once Eve had transgressed and faced expulsion from the garden, Adam also needed to transgress to remain with her so they could have children. In this sense, Adam's fall became necessary.<sup>1</sup> The other sense in

which one may understand why the Fall was necessary is based on Lehi's teachings in the same chapter:

And now, behold, if Adam had not transgressed he would not have fallen, but he would have remained in the garden of Eden. And all things which were created must have remained in the same state in which they were after they were created; and they must have remained forever, and had no end. And they would have had no children; wherefore they would have remained in a state of innocence, having no joy, for they knew no misery; doing no good, for they knew no sin. (2 Nephi 2:22–23)

These verses may be read to teach the idea that the fall of both Adam and Eve was necessary to acquire the ability to have children.<sup>2</sup> While this reading has been presented as the plain reading of the text,<sup>3</sup> it does raise the dilemma that obedience to one of the two commandments given to Adam and Eve in the garden would require that they disobey the other.<sup>4</sup>

### **The Larger Rhetorical Context**

The larger rhetorical context of Lehi's teachings, however, suggests a reading that differs from this "plain reading" of the text. Consistent with ancient Hebrew rhetoric, each section of Lehi's teachings to his sons is structured by and linked to the other sections by the repetition of keywords, phrases, and ideas.<sup>5</sup> The links within and between these sections of his teachings must be taken into consideration when reading them. The paratactic nature of ancient Hebrew texts further complicates one's ability to understand them.<sup>6</sup> In order to truly understand Lehi's teachings, one must utilize the same rhetorical tools to read them that he used to present them. This will provide a better understanding of his development of thought.

### **Assumptions and Scope**

Lehi's teachings to his sons may represent commentary on an early Hebrew version of the Creation and Garden of Eden narratives that are now in Genesis. This would have been the version with which his sons, who grew up in Jerusalem, would be most familiar,<sup>7</sup> especially if these narratives were read or enacted in temple festivities as has been proposed by multiple scholars.<sup>8</sup> But Lehi's commentary incorporates

insights and content that he obtained from the narratives on the brass plates, narratives that were recorded using the Egyptian language (1 Nephi 5:11).<sup>9</sup> These may have been the narratives from which the Hebrew versions were derived.<sup>10</sup> Lehi's commentary also incorporates things that he learned in his early revelations (1 Nephi 1:5–15, 18–19; 8:2–18).

It makes sense that Lehi would have used a Hebrew version of these narratives if one were available because he would not have had to translate the entirety of the narratives on the brass plates for his sons. Thus, we can assume that Lehi's use of language that is found in the biblical version of the Creation and garden narratives comes from his Hebrew source. Nevertheless, corresponding references in the Book of Moses, as well as Lehi's use of non-biblical language that is also found in the Book of Moses, will be cited, since there is good reason to suspect that the version of these narratives in the Book of Moses more closely resembles the version that was on the brass plates.<sup>11</sup> Thus, any non-biblical language or concepts in Lehi's teachings that are also found in the Book of Moses may be attributed to the brass plates.<sup>12</sup>

The scope of this paper is limited to Lehi's teachings about the Fall. While contributions from the other sections of his sermon will be noted where necessary, space does not allow for a comprehensive analysis of each section. A suggested structure for the other sections is included in appendix B, with explanations provided in the end notes.

### **The Rhetorical Structure of Lehi's Teachings about the Fall**

In 2 Nephi 2:19–25, Lehi presents his teachings about the consequences of the Fall of Adam and Eve. This is a complex passage and presents some challenges for the reader. Noel Reynolds warned:

The rhetoric we have learned in the western tradition is *hypotactic* in that it is direct, open, and logical. Hebrew rhetoric, in contrast, is *paratactic* in that it tends to be indirect, making important points both through its structure and *through words that may have their full meaning provided and adjusted gradually throughout the text.*<sup>13</sup>

These teachings from Lehi are a good illustration of this feature of Hebrew rhetoric. While they lack the straightforward logic used in Western rhetoric, Lehi does provide a rich background of information that he intends for his audience to use to understand his teachings.<sup>14</sup>

This section defines the limits of this rhetorical unit by identifying the configuration of its component parts. This provides some idea of Lehi's thought development, but requires the identification of Lehi's underlying assumptions based upon the background material that he provided in his teachings to his sons.

In studying 2 Nephi 2:19–25, the first thing to note is that two different garden scenarios are presented. The first describes what happened after Adam and Eve transgressed the commandment to not partake of the forbidden fruit. At the center of this passage is the sentence, “their state became a state of probation.” The second scenario is hypothetical. It evaluates what would have happened if Adam had not transgressed. At the center of this passage is the statement, “they would have remained in a state of innocence.”<sup>15</sup> This is the opposite of a state of probation. To find antithetical climactic ideas at the center of two adjacent scenarios suggests that the passage might have parallel chiasms.<sup>16</sup> Initially, as one arranges the keywords moving out from the center, one finds symmetry within each scenario, but this symmetry does not appear to extend between the two scenarios. While the keywords in Scenario 2 do begin with a similar theme — the length of life — that is where any parallel with Scenario 1 ends. The two potential chiasms do not appear to be parallel:

**Scenario 1**

*days . . . prolonged*  
*according to . . . God*  
*repent*  
 state of probation  
*time . . . lengthened*  
*according to . . . Lord God*  
*repent*

**Scenario 2**

*remained forever . . . had no end*  
*had no children*  
 state of innocence  
*no joy . . . no misery*  
*no good . . . no sin*

The keyword repetitions in the second scenario do hearken back to Lehi's earlier discussion about the need for opposition in *all things* (2 Nephi 2:11–13). Thus, it is interesting that *all things* are the keywords in the very next lines, moving outward from here. And in these lines, the keywords do exhibit symmetry with those in Scenario 1:

**Scenario 1***family of all the earth***days . . . prolonged**  
**according to . . . God**  
**repent**

state of probation

**time . . . lengthened**  
**according to . . . Lord God**  
**repent***all men***Scenario 2***all things***remained forever . . . had no end**  
**had no children**

state of innocence

**no joy . . . no misery**  
**no good . . . no sin***all things . . . all things*

Here, the key idea in this line of Scenario 1 is *all mankind*, whereas in Scenario 2 it is *all things*. The reader can also note that there are, after all, two parallel chiasms, each with a different second-level structure embedded within (now in bold). Also there exists a trend in the second scenario: the keywords in the second half are doubled. This continues as one moves out from here:

**Scenario 1***driven out from the garden of Eden**family of all the earth***days . . . prolonged**  
**according to . . . God**  
**repent**

state of probation

**time . . . lengthened**  
**according to . . . Lord God**  
**repent***all men**they were lost***Scenario 2***he would not have fallen . . . remained in the garden**all things***remained forever . . . had no end**  
**had no children**

state of innocence

**no joy . . . no misery**  
**no good . . . no sin***all things . . . all things**Adam ('ādām) fell that men ('ādām) might be*

There is symmetry between the two chiasms. This is because the words *lost* and *fallen* (paired nine times throughout the Book of Mormon<sup>17</sup>) are here paired in parallel lines of two adjacent chiasms. Lundbom noted that paired words can serve as keywords:

Rhetorical critics make much of “keywords,” which are normally repeated words or word cognates in a given discourse. But they can also be synonyms, antonyms or *fixed-pairs that balance one another*.<sup>18</sup>

The words *lost* and *fallen* are a fixed word pair in the Book of Mormon. The parallelism of these four lines also serves to define this word pair. The state of being *lost* and *fallen* is associated with being “driven out from the garden of Eden” (2 Nephi 2:19). For Lehi and Alma, to be lost

and fallen was to be separated from the tree of life or the path that leads to it (1 Nephi 8:28; Alma 42:6–7). That path was located within the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:24).<sup>19</sup>

In the second scenario, an example of *paronomasia* (a play on multiple meanings of identical or cognate words) occurs. Here, Lehi plays on the multiple meanings of the Hebrew noun *‘āḏām*. When used without a definite article, this noun can be used as either the proper name *Adam* or as the collective noun *mankind*.<sup>20</sup> When used in the latter sense, the KJV Old Testament translates it as *men*.<sup>21</sup> Thus, when Lehi presented these teachings in Hebrew, he would have pronounced the noun *‘āḏām* twice: “*‘āḏām* fell that *‘āḏām* might be.” This is consistent with the previous three lines where there is a double use of the keyword, although here, it is repeated with a different meaning. This observation allows the reader to understand how the last line of the second chiasm balances with the first line:

#### Scenario 1

*Adam and Eve had partaken of the forbidden fruit*

driven out from the garden of Eden

family of all the earth

**days . . . prolonged**

**according to . . . God**

**repent**

state of probation

**time . . . lengthened**

**according to . . . Lord God**

**repent**

all men

they were lost

*transgression of their parents*

#### Scenario 2

*Adam (‘āḏām, proper name) had not transgressed*

he would not have fallen . . .

remained in the garden

all things

**remained forever . . . had**

**no end**

had no children

state of innocence

**no joy . . . no misery**

**no good . . . no sin**

all things . . . all things

Adam (‘āḏām) fell that men (‘āḏām)

might be

*men (‘āḏām, generic) are . . . have joy*

In the last line of the second chiasm, Lehi may have used *joy* as an antithetical parallel to *transgression*, which is found in the first line of the same chiasm and in the last line of the adjacent chiasm. Alma illustrates the same idea by pairing *wickedness* with *happiness* in the statement, “Wickedness never was happiness” (Alma 41:10).

In the statement, “For he shewed unto all men that they were lost because of the transgression of their parents,” Lehi may be using the phrase *transgression of their parents* as a metaphor for the sinful or fallen nature inherited from one’s parents. In the second chiasm, the man named Adam (‘āḏām) becomes all men (‘āḏām) between the first

and last lines. In the first chiasm, *Adam and Eve* may have become all *parents* between the first and last lines. While Lehi previously referred to Adam and Eve as "our first parents" (1 Nephi 5:11, 2 Nephi 2:15), here he is not necessarily referring to the *first* parents of all men when he refers to just "their parents." Using rhetoric, in the last lines of these two scenarios, Lehi may be showing that *Adam* was an archetype for *all men* and that *Adam and Eve* were an archetype for *all parents*. This explains how the last lines continue the parallelism between the two chiasms. This allows understanding the phrase "the transgression of their parents" as a metaphor for the human nature that all inherit from their progenitors, just as Benjamin later uses the phrase "the transgression of Adam" as a metaphor for the same thing.<sup>22</sup>

In summary, the delimitation of this rhetorical unit is accomplished by teachings that form two parallel chiasms. Embedded within each chiasm and at the same location and beginning with the same theme is another level of structure that is identified by repetitions that are directly parallel. At this level, the parallelism exists within each scenario but not between them as in the other lines. Thus, the following can be the structure for the rhetorical unit in 2 Nephi 2:19–25:

- A And after that *Adam and Eve* had *partaken of the forbidden fruit*,
- B they were *driven out from the garden of Eden* to till the earth.
- C And they have brought forth children, yea, even the *family of all the earth*.
- D1 And the *days* of the children of men (*'āḏām*) were *prolonged*,
- 2 *according to the will of God*,
- 3 that they might *repent* while in the flesh.
- E Wherefore their state became a *state of probation*,
- D' 1 and their *time* was *lengthened*
- 2 *according to the commandments which the Lord God gave unto the children of men ('āḏām)*.
- 3 For he gave commandment that all men (*'āḏām*) must *repent*,
- C' for he shewed unto *all men ('āḏām)*
- B' that they were *lost*
- A' because of the *transgression of their parents*.
- A And now behold, if *Adam ('āḏām, proper name)* had not *transgressed*,
- B *he* would not have *fallen*, but *he* would have *remained in the garden of Eden*;
- C and *all things* which were created must have remained

in the same state which *they* were after that *they* were created.

D1 And *they* must have *remained forever* and had *no end*,  
2 and *they* would have had *no children*.

E Wherefore *they* would have remained in a *state of innocence*,

D'3 having *no joy*, for *they* knew *no misery*,  
4 doing *no good*, for *they* knew *no sin*.

C' But behold, *all things* have been done in the wisdom of him who knoweth *all things*.

B' Adam ('*ādām*, proper name) fell that *men* ('*ādām*, generic) might be,

A' and *men* ('*ādām*, generic) are that *they* might have joy.

### Lehi's Development of Thought

The first chiasm (2 Nephi 2:19–21) addresses the biblical garden scenario where Adam and Eve eat the forbidden fruit, but it also includes elements from the plan of redemption that are not found in the biblical narrative. These include the understanding that this life is a period of probation in which mortals are given the opportunity to repent. The second chiasm addresses a hypothetical alternative to the biblical story (2 Nephi 2:22–23), a scenario where Adam chooses not to fall. In these two scenarios, Lehi describes the associated consequences. The framework presented for understanding Lehi's thought development in these teachings is defined by the following proposals which are based upon the rhetorical features of this text:

- In each scenario, Adam and Eve have partaken of the fruit from one of the two trees that are identified in the second Creation narrative (Genesis 2:9; Moses 3:9).
- The consequences of the choice made in each scenario affect only Adam and Eve and their posterity, not all of Creation.
- In both scenarios, Adam and Eve were not fully prepared to make their choice. Thus, some of the consequences are not what one would expect for the choice that was made.

In what follows, there is a defense of each of these proposals by using, primarily, the same rhetorical tools to read these teachings that Lehi used to present them. In the process, Lehi's development of thought and intent will become more evident.

### A choice for "the one or the other"

In the garden scenario from the first chiasm, Adam and Eve have partaken of the forbidden fruit from the tree of knowledge. This is clearly the biblical story, as the punishment for this transgression is described by paraphrasing the description found in Genesis 3:23–24 (also Moses 4:29, 31), "they were driven out from the garden of Eden to till the earth."<sup>23</sup>

In the alternative garden scenario in the second chiasm, Lehi does not specifically mention the tree of life. However, in an earlier section of these teachings (2 Nephi 2:15–16), he presented the tree of life and the forbidden fruit as the alternatives in a choice that Adam and Eve would be enticed to make:

it must needs be that there was an opposition, even the *forbidden fruit* in opposition to the *tree of life*,

**a** *the one* being sweet and *the other* bitter.

**b** Wherefore the Lord God gave unto *man* that he should *act for himself* ;

**b'** wherefore *man* could not *act for himself*

**a'** save it should be that he were enticed by *the one* or *the other*.

In these teachings, the two trees represent the presence of opposition in the garden. While Lehi did not use the word *choice*, the idea that these two trees also represented a mutually exclusive choice may be implicit in the statement that man (*‘āqām*) "should act for himself" after being "enticed by the one or the other." He may choose either the fruit that is bitter or the fruit that is sweet, but not both.

The use of the collective noun *man* to translate the Hebrew noun *‘āqām* in this passage may be a hint that this simple choice given to Adam (*‘āqām*) represents the choice that is given to all mortals, the choice for "the way of eternal life" or "the way of everlasting death" (2 Nephi 9:23). This choice is also mutually exclusive (1 Nephi 14:7) in the sense that one cannot serve two masters (Matthew 6:24; 3 Nephi 13:24). However, in a simplified story, perhaps designed to be acted out in temple ritual, the choice that is given to all may be represented in the fruit from two opposing trees that offer Adam and Eve either eternal life or death (Genesis 2:17; Alma 12:23; Moses 3:17).<sup>24</sup>

This understanding may help the reader recognize how Lehi read his version of what is in Genesis 2–3. After the two trees are identified in Genesis 2:9 (Moses 3:9), Adam is placed in the garden and God gives him the commandment to not eat the fruit from the tree of knowledge—in other words, the forbidden fruit (Genesis 2:15–17; Moses

3:15–17). Eve later adds the detail that they were commanded to not even touch that tree (Genesis 3:3; Moses 4:9). But nowhere does the text read that Adam and Eve have any interaction with the tree of life or receive any instructions from God regarding that tree. How might this be understood considering Lehi’s teaching that they were to be “enticed by the one or the other?”

Since the tree of life was not forbidden, some have proposed that Adam and Eve were eating its fruit all along and that this may have been the means by which they were sustained in an immortal state while in the garden.<sup>25</sup> But this is not consistent with Lehi’s view that the choice was for “the one [fruit] or the other.” Others point to the phrase “lest he put forth his hand, and take *also* of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever” (Genesis 3:22; Alma 42:3; Moses 4:28), to show that Adam had not been eating from the tree of life before he ate the forbidden fruit.<sup>26</sup> That reading would be consistent with Lehi’s view.

This leaves two possible explanations for why the Genesis narrative does not have Adam and Eve interact with the tree of life: Either they didn’t know it existed or they knew it existed but the way to the tree of life had not yet been revealed to them when they ate the forbidden fruit.<sup>27</sup> It is not likely that the first explanation represents Lehi’s understanding as an awareness of both trees would be required for Adam and Eve to use their agency and make a choice. The second explanation would align with Lehi’s teachings, especially if it were understood that the way of or path leading to the tree of life (Genesis 3:24; Moses 4:31)<sup>28</sup> represents a process of preparation for Adam and Eve that would be required before they could eat the fruit from that tree. That is how this path was portrayed in Lehi’s vision (1 Nephi 8), and it is also what the covenant path represents today. However, one must first demonstrate trust in the Lord and compliance with the law of obedience before one may access that path. Is it possible that the commandment to not partake of the forbidden fruit served as a test of our first parents’ willingness to be obedient? Had they kept that commandment, would they have been able to prepare for and eventually have access to the tree of life while in the garden? These two questions circle back to the two garden scenarios in Lehi’s teachings.

Since, in the first scenario, Adam and Eve “had partaken of the forbidden fruit,” in the parallel, second scenario, the idea that Adam and Eve had partaken of the fruit from the tree of life must be implicit in the statement that Adam “would have remained in the Garden of Eden.”

That statement is found in line B of the second chiasm, and this proposal is supported by two observations:

- In the second garden scenario, the choice for the tree of life is not considered as a future possibility as one might expect, if Adam had not yet made that choice.
- The tree of life is also implicit in the parallel line B from the first chiasm.

Adam and Eve were not driven from the garden because the earth needed to be tilled; rather it was to prevent them from partaking *also* of the tree of life (Genesis 3:22; Alma 42:3; Moses 28). Thus, background information from an earlier section of Lehi's teachings and rhetorical links between the two chiasms indicate that in both of Lehi's garden scenarios, Adam and Eve partook of the fruit from one of the two trees identified in Genesis 2:9 and Moses 3:9. However, in the hypothetical second scenario, they have not had the preparation that would be required for that choice. The significance of that detail will become apparent while unraveling Lehi's development of thought.

### **The consequences of each choice**

In the biblical Garden of Eden narrative, very little indicates that the Fall affected the entire earth. The Garden of Eden was clearly a holy place set apart from the rest of the world, as temples are today.<sup>29</sup> The Bible does not indicate that the entire earth was created in a paradisiacal state.<sup>30</sup> While God cursed the ground or earth that Adam would be "driven out from the garden of Eden to till" (2 Nephi 2:19), the Garden of Eden may also have required tilling.<sup>31</sup> And the earth apparently remained in place and, presumably, in the same condition after Adam was removed from it, as cherubim were placed at the garden's entrance to "keep the way of the tree of life" (Genesis 3:24). The idea that the Fall affected the entire earth doesn't come from the Bible, but from 2 Nephi 2:22.

In the 2012 edition of the Book of Mormon, 2 Nephi 2:22 reads as follows:

And now, behold, if Adam had not transgressed he would not have fallen, but he would have remained in the garden of Eden. And all things which were created must have remained in the same state in which they were after they were created; and they must have remained forever, and had no end.

The last sentence of this verse includes the C and D1 lines from the second chiasm. These two lines are separated by a semicolon. At first glance, the punctuation and verse division would suggest that these two lines should be read together and that the pronoun *they* refers to “all things which were created.” One may argue that the plain reading of this verse says that “all things” were “created” in a “state” where there was no death. With this reading, the Fall would be responsible for introducing death into the world.<sup>32</sup>

Given the fact that Joseph Smith did not provide either the punctuation or the verse divisions for the Book of Mormon, it is possible to take a closer look at the rhetorical features of this text to see if there is any indication that this is how Lehi intended that it be read. The following paragraphs indicate that Lehi’s use of keywords linking to other sections of these teachings, his use of Hebrew wordplay on the multiple meanings for the noun *‘ādām*, and his structuring of this rhetorical unit all suggest that this is not the correct reading of these teachings. These features of Lehi’s rhetoric show that the “state” in which “all things” were “created” was, what one might call, the natural state. In Lehi’s blessing of Jacob, the natural state is necessarily characterized by opposition. Thus, if there is life there must also be death. If Adam and Eve have not eaten of the tree of life, it cannot be assumed that they were immortal. The rhetorical structure and Hebrew wordplay also show that in the garden scenarios that begin each chiasm, Lehi uses the pronoun *they* to refer specifically to Adam *and* Eve. Thus, studying 2 Nephi 2:22–23 with these observations in mind, gives a reading where the consequences of the Fall affect only Adam and Eve and their posterity, not all of creation.

### ***The state in which all things were created***

The keywords *all things* and *created*, found in line C of the second scenario, link specifically to Lehi’s previous description of the state in which “all things” were “created,” a state that, according to Lehi, requires “opposition in all things”:

*for it must needs be that there is an opposition in all things. If not so, my first born in the wilderness, righteousness could not be brought to pass, neither wickedness, neither happiness nor misery, neither good nor bad; wherefore all things must needs be a compound in one. Wherefore if it should be one body, it must needs remain as dead, having no life*

*neither death, nor corruption nor incorruption, happiness nor misery, neither sense nor insensibility.* (2 Nephi 2:11)

Lehi uses these teachings about opposition in all things to segue from his blessing of Jacob to the teachings that he presented to all his sons. He begins the latter by speaking about the creation of "all things" (2 Nephi 2:14–15). He presents these teachings in two parallel panels:<sup>33</sup>

**2 Nephi 2:14**

A For there is a *God*

B and he hath *created* all things,

C both *the heavens* (*šāmayim*)  
and *the earth*

D and *all things* that in them is,

E both things *to act* and  
things *to be acted upon*.

**2 Nephi 2:15**

A And to bring about *his* eternal  
purposes in the end of man —

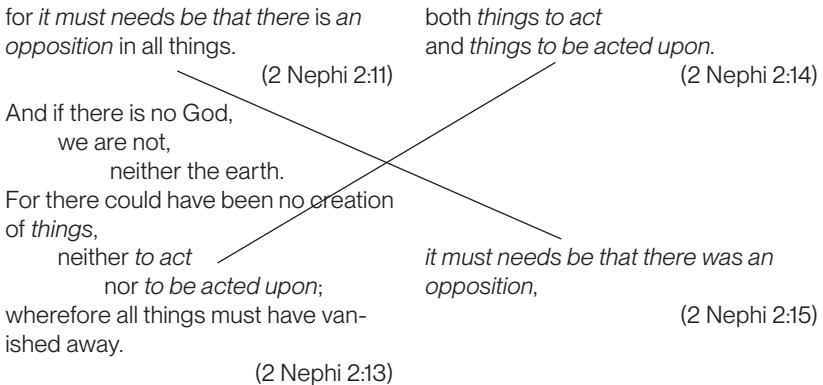
B after that he had *created* our first  
parents

C and *the beasts of the field* and  
*the fowls of the air* (*šāmayim*)

D and, in fine, *all things* which  
are created —

E *it must needs be that*  
*there was an opposition*,  
even the forbidden fruit in  
*opposition* to the tree of life

Note that the keywords in the climactic fifth line (the E line) of each panel are also found in the sentences that bracket Lehi's teachings on *opposition* in Jacob's blessing (2 Nephi 2:11–13), albeit in reverse order:<sup>34</sup>



This linkage of Lehi's teachings about the creation of "all things" to those earlier teachings in Jacob's blessing strongly suggests that those earlier teachings were describing the nature of God's creation. Thus, in line C of Lehi's second chiasm (2 Nephi 2:22), the "state" in which "all things" were "created" and "must have remained" was very likely what might be called the "natural state."<sup>35</sup> These teachings about

the Fall begin with the world in its natural state, Adam and Eve included. Indeed, according to the biblical account, when God completed the Creation, he “saw every thing that he had made, and behold, it was very good” (Genesis 1:31; Moses 2:31).<sup>36</sup> What could that statement have meant if the world at that time was not characterized by opposition in all things? According to Lehi, in such a world, there could have been “neither good nor bad” (2 Nephi 2:11). For Lehi, creation was all about dividing something into opposites to provide definition, meaning, and purpose. This was the ancient Hebrew understanding of creation.<sup>37</sup>

It has been argued that the Fall was the final step of Creation, that it was necessary to bring about “the mortal condition.”<sup>38</sup> According to this understanding, Adam and Eve were originally placed in a world where there was no death and no procreation—in other words, a world without opposition in all things. The Garden of Eden served as the place where Adam and Eve would be given a commandment and would be tested to see if they would obey it. Yet, it was necessary that they disobey for both death and procreation to be introduced, as these conditions were essential for God “to bring about his eternal purposes in the end of man” (2 Nephi 2:15). Thus, according to this understanding, a world without death and procreation served as the state in which Adam and Eve would make a decision that would set God’s plans in motion.

Lehi probably would not have agreed with this idea. In his blessing of Jacob, he emphasizes that if God had created a world without opposition, then it would have served no purpose at all:

Wherefore it must needs have been created for a thing of naught; wherefore there would have been no purpose in the end of its creation. (2 Nephi 2:12)

Would Lehi have said that if he intended to teach that God originally placed Adam and Eve in a world without opposition? In Lehi’s understanding, when Adam and Eve were placed in the Garden of Eden, they were very likely in a state that was analogous to the state in which little children exist, a natural state of innocence. However, as natural beings in the garden, Adam and Eve were not “an enemy to God,” as Benjamin characterizes the fallen, natural man (Mosiah 3:19). They were not beings who were “carnal, sensual, and devilish,” as Alma describes fallen man (Alma 42:10). The natural man is only “an enemy to God” if he does not yield “to the enticings of the Holy Spirit,” which

was present with Adam and Eve in the garden.<sup>39</sup> Also, Alma notes that because "fallen man" has been "cut off, both temporally and spiritually, from the presence of the Lord," they have become "subjects to follow after their *own will*" (Alma 42:6–7; Moses 6:49), not necessarily a *new will* or nature. While one's "own will" is "carnal, sensual, and devilish by nature" (Alma 42:10), the Lord has given everyone the means to follow after "the will of his Holy Spirit" rather than "the will of the flesh and the evil which is therein" (2 Nephi 2:28–29). While Adam and Eve may have been natural beings in a state of innocence in the garden, they were not fallen beings and, thus, enjoyed the presence of the Lord.

### *The origin of death*

In those teachings to Jacob, Lehi associates the origin of death with the Creation rather than the Fall. This signals that Lehi did not read the warning in Genesis 2:17, "thou shalt surely die," as a warning of the origin of death writ large, but as a sentence of death for Adam and Eve alone. Robert Alter, in support of his translation of the phrase "thou shalt surely die" as "you are doomed to die," had this to say:

The form of the Hebrew . . . is what grammarians call the infinitive absolute: the infinitive immediately followed by a conjugated form of the same verb. The general effect of this repetition is to add emphasis to the verb, but because in the case of the verb "to die" it is the pattern regularly used in the Bible for the issuing of death sentences, "doomed to die" is an appropriate equivalent.<sup>40</sup>

Thus, God's warning predicts a sentence of death rather than the origin of death.<sup>41</sup> As John Walton reads the garden story, the tragedy is not that Adam and Eve "initiated a situation that was not already there [the existence of death]; it is that they failed to achieve a solution to that situation that was in their reach. . . . We are all doomed to die because when they sinned we lost access to the tree of life."<sup>42</sup>

Alma understands the warning in Genesis 2:17 in the same way. After noting that "it was appointed unto man to die," he shows Corianton that God carried out that sentence of death by having Adam and Eve "cut off from the tree of life" (Alma 42:6–7). At Ammonihah, after referring specifically to the warning in Genesis 2:17, he notes that "it was appointed unto man that they *must die*" (Alma 12:23, 27). In other words, God was telling Adam and Eve that if they ate the forbidden fruit, then they would no longer have an alternative to death.

### The pronoun “they”

Each of the two chiasms begins with a garden scenario involving both Adam and Eve. In the first scenario, Lehi uses the pronoun *they* to refer specifically to Adam and Eve up to the point where the narrative departs from the biblical garden scenario (Genesis 2 and 3). When Lehi begins to speak about the “children” of Adam and Eve, the pronoun *they* refers to the children. After noting that these “children” represent “the family of all the earth,” Lehi refers to them as “the children of men (*‘āḏām*).”<sup>43</sup> So, by the end of this first chiasm, “the children of men” have become “all men (*āḏām*).” One sense in which one may understand this play on the multiple meanings of the noun *‘āḏām* is that the children of Adam have become Adam. This may be another hint that, for Lehi, the story of Adam and Eve is everyone’s story.

In the second garden scenario, as with the presumption that Adam had eaten the fruit from the tree of life, it is not at first clear that Eve is included in the scenario. That is because Lehi begins this second chiasm with just Adam as the subject, referring to him using the pronoun *he* in line B. The reasons why Lehi does this will be explored later. Here it can be seen that the pronoun *they* refers to Adam *and* Eve in this second garden scenario when one recognizes that in this chiasm, as in the first, Lehi plays on the multiple meanings for the Hebrew noun *‘āḏām*.<sup>44</sup> A pronoun shift from *he* (Adam) to *they* (Adam and Eve) in this second scenario is one way in which he does that, and this has the effect of reintroducing Eve into the subject as if she had been there all along. Lehi was able to do this because the Hebrew noun *‘āḏām* can carry both singular and plural meanings; there is biblical precedence for this shift from singular to plural when referring to the noun *‘āḏām*:

So God created man (*ha ‘āḏām*) in his own image,  
in the image of God created he *him*;  
male and female created he *them*. (Genesis 1:27)

This is the *book of the generations* of Adam (*‘āḏām*).  
In the day that God created man (*‘āḏām*),  
in the likeness of God created he *him*;  
Male and female created he *them*;  
and blessed *them*, and called *their* name Adam (*‘āḏām*),  
in the day when *they* were created. (Genesis 5:1–2)

In the *book of generations* context, the plural pronouns may refer specifically to Adam and Eve. As in Genesis 1:27 and 5:1–2, the noun

'*ādām* in line A of the second chiasm can be read as a reference to just Adam or as a reference to Adam and Eve.<sup>45</sup>

Most commentators have recognized that, by 2 Nephi 2:23, there has been a pronoun shift from *he* to *they* that serves to reintroduce Eve into the subject.<sup>46</sup> This is because the reference to "no children" and the discussion about doing "no good" and knowing "no sin" in verse 23 wouldn't make much sense if Lehi were speaking about other creatures. As previously noted, most people read the pronoun *they* in verse 22 as referring to "all things which were created," but, given the current punctuation and verse division and the fact that Eve has not been formally reintroduced into the subject, that does make sense.

However, the rhetorical structure of this passage would favor a reading where all instances of the pronoun *they* in verses 22 and 23 refer specifically to Adam and Eve. The structure of this alternative scenario clearly indicates that in line E, and in the four parallel D lines that surround it, the pronoun *they* refers to the same thing:

- D 1 And *they* must have *remained forever* and had *no end*,
- 2 and *they* would have had *no children*.
- E Wherefore *they* would have remained in a *state of innocence*,
- D' 3 having *no joy*, for *they* knew *no misery*,
- 4 doing *no good*, for *they* knew *no sin*.

This is the punctuation used in the Yale edition of the Book of Mormon. With this punctuation, lines C and D1 are in separate sentences and line D1 (the last line of verse 22) is separated from line D2 (the first line of verse 23) by a comma. The rhetorical structure favors this punctuation because it shows that line D1 is to be read with line D2 rather than line C. Note also, that together, all the D and E lines make the most sense when the pronoun *they* refers to both Adam and Eve.

In line C from the first chiasm, the pronoun *they* still refers to Adam and Eve, and reading that pronoun in the parallel line C as a reference to Adam and Eve does make sense, especially if one reads the conjunction *And* in line D1 as *But*. The conjunctions *and* and *but* both translate from the same Hebrew word.<sup>47</sup>

Thus, after Adam and Eve had partaken of the fruit from the tree of life, "all things must have remained in the same state which they (Adam and Eve) were after that they (Adam and Eve) were created." All things, including Adam and Eve, were in the natural state after their creation.<sup>48</sup> "And [But] *they* (Adam and Eve) must have remained forever and had

no end.” Only Adam and Eve would have become immortal after they ate the fruit from the tree of life. This consequence for that choice would be expected, as immortality was something that the tree of life had to offer them. If they had been created as immortal beings, then the incentive or enticement to choose the tree of life would have been greatly diminished.

Of course, this scenario may have created a problematic situation where Adam and Eve were immortal beings in a natural world. But Lehi uses this hypothetical scenario to show the problems that it would create. This scenario is hypothetical for a reason that will be explored later. For now, one may surmise that, just as God did not allow Adam and Eve to partake of the tree of life after eating the forbidden fruit (while they were in an unworthy state), he probably would not have allowed them to partake of its fruit while they were in a state of innocence (an unprepared state).

In this chiasm, as in the first chiasm, after the narrative leaves the garden scenario, the pronoun *they* is used to refer to all *men* (line A'). Thus, the following can be the reading for this second chiasm:

- A And now behold, if *Adam* (*'āḏām*, proper name) had not *transgressed*,
- B *he* would not have *fallen*, but *he* would have *remained in the garden of Eden* (chosen the tree of life);
- C and *all things* which were created must have remained in the same state which *they* (Adam and Eve) were after that *they* (Adam and Eve) were created (the natural state).
- D 1 [But] *they* (Adam and Eve) must have *remained forever* and had *no end*,
- 2 and *they* (Adam and Eve) would have had *no children*.
- E Wherefore *they* (Adam and Eve) would have remained in a *state of innocence*,
- D' 3 having *no joy*, for *they* (Adam and Eve) knew *no misery*,
- 4 doing *no good*, for *they* (Adam and Eve) knew *no sin*.
- C' But behold, *all things* have been done in the wisdom of him who knoweth *all things*.
- B' *Adam* (*'āḏām*, proper name) *fell* that *men* (*'āḏām*, generic) might be,
- A' and *men* (*'āḏām*, generic) are that they might have *joy*.<sup>49</sup>

Again, it appears that Alma reads the biblical version of the garden narrative as Lehi does. At Ammonihah, after addressing the Fall, which led to mankind becoming “a lost and a fallen people,” he addresses

the measures that God took to prevent Adam (*ʾāḏām*) from partaking *also* of the tree of life. He notes that if Adam had been able to partake of its fruit "at that time," then "there would have been no death" (Alma 12:22–23). To show that this general reference to "death" applied just to Adam and the penalty that he incurred, rather than to all of creation, he cites the warning from Genesis 2:17 as follows: "if *thou* eat, *thou* shalt surely die" (Alma 12:23). Alma then follows this paraphrase with a statement noting that the Lord kept his word after Adam (*ʾāḏām*) had transgressed: "And we see that death comes upon *mankind* (*ʾāḏām*), . . . which is the temporal death" (Alma 12:24).<sup>50</sup> Thus, these teachings are consistent with Lehi's:

- The tree of life offered immortality to Adam.
- Adam could not make both choices.
- The sentence of death applied only to mankind (*ʾāḏām*).

In this passage, Alma plays upon the full range of meaning for the noun *ʾāḏām*, as does Lehi.

### ***A summary of the consequences***

The rhetorical links within 2 Nephi 2 show that in the second garden scenario, Adam had eaten the fruit from the tree of life and that the "state" in which "all things" were "created" was the natural state. From these observations, and from Lehi's wordplay with the Hebrew noun *ʾāḏām* (which included the pronoun shift from *he* to *they*), one can recognize that the consequences of the choice for the tree of life would have affected only Adam and Eve and their potential for posterity, not all of creation.

In the Bible, the punishment given to Adam and Eve for eating the forbidden fruit was separation from the garden which contained the path leading to the tree of life (Genesis 3:22–24; Alma 42:2–3). Adam and Eve and their children would "surely die" because they all lost access to the tree of life. That consequence was to be expected, based on the warning in Genesis 2:17. But Genesis says nothing about a change from immortality to mortality for Adam and Eve or any other creature. Thus, it is significant to note that, in their commentaries on this biblical scenario, neither Lehi nor Alma describe a change from immortality to mortality for Adam and Eve or any other creature.

To be clear, the decision to eat the forbidden fruit brought death to both Adam and Eve and to all mankind. Consistent with the Bible dictionary's definition for the Fall of Adam, one may say that the Fall was

“the process by which mankind became mortal on this earth,” if mortality is defined as the certainty of death.<sup>51</sup> Still, the scriptures nowhere describe a change from immortality to mortality for Adam and Eve or any other creature.

What may be unexpected in the Bible is the fact that Adam and Eve do not die “in the day that” they eat the forbidden fruit (Genesis 2:17). In commenting on the biblical scenario, Lehi notes that their days were prolonged so they could repent. Alma notes the same thing (Alma 12:24; 42:4). Because of this, both Lehi and Alma understand that in this interval between the Fall and death, Adam and Eve (and all mankind) find themselves in a *lost* and *fallen* state. Lehi learns this from his vision of the tree of life. In that vision, this *lost* and *fallen* state is described as separation from the tree of life or the path that leads to it (1 Nephi 8:23, 28, 34; 10:6–7). And, as previously noted, one also sees this in Lehi’s two adjacent chiasms. The keywords and ideas in the four parallel B lines clearly show that to be *lost* and *fallen* is to be separated from *the Garden of Eden*. Lehi also understood that mankind’s *lost* and *fallen* condition leads to “captivity and death” as opposed to “liberty and eternal life” (2 Nephi 2:27).

Alma understands mankind’s *lost* and *fallen* condition in the same way that Lehi did. He defines separation from the tree of life (our lost and fallen condition) as separation from God’s presence in both a temporal and spiritual sense (Alma 42:6–7). This separation leads to both temporal and spiritual death (Alma 42:8–9). Thus, in this *lost* and *fallen* condition, mortals are left to “follow after [their] *own will*” (Alma 42:7), not necessarily a *new will*, because they lose access to the Holy Spirit which provides guidance and help for those who are on the path that leads to the tree of life (2 Nephi 2:28–29, 32:3, 5).

In the garden scenario from Lehi’s second chiasm, the direct consequence of eating the fruit from the tree of life — immortality — would also be expected. Again, it would be expected for Adam and Eve only, as Lehi has explicitly noted that everything else would have remained in the same state that *they* were in after *they* were created. Whether one reads the pronoun *they* in that sentence (line C) as a reference to *all things* or to just *Adam and Eve*, it is the same. Lehi had clearly identified the state in which all things were created as the natural state.

However, based on the descriptions of what Lehi and Nephi had experienced after eating the fruit from the tree of life, one learns that this choice for the tree of life also carried unexpected consequences. While joy was the hallmark of their experience, Lehi avers that Adam

and Eve would have had no joy if they had eaten the same fruit. Yet, in both scenarios, the unexpected consequences may be explained by the fact that when Adam and Eve made their choice, they were not fully prepared to make it.<sup>52</sup>

### **Adam and Eve were not fully prepared to choose**

In both scenarios, Adam and Eve make their choice while they are in a "state of innocence." Although they were given a commandment and a warning of the consequences for disobeying it, which gave them a sense of right and wrong and, thus, accountability for disobedience, they did not yet comprehend the concepts of good and evil (Genesis 3:5, 22; Moses 4:11, 28). While commenting on James Talmage's teaching that when Eve ate the forbidden fruit, "She feared not evil, for she knew it not,"<sup>53</sup> Jeffrey Bradshaw states the following:

I am persuaded that Elder Talmage states the situation accurately. Although he recognized that Satan beguiled Eve, he in no way implies that she chose evil — because "she knew it not."<sup>54</sup>

A knowledge of good and evil is the basis for fully understanding the commandments that mortals are given and for using their agency to make choices. In Lehi's teachings about the plan of redemption, this knowledge of good and evil is an essential element in the plan:

and the way is prepared from the fall of man, and salvation is free. And men are instructed sufficiently that they *know good from evil*, and the law is given unto men. . . . And the Messiah cometh in the fullness of time that he might redeem the children of men from the fall. And *because that they are redeemed from the fall*, they have become free forever, *knowing good from evil* (2 Nephi 2:4–5, 26)

However, the plan of redemption wasn't implemented until after the Fall. In the second, hypothetical garden scenario (2 Nephi 2:22–23), Lehi teaches that if Adam and Eve had chosen to eat the fruit from the tree of life while in their state of innocence, then they would have remained in that state forever, "doing *no good*, for they knew *no sin*" (line D'4). This implies that in that state of innocence, they did not yet "know good from evil." Lehi also links the statement that "they would have had no children" directly to this state of innocence (lines D2 and E), signaling that he understood his version of the Genesis statement "they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not

ashamed” (Genesis 2:25) to imply that Adam and Eve were in a state of innocence in that scenario as well. This raises the question of why God would even allow Adam and Eve to be tempted to disobey the commandment to not eat the forbidden fruit while they did not fully understand the concepts of good and evil.

As will be shown later, Lehi does address that question and it may be why he presents these teachings about the consequences of the Fall. But here, one must note that some of the consequences for the choice that was made in each garden scenario are not what one would expect for the choice that was made. These unexpected consequences may be explained by the fact that Adam and Eve were in a state of innocence when they made their choice, in both scenarios. That observation shows that these unexpected consequences could have resulted from the time when Adam and Eve made their choice and not just from the fact that they made the choice.

### **Unexpected consequences**

In the second, hypothetical garden scenario (2 Nephi 2:22–23), Lehi teaches that if Adam and Eve had eaten the fruit from the tree of life, then they “must have remained forever and had no end” (line D1). One would expect that the tree of life would offer them immortality. As previously noted, Lehi also teaches that Adam and Eve would have had “no joy” because they “knew no misery” (line D'3). The tree of life would not have offered Adam and Eve the joy that Lehi had described when he partook of its fruit (1 Nephi 8:12). Adam and Eve also would never have experienced joy from their posterity because they would have also had “no children” (line D2). From what Lehi and Nephi have described so positively in the accounts of their vision after eating the fruit from the tree of life (1 Nephi 8:10–16, 11:2–5, 8–11, 21–23), one would not expect that this same choice would produce such negative consequences for Adam and Eve.

It has also been noted that, in the first garden scenario, Adam and Eve do not die “in the day that” they eat the forbidden fruit (Genesis 2:17). Rather, their days are “prolonged” or “their time was lengthened” so they could “repent” (2 Nephi 2:21). That may also be unexpected.

### **Choices made prematurely**

All these unexpected consequences may be the result of *when* these choices were made. They were made while Adam and Eve were in a state of innocence. Because of this, in the first scenario God could offer

leniency to Adam and Eve as they may not have been fully accountable for their choice. While they were commanded to not eat the forbidden fruit and must have understood the consequence for doing that, they did not yet have the fully developed ability to differentiate between good and evil. Thus, they were easily beguiled, persuaded by the devil to violate that commandment, and they had to suffer the consequences: expulsion from the garden and, ultimately, death. Yet their days were prolonged. They were offered an opportunity to repent and were given what may have been a second chance to learn "the way of the tree of life" (Genesis 3:24) and prepare to partake of its fruit.

In the second scenario, the consequence of eating from the tree of life while in a state of innocence was threefold: Adam and Eve would have "remained in the garden of Eden"; they "must have remained for ever, and had no end"; and "they would have remained in a state of innocence." In some sense, eating the fruit from the tree of life while in a state of innocence would have had the effect of perpetuating that state of innocence forever. This perpetuation of their state of innocence does explain why they would have had "no children." That, coupled with the fact that they would never have experienced death, goes a long way toward explaining why they would have had "no joy" and "no misery." The fact that they would have done "no good" because they "knew no sin" is also explained by this perpetuation of their state of innocence — they would not have known the difference.

The fact that Adam and Eve would have "remained in a state of innocence" after eating the fruit from the tree of life indicates that they were in that state when they made that choice. However, since remaining in that state of innocence was a consequence of their choice, had they not made it *when* they did, would they have remained in that state of innocence forever, in the garden? Lehi does not say that they would have.

Indeed, if they were in a condition analogous to the state in which all find themselves as little children, then it would be expected that, with time, Adam and Eve would outgrow their state of innocence within the garden, as they did outside the garden in the first scenario. Thus, if they had not partaken of the forbidden fruit *when* they did, would they have been able to learn from the things that they experienced in the garden that all things have their opposite? From this experience, from Lucifer's presence in the garden, and with further instructions from the Lord, could they have learned to distinguish good from evil while in the garden? Would they have been able to experience joy therein?<sup>55</sup>

Is it possible that they were placed in the garden to see if they would do *all* that the Lord commanded (Abraham 3:25)? If so, then they, eventually, must have been able to have children while there,<sup>56</sup> and their posterity would have brought them great joy as well.

The realization that Lehi viewed Adam and Eve as natural beings when they were placed in the Garden of Eden does raise the possibility that the answer to all these questions is yes. It is possible that Lehi just assumed that his sons would understand that Adam and Eve would not have remained in a state of innocence forever, had they remained in the garden.

Regardless of how prepared intellectually and spiritually Adam and Eve may or may not have been when they made their choice in this second scenario, they may not have been physically ready to eat the fruit from the tree of life while in a state of innocence. Thus, many of the blessings associated with the tree of life could not have come to fruition for them in this hypothetical garden scenario. The negative consequences associated with eating the fruit from the tree of life in this hypothetical scenario might suggest that God would not have allowed them to eat the fruit from that tree while in an unprepared state.<sup>57</sup>

This reading of 2 Nephi 2:22–23 does raise another question: If this hypothetical Garden of Eden scenario did not show that the Fall was necessary to introduce procreation and death into this world, then what purpose did it serve in Lehi's teachings?

### **The Question that the Hypothetical Scenario Answers**

Lehi's statement that "all things have been done in the wisdom of him who knoweth all things" ends the hypothetical garden scenario in the second chiasm and returns to what happened in the biblical story. From what precedes this statement and from what follows, it appears that this hypothetical scenario serves to answer a question that may have been raised by what happened in the first scenario, which addresses the biblical story. Why would God have allowed Adam and Eve to be "beguiled" or persuaded to eat the forbidden fruit while they were in a state of innocence? That does not seem fair. Perhaps, this was a question raised by Lehi's sons as one of Alma's commentaries on the garden narrative was prompted by a similar question from Corianton (Alma 42:1). Regardless, in this hypothetical scenario, Lehi showed his sons that if God had intervened to give Adam and Eve the fruit from the tree of life before they could be "beguiled" or persuaded

to eat the forbidden fruit, then it would have destroyed the very purpose for which they were created, which was to attain eternal life and eternal joy.

### **Adam's fall was necessary**

God allowed "all things" to happen as they inevitably would in the kind of world that he had to create for his children to have the experience necessary to attain eternal joy. Thus, "Adam fell that men might be."<sup>58</sup> The rhetorical structure of these teachings helps reveal that this Adam in line B', who chooses to fall "that men might be," is the same Adam who had chosen not to fall in the parallel line B, where he was referred to using the pronoun *he*. Yet Lehi is not necessarily singling out Adam for any reason other than to state the obvious: once Eve has fallen and faced expulsion from the garden, Adam's fall becomes necessary for them to obey the commandment to multiply and replenish the earth (Genesis 1:28; Moses 2:28). Even though Lehi does not mention Eve by name in the second chiasm, the fact that she is with Adam the whole time is evident by his use of the plural pronoun *they*. Further, Lehi does not give Adam or Eve credit or blame for the Fall. Multiple passages in the Book of Mormon note that *both* Adam and Eve are beguiled by the devil, and it is the devil himself who gets the blame for the Fall (2 Nephi 9:9; Mosiah 16:3; Ether 8:25). Lest this statement from Lehi is read to suggest that he is giving Adam exclusive credit for the Fall, one may remember temple teachings where it is learned that it was Eve who helped Adam understand why he must eat the forbidden fruit. In the Book of Moses, what Adam refers to as "my transgression," Eve refers to as "our transgression," even as she reminds him why he needed to transgress (Moses 5:10–11).<sup>59</sup> Were it not for her role in Adam's Fall, he may have remained a lone man in the garden, forever. Thus, her role is equally necessary and most fortunate for us.<sup>60</sup> In her more enlightened state, after eating the fruit from the tree of knowledge, Eve's only motive is to be obedient to the extent possible, not to be disobedient.

An important takeaway from these teachings is that Lehi does not indicate that Adam and Eve needed to fall to acquire the ability to have children. If they had not partaken of the fruit from the tree of life prematurely, then they may have eventually had children naturally, while they were in the garden, as they did when they were outside the garden. If this is correct, then the dilemma of contradictory commandments disappears.

While Lehi's statement, "Adam (*'adam*) fell that men (*'adam*) might

be” indicates that Adam’s fall became necessary for mankind to have this earthly experience, the Hebrew wordplay in this statement also helps one to recognize the same wordplay, involving the same noun (*‘adam*), in the first and last lines of the second chiasm. It is in this last line where the climax of Lehi’s teachings on the consequences of the Fall (the purpose for all creation) occurs.

### **The purpose of existence**

Lehi concludes his commentary on the consequences of the Fall with the simple statement, “men (*‘adam*) are that they might have joy.” Lehi has taught his sons that the experience of this life is necessary for them to obtain joy in the fullest sense. The world was created as it is to allow all to have the necessary experience for this end. But God, “who knoweth all things,” surely understood that in the kind of world that he needed to create — a world of opposition, of things to act and things to be acted upon — the Fall was probably inevitable. Thus, he had a plan of redemption in place to address it. Still, it is important to note that in teaching about the Fall, Lehi gave no reason to assume that God’s anticipation of the Fall was an indication that it was a required element in his eternal plan of happiness. Could God not have also been prepared for and maybe even preferred the possibility that his children might obey him? Why was the path to the tree of life within the garden in the first place? Lehi apparently does not see a need to address the problem of conflicting commandments because he does not do it. Instead, both he and Alma embed their discussion of the garden scenarios within a larger discussion of God’s eternal justice and mercy (2 Nephi 2:5ff; Alma 42:1–15).

Again, one should note that Lehi skillfully plays upon the multiple meanings of the noun *‘ādām* in these teachings. He uses that noun to refer to Adam, to Adam and Eve, and to all men. By beginning the second chiasm with just Adam as the subject and using the noun *‘ādām* with its narrowest and broadest meanings in the first and last lines, respectively, Lehi also prepares his audience to understand how the story of Adam and Eve is everyone’s story as well. In the first chiasm, the children of *‘ādām* become *‘ādām*. In this second chiasm, the man *‘ādām* (Adam) becomes all *‘ādām* (men).

### **The Larger Structure of Lehi’s Teachings**

Not only do these teachings about the Fall show why the world was created as it is (which helps all appreciate the purpose for which they

were placed in it) in the final sections of these teachings—which deal with the plan of redemption (2 Nephi 2:26–27) and the doctrine of the two ways (2 Nephi 2:28–29)<sup>61</sup>—Lehi shows his sons that this story about Adam and Eve is a simplified version of one’s own story. Because of the Atonement, everyone begins this life in a state of innocence, is given agency, acquires knowledge of good and evil, and discovers that choices have as their consequence either “liberty and life” or “captivity and death” (2 Nephi 2:26–27). Further, everyone receives enticements to choose between the options (2 Nephi 2:28–29). Finally, everyone can also come to understand that the choice for “the way of eternal life” or “the way of everlasting death” (2 Nephi 10:23) is, like the choice given to Adam and Eve in the garden, a choice for “the one or the other” (2 Nephi 2:16, 27; 1 Nephi 14:7).

In the end, Lehi placed his teachings about the consequences of the Fall at the very center of his teachings to his sons. These two parallel chiasms are surrounded by sections that together exhibit a fourfold pattern similar to what others have associated with the plan of redemption and the temple: the Creation, the Fall, the Atonement, and redemption (see appendix A).<sup>62</sup> The teachings in these four sections answer the *what* questions related to mortal existence whereas the teachings in the two chiasms at the center, together, answer the *why* questions. There is not anything quite like Lehi’s teachings about the consequences of the Fall in the rest of scripture when it comes to answering important questions:

- Why did God create the Earth?
- Why didn’t he just create us to live with him in Heaven?
- Where did evil come from?
- Why did God allow evil to exist along with the good in this world?
- Why didn’t he just start over with a new Adam and Eve after the first Adam and Eve disobey him?

The insights that Lehi shares in just seven verses help to answer some of the most difficult questions that might be asked.

## Conclusion

Lehi’s teachings about the Fall in 2 Nephi 2:19–25 provide valuable insights that create better understanding of the Creation and garden narratives in Genesis 1–3 and Moses 2–4. It is possible that these teachings represent commentary on an early Hebrew version of these biblical narratives, commentary that is clearly enhanced by insights

that Lehi gained from the brass plates and from his own visions or revelations. Nevertheless, Lehi repeatedly alludes to a source with which his sons must be familiar (2 Nephi 2:14–21, 24–25), and his skillful use of the tools of ancient Hebrew rhetoric — especially his wordplay with the Hebrew noun *‘adam* — are consistent with the hypothesis that it was a Hebrew source. If these narratives were presented in Solomon’s temple, then Lehi’s older sons would have been familiar with them. Indeed, Lehi’s teachings to his sons may represent the only commentary on these ancient Hebrew narratives that exist from someone who lived in the culture that produced them.

In the teachings found in 2 Nephi 2:19–25, Lehi effectively uses two adjacent chiasms to contrast the consequences of the choice to eat the forbidden fruit (the biblical garden scenario) from those associated with eating from the tree of life (a hypothetical, alternative scenario) to show why God had to allow the biblical Garden of Eden scenario to happen. God knew that in the kind of world that he needed to create to provide eternal life and eternal joy for his children, the Fall was likely inevitable. Thus, he had a plan in place to address it. Lehi’s teachings do not necessarily state that God’s anticipation of the Fall was an indication that it was a required element in his plan “to bring about his eternal purposes in the end of man” (2 Nephi 2:15). Rather, the Fall may have been something for which God had to plan.

Since Lehi did not explain why God would give Adam and Eve conflicting commandments in the garden, one may surmise that his reading of these ancient Hebrew narratives did not raise that question. He probably did not intend to teach the idea that the Fall was required to introduce death and procreation into the world. From his teachings, it is apparent that he understood that the story of Adam and Eve was a simplified, figurative version of everyone’s story, which makes a lot of sense if these narratives were read or enacted in ancient temple proceedings as they are in today’s temples. Indeed, Lehi’s teachings may be as relevant for helping patrons understand current temple teachings as they were for his sons and daughters in helping them understand theirs.

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## **Appendix A: The Rhetorical Structure of Lehi’s Teachings to his Sons: A Thematic Chiasm (2 Nephi 2:14–30)**

- I. The Creation: Preparation of the Earth for mankind (2 Nephi 2:14–16)<sup>63</sup>

- a. Summary of the two Creation narratives
- b. The choice given to man
- II. The Fall (2 Nephi 2:17–18)
  - III. The consequences of eating the forbidden fruit (2 Nephi 2:19–21)
  - III.' Why God allowed Adam to eat the forbidden fruit (2 Nephi 2:22–25)
- II.' The Atonement: Redemption from the general consequences of the Fall (2 Nephi 2:26–27)<sup>64</sup>
- I.' Redemption: Redemption from one's own sins (mankind's preparation for eternity, 2 Nephi 2:28–30)<sup>65</sup>
  - a. Summary of the two ways
  - b. The choice that Lehi made

## Appendix B: The Structure of Each Rhetorical Unit in Lehi's Teachings to His Sons

### Creation: Preparation of the Earth for mankind

#### *A summary of the two creation narratives*<sup>66</sup>

- 14 *And now my sons, I speak unto you these things for your profit and learning. (inclusio)*
- A** For there is a *God*<sup>67</sup> (extended alternate)
  - B** and he hath *created* all things,<sup>68</sup>
  - C** both *the heavens* (*šāmayim*) and *the earth*<sup>69</sup> (merism)
  - D** and *all things* that in them is,
  - E** both *things to act* and *things to be acted upon*.<sup>70</sup>
- 15 **A** And to bring about *his* eternal purposes in the end of man—
- B** after that he had *created* our first parents
  - C** and *the beasts of the field* and *the fowls of the air* (*šāmayim*) (merism)
  - D** and, in fine, *all things* which are created—
  - E** it must needs be that there was an *opposition*, even the *forbidden fruit* in opposition to the *tree of life*,

#### *The choice given to man*

- F** *the one* being sweet and *the other* bitter. (chiasm)
- 16 **G** Wherefore the *Lord God* gave unto *man* that he should *act for himself*,
- G'** Wherefore *man* (*ādām*) could not *act for himself*

**F'** save it should be that he were enticed by *the one* or *the other*.

## The Fall

- 17 **H** And I Lehi, according to the things which I have read,<sup>71</sup> must needs suppose (repeated alternate)<sup>72</sup>
- I** that an *angel of God*, according to that which is written, had *fallen from heaven*;
  - J** wherefore he *became a devil*,
  - K** having *sought* that which was evil before God.
- 18 **I** And because that *he had fallen from heaven*
- J** and *had become miserable* forever
  - K** he *sought* also the misery of *all* mankind;
  - L** wherefore *he saith* unto Eve
  - J** —yea, even that old serpent which is the *devil* (Revelation 12:9; 20:2)<sup>73</sup>
  - K** which is the father of *all* lies (Moses 4:4; John 8:44)
  - L** wherefore *he saith*:
    - M** Partake of the forbidden fruit and ye shall not die, but ye shall be as God,<sup>74</sup> knowing good and Evil (Genesis 3:4, 5).

## The consequences of eating the forbidden fruit

- 19 **N** And after that *Adam and Eve* had *partaken of the forbidden fruit*, (parallel chiasms)
- O** they were *driven out from the garden of Eden* to till the earth.
- 20 **P** And they have brought forth children, yea, even the *family of all the earth*.
- 21 **Q** 1 And the *days* of the children of men (*‘āḍām*) were *prolonged*, (extended alternate)
- 2 *according to* the will of *God*,
  - 3 that they might *repent* while in the flesh.
  - R** Wherefore their state became a *state of probation*,
  - Q'** 1 and their *time* was *lengthened*
  - 2 *according to* the commandments which the *Lord God* gave unto the children of men (*‘āḍām*).
  - 3 For he gave commandment that all men (*‘āḍām*) must *repent*,
  - P'** for he shewed unto *all men* (*‘āḍām*)
  - O'** that they were *lost*
  - N'** because of the *transgression of their parents*.

## Why God allowed Adam and Eve to eat the forbidden fruit

- 22 **N** And now behold, if *Adam* ('*ādām*, proper name) had not transgressed,  
**O** *he* would not have fallen, but *he* would have remained in the garden of Eden;  
**P** and *all things* which were created must have remained in the same state which *they* were after that *they* were created.  
**Q** 1 And *they* must have remained forever and had no end, (repetition of the words *they* and *no*)  
23 2 and *they* would have had no children.  
**R** Wherefore *they* would have remained in a state of innocence,  
**Q'** 3 having no joy, for *they* knew no misery,  
4 doing no good, for *they* knew no sin.  
24 **P'** But behold, *all things* have been done in the wisdom of him who knoweth *all things*.  
25 **O'** *Adam* ('*ādām*, proper name) fell that *men* ('*ādām*, generic) might be, (paronomasia)  
**N'** and *men* ('*ādām*, generic) are that they might have joy.

## Atonement: Redemption from the general consequences of the Fall

- 26 **S** And *the Messiah* cometh in the fullness of time (chiasm)  
**T** that he might *redeem* the *children of men* from the fall.  
And because that *they* are *redeemed* from the fall,  
**U** a *they* have become *free* forever, (extended alternate)  
b *knowing good from evil*,  
c<sub>1</sub> *to act* for themselves  
c<sub>2</sub> and not *to be acted upon*,  
d save it be by the *punishment of the law* at the great and last day,  
e *according to* the commandments which *God* hath given.  
27 **U'** a Wherefore *men* are *free* according to the flesh,  
b and *all things* are given them which is expedient unto man.  
c<sub>1</sub> And they are free *to choose* liberty and eternal life  
d through *the great Mediator* of all men,  
c<sub>2</sub> or *to choose* captivity and death  
e *according to* the captivity and power of *the devil*,  
**T'** for he seeketh that *all men* might be *miserable*  
**S'** like unto *himself [the devil]*.

## Redemption: Redemption from our own sins (mankind's preparation for eternity)

### A summary of the two ways

- 28 And now my sons, I would that ye should *look to the great Mediator* (anabasis: ascent)  
and hearken unto his great *commandments*  
and be faithful unto *his words*  
    a and *choose eternal life*<sup>75</sup> (simple alternate)  
    b *according to the will of his Holy Spirit*,
- 29      a and *not choose eternal death*<sup>76</sup> (catabasis: descent)  
    b *according to the will of the flesh* and the evil  
    which is therein,  
    which giveth the spirit of the devil *power to*  
    *captivate*,  
        *to bring you down to hell*,  
            that he may *reign over you* in his own  
            kingdom.<sup>77</sup>

### The choice that Lehi has made

- 30   c *I have spoken* these few words *unto you all, my sons*, (inclusio)  
    d in the last days of *my probation*.  
        (repeated alternate)
- c And *I have* chosen the good part,  
    d *according to the words of the prophet*.
- c And *I have* none other object  
    d *save it be the everlasting welfare of your souls*. Amen.

## Appendix C: Lehi's Final Blessing of his Sons and Their Families (2 Nephi 1:28–4:11)

- A** Lehi's "first blessing," addressed collectively, to Laman, Lemuel, Sam, and also, "my sons which are the sons of Ishmael."  
(1:28–29)<sup>78</sup>
- B** Blessing addressed to Zoram. He is told that "thy seed shall be blessed with [Nephi's] seed . . . upon the face of this land forever." (1:30–32)<sup>79</sup>
- C** Blessing addressed to Jacob, Lehi's "first born in the wilderness." (2:1–13)
- D** *Lehi's teachings to all his sons*.  
(2:14–30)<sup>80</sup>

**C'** Blessing addressed to Joseph, Lehi's "last born. . . in the wilderness." (3:1–25)

**A'** Nephi's narration of the blessings addressed to the children of Lehi's "first born" and then, to the sons and daughters of the other individuals listed in section A (except Sam) (4:1–10)<sup>81</sup>

**B'** Blessing addressed to Sam. His seed is blessed to be "like unto [Nephi's] seed." (4:11)<sup>82</sup>

### Appendix D: Jacob's Blessing (2 Nephi 2:1–13)

Lehi introduces Jacob's blessing with the statement, "And now Jacob, I speak unto you." After a brief introduction, he adds the following:

Wherefore I know that thou art redeemed because of the righteousness of thy Redeemer, for thou hast beheld that in the fullness of time he cometh to bring salvation unto men.  
(2 Nephi 2:3b)

Note the similarities between the words that follow this statement and those that Nephi used to introduce his tree of life vision:

#### Lehi

And thou hast beheld in thy youth his glory, wherefore thou art blessed even as *they unto whom he shall minister in the flesh*. For the Spirit is the same yesterday, today, and forever;<sup>83</sup> and the way is prepared from the fall of man, and salvation is free. (2 Nephi 2:4)

#### Nephi

I Nephi was desirous also that I might see and hear and know of these things by the power of the Holy Ghost, which is the gift of God unto all those who diligently seek him as well in times of old as *in the time that he should manifest himself unto the children of men*, for he is the same yesterday and today and forever. And the way is prepared for all men from the foundation of the world . . . (1 Nephi 10:17–19)

This blessing repeats some words and concepts that are found in Nephi's introduction to his own revelation, in the same order. This is an indication that Jacob experienced the same heavenly ascent experience that Lehi and Nephi had shared.

## The Atonement

**5** And men are *instructed sufficiently*

*that they know*<sup>84</sup> good from evil, and the law is given unto men. And by the law no flesh is justified (Romans 3:20); or by the law men are cut off, yea, by the

*temporal* law they were cut off. And also by the *spiritual* law they perish from that which is good and become miserable forever.

**6** Wherefore redemption cometh in and through *the Holy Messiah*, for he is full of grace and truth (John 1:14).

**7** Behold, he offereth himself a *sacrifice* for sin,

*to answer the ends of the law*

*unto all those which have a broken heart and a contrite spirit.*

And *unto none else*

can the *ends of the law* be answered.

**8** Wherefore how great the importance *to make these things known* unto the inhabitants of the earth,

*that they may know* that there is *no flesh* that can dwell in the presence of God

save it be through the merits and mercy and *grace* of *the Holy Messiah*, which layeth down his life (John 10:17) according to the flesh (Acts 2:30) and taketh it again (John 10:17) by the power of the Spirit (Luke 4:14),

that he may bring to pass the resurrection of the dead (Matthew 22:31),<sup>85</sup> being the first that should rise (Acts 26:23).

**9** Wherefore he is the firstfruits unto God (Revelation 14:4), inasmuch as he shall make intercession (Hebrews 7:25) for all the children of men, and they that believe in him shall be saved.

**10** And because of the intercession (Hebrews 7:25) for all, all men cometh unto God. Wherefore they stand in the presence of him (Luke 1:19) to be judged of him according to the truth and holiness which is in him;

wherefore *the ends of the law* which the Holy One hath given

*unto* the inflicting of the *punishment which is affixed*

which punishment that is affixed (error?) is in opposition to that of *the happiness which is affixed*,

*to answer the ends of the atonement*—

## The nature of God's creation

- 11** for it must needs be that there is an opposition in **all things** Inclusio,<sup>86</sup> *all things*  
 If not so, my firstborn in the wilderness,  
     righteousness could **not** be brought to pass,  
     **neither** wickedness,  
     **neither** happiness **nor** misery,  
     **neither** good **nor** bad; Accumulatio  
**wherefore** *all things* must needs be a *compound*  
*in one.*  
**Wherefore** if it should be *one body*, it must needs  
 remain as dead, having  
     **no** life **neither** death,  
     **nor** corruption **nor** incorruption,  
     happiness **nor** misery,  
     **neither** sense **nor** insensibility. Accumulatio
- 12** **Wherefore** it must needs have been **created** for  
*a thing of naught;*  
**wherefore** there would have been **no** purpose in  
 the end of its **creation.**  
**Wherefore** *this thing* must needs destroy the  
 wisdom of God Anaphora  
     **and** his eternal purposes, **and** also the power  
     **and** the mercy **and** the justice of God. Accumulatio
- 13** **And if** ye shall say there is **no law**, ye shall also say  
 there is **no sin.** Anaphora  
**And if** ye shall say there is **no sin**, ye shall also say  
 there is **no righteousness.** Protasis Apodosis  
**And if** there be **no righteousness**, there be **no**  
**happiness.** Chain Figure  
**And if** there be **no righteousness nor happi-**  
**ness**, there be **no punishment nor misery.**  
**And if these things are not**, there is **no God.**  
**And if** there is **no God**, Parallel Tri-cola  
     **we are not**,  
     **neither the earth.**
- For there could have been **no creation** of things,  
**neither to act**  
**nor to be acted upon;**  
 wherefore **all things** must have vanished away. Synecdoche<sup>87</sup>  
 Ballast Line, includes  
 the inclusio, *all things*



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## Notes

1. As B. H. Roberts explained this understanding,
 

Eve was already “in the transgression” [1 Tim. 2:14] and stood in the shadow of the penalty of the law—banishment from Eden . . . death! Under these circumstances what shall Adam do? Conjointly they had received this mission to “replenish the earth” (Genesis 1:28). . . . Not deceived, but with eyes open and knowing all the consequences, he ate the forbidden fruit offered by a loving hand.

B. H. Roberts, *The Truth, The Way, The Life: An Elementary Treatise on Theology* (San Francisco: Smith Research Associates, 1994), 395–96.
2. For an interesting summary of the sometimes-controversial interpretive history of 2 Nephi 2:22–23, see T. Benjamin Spackman, “(NO) Death Before the Fall?: The Basis and Twentieth Century Interpretation,” in *The Restored Gospel of Jesus Christ and Evolution*, ed. Jamie L. Jensen et. al (Provo, UT: College of Life Sciences, Brigham Young University [BYU], 2025), 81–115, [lifesciences.byu.edu/the-restored-gospel-of-jesus-christ-and-evolution](https://lifesciences.byu.edu/the-restored-gospel-of-jesus-christ-and-evolution).
3. Joseph Fielding Smith, “Faith Leads to a Fullness of Truth and Righteousness,” *Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine* 21 (October 1930), 148–49, [familysearch.org/library/books/viewer/284228/?page=8](https://familysearch.org/library/books/viewer/284228/?page=8). This speech was presented on 5 April 1930.
4. To make sense of the paradox of conflicting commandments, Latter-day Saint leaders and commentators have offered a variety of suggestions. Perhaps the most common is that the two commandments represented greater and lesser commandments, that “the act that produced the Fall was not a sin—inherently wrong—but a transgression—wrong because it was formally prohibited.”

Dallin H. Oaks, “The Great Plan of Happiness,” *Ensign* (November 1993), churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/1993/10/the-great-plan-of-happiness. Others reclassify the two commandments as a choice, each offering a different outcome for Adam and Eve. See Roger R. Keller, “Teaching the Fall and the Atonement: A Comparative Method,” *Religious Educator: Perspectives on the Restored Gospel* 5, no. 2 (2004): 103–4, scholarsarchive.byu.edu/re/vol5/iss2/10. Proponents of this view propose that Adam and Eve were not deceived but, rather, acted with an understanding of the importance of the choice that they made in God’s overall plan for mankind. See, for example, Beverly Campbell, *Eve and the Choice Made in Eden* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2003), 70–75. Another author has noted that the language about the “two mutually exclusive commandments” is “figurative” and not to be taken literally, that this story has more to do with “us and our personal fall” than it does with Adam and Eve and their fall. Alonzo L. Gaskill, *The Truth About Eden: Understanding the Fall and our Temple Experience* (Springville, UT: CFI, 2013), 24, 28, 29. A recent variation of this idea presents the two commandments as a *paradoxical injunction*. This provided a means by which God could place Adam and Eve in “an influence-free decision-making environment with the implied message of ‘make a decision!’ without having to ‘introduce evil’ or ‘make an argument in one direction over another.’” Jared Balmer, “Why God Placed Adam and Eve Under Paradoxical Injunctions: A View of the Garden Scene through the Optics of Communication Theory,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 66 (2025): 239–46, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/why-would-god-place-adam-and-eve-under-paradoxical-injunctions-a-view-of-the-garden-scene-through-the-optics-of-communication-theory.

5. Jack R. Lundbom, *Biblical Rhetoric and Rhetorical Criticism* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2013), 4; and Noel B. Reynolds, “Chiastic Structuring of Large Texts: Second Nephi as a Case Study,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 41 (2020): 197, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/chiastic-structuring-of-large-texts-second-nephi-as-a-case-study.
6. Lundbom, *Biblical Rhetoric*, 73–74.
7. The fact that Lehi alludes to these narratives throughout his teachings, using vocabulary from and paraphrases of various passages in them, yet seldom cites a source, indicates that his sons are familiar with the narratives. In commenting on Genesis 1, Gary Rendsberg noted that “These texts were the national literature of the people of ancient Israel.” Based on his experience primarily oral cultures, he assumed “that the people of ancient Israel had an uncanny appreciation for belles lettres.” He noted that “For the ancients . . . reading was an aural experience: one *heard* the text before it was processed by the brain.” He noted that the Hebrew verb that means *call aloud* also means *read*. See Gary A. Rendsberg, *How the Bible is Written* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2019), 26–29. If Rendsberg is correct, then Laman, Lemuel, Sam, and Nephi would have likely been familiar with the Hebrew version of these Creation and garden narratives before they left Jerusalem and before acquiring the brass plates.
8. Multiple authors have suggested that the biblical Creation and Garden of Eden

narratives were used in teachings presented in Solomon's temple. See, for example, Hugh W. Nibley, "The Circle and the Square," in *Temple and Cosmos, Beyond This Ignorant Present*, ed. Don E. Norton (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo, UT: Foundation for Apologetic Research and Mormon Studies [FARMS], 1992), 149; Stephen D. Ricks, "Liturgy and Cosmogony: The Ritual Use of Creation Accounts in the Ancient Near East," in *Temples of the Ancient World*, ed. Donald W. Parry (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1994), 120–22; LeGrand L. Baker and Stephen D. Ricks, *Who Shall Ascend into the Hill of the LORD? The Psalms in Israel's Temple Worship in the Old Testament and in the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Eborn Books, 2011), 13–14, 229–33; and David Calabro, "Ancient Israelite Temple Ritual Through the Telescope of Restoration Scripture," in *The Temple: Plates, Patterns, and Patriarchs*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks and Jeffrey M. Bradshaw (Orem, UT: Interpreter Foundation; Salt Lake City: Eborn Books, 2024), 367.

9. While Mosiah 1:3–4 might suggest that the texts on the brass plates were recorded using the Egyptian language exclusively, Brian Stubbs raised the possibility that some Hebrew texts were included on those plates. See Brian D. Stubbs, "Book of Mormon Language," *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow, (New York: Macmillan, 1992): 1:180, [contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/EoM/id/5542](https://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/EoM/id/5542).
10. Noel B. Reynolds, "A Backstory for the Brass Plates," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 53 (2022): 208–10, 212–13, 230, 235–36, [interpreterfoundation.org/journal/a-backstory-for-the-brass-plates](https://interpreterfoundation.org/journal/a-backstory-for-the-brass-plates).
11. The recognition that dozens of passages in the Book of Mormon and the Book of Moses share language that is not found in the Bible raises the possibility that this language was on the brass plates. Noel B. Reynolds, "The Brass Plates Version of Genesis," *Interpreter: A Latter-day Saint Journal of Faith and Scholarship* 34 (2020): 63–96, [interpreterfoundation.org/journal/the-brass-plates-version-of-genesis](https://interpreterfoundation.org/journal/the-brass-plates-version-of-genesis); Jeff Lindsay and Noel B. Reynolds, "'Strong Like unto Moses': The Case for Ancient Roots in the Book of Moses Based on Book of Mormon Usage of Related Content Apparently from the Brass Plates," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 44 (2021): 1–92, [interpreterfoundation.org/journal/strong-like-unto-moses-the-case-for-ancient-roots-in-the-book-of-moses-based-on-book-of-mormon-usage-of-related-content-apparently-from-the-brass-plates](https://interpreterfoundation.org/journal/strong-like-unto-moses-the-case-for-ancient-roots-in-the-book-of-moses-based-on-book-of-mormon-usage-of-related-content-apparently-from-the-brass-plates); and Jeffrey D. Lindsay, "Further Evidence from the Book of Mormon for a Book of Moses-like Text on the Brass Plates," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 61 (2024): 415–94, [interpreterfoundation.org/journal/further-evidence-from-the-book-of-mormon-for-a-book-of-moses-like-text-on-the-brass-plates](https://interpreterfoundation.org/journal/further-evidence-from-the-book-of-mormon-for-a-book-of-moses-like-text-on-the-brass-plates).
12. An example of Lehi's use of content from the brass plates and from his early revelations may be found in his brief discussion of the devil's fall from heaven (2 Nephi 2:17–18). Except for his general reference to "the words of the prophet" at the very end of this sermon (2 Nephi 2:30), the only time that Lehi cites a source is for these teachings about the devil's fall. Lehi refers to it as "things which I have read" and "that which is written." Apparently only Lehi had read it. His need to cite this source may suggest that, as with Genesis, the Hebrew

garden narrative with which his sons are familiar does not include this text. Lehi could be referring to the brass plates or to the book he has been given to read in his second vision (1 Nephi 1:11), or he may be referring to both. His discussion about the devil's fall contains an exact quote of phrases found in Moses 4:4, *the father of all lies*, and Revelation 20:2, *that old serpent which is the devil* (compare with Revelation 12:9). Both quotes are associated with accounts of Satan's fall. While neither Lehi nor Nephi describe having seen the devil's fall in the vision they shared (1 Nephi 10:17; 11:1, 6; 14:29), Nephi prophetically links that vision to the one that John will later receive (1 Nephi 14:24, 27). Nephi also notes that his account of the vision that he shared with his father does not describe all that he and Lehi have seen (1 Nephi 14:28–30).

13. Reynolds, "Chiastic Structuring of Large Texts," 197, emphasis added.
14. See Lundbom's discussion of this in Lundbom, *Biblical Rhetoric*, 74.
15. Unless stated otherwise, all Book of Mormon citations are from Royal Skousen, ed., *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text*, 2nd ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2022).
16. For simplicity, this paper refers to structures that exhibit the repetition of a series of words, phrases, and/or ideas in reverse order as *chiasmus* without an effort to differentiate between *chiasmus* (repetition of ideas) and *antimetabole* (repetition of words and phrases) or between a *chiasm* (two central elements) and a *concentric structure* (one central element). For a good discussion of the technical differences, see Stephen Kent Ehat, "Centered on Christ: The Book of Enos Possibly Structured Chiastically," *Interpreter: Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 58 (2023): 247–56, [interpreterfoundation.org/journal/centered-on-christ-the-book-of-enos-possibly-structured-chiastically](http://interpreterfoundation.org/journal/centered-on-christ-the-book-of-enos-possibly-structured-chiastically).
17. See 1 Nephi 8:28, 10:6; 2 Nephi 2:21–22, 25:17; Mosiah 16:4; Alma 9:30–32, 12:22, 34:9, 42:6. In his groundbreaking study on the presence of word pairs in the Book of Mormon, Barney showed that in the Bible, recurring word pairs could show up in chiasms where they were paired in parallel lines of the chiasm. See Kevin L. Barney, "Poetic Diction and Parallel Word Pairs in the Book of Mormon," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 4, no. 2 (1995): 24, [scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jbms/vol4/iss2/2](http://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jbms/vol4/iss2/2). In that study, Barney identified within the Book of Mormon 40 word-pairs that also show up in the Bible. Barney, "Poetic Diction," 25, 80–81. James Duke was the first to identify the words *lost* and *fallen* as a word pair in the Book of Mormon. He noted eight occurrences of this word pair. See James T. Duke, "Word Pairs and Distinctive Combinations in the Book of Mormon," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 12, no. 2 (2003): 38, chart 1, [scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jbms/vol12/iss2/5](http://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jbms/vol12/iss2/5). Lehi's pairing of *lost* and *fallen* in parallel lines from adjacent chiasms would constitute a ninth occurrence of this word pair in the Book of Mormon.
18. Lundbom, *Biblical Rhetoric*, 32, emphasis added.
19. David Calabro noted that the phrase "the way of" in Genesis 3:24, from the Hebrew word *derek*, may also be translated as *the path leading to* or *the way to*, as it is in Genesis 16:7. David M. Calabro, "Lehi's Dream and the Garden of Eden," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 26 (2017): 275, [interpreterfoundation.org/journal/lehis-dream-and-the-garden-of-eden](http://interpreterfoundation.org/journal/lehis-dream-and-the-garden-of-eden).

20. In the Hebrew version of Genesis, when the noun *ʾādām* is used without the definite article *ha*, it may refer to humanity in general or it may be used as a name for a specific individual. In Genesis, *ʾādām* is only used like the proper name Adam in Genesis 5:1, 3–5. John H. Walton, *The Lost World of Adam and Eve* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 59–62.
21. Blue Letter Bible, s.v. “Men” and “H120,” [blueletterbible.org//search/search.cfm?Criteria=Men+H120&t=KJV#s=s\\_primary\\_0\\_1](http://blueletterbible.org//search/search.cfm?Criteria=Men+H120&t=KJV#s=s_primary_0_1). Note that, in the Pentateuch, the noun *ʾādām* (H120 אָדָם) is translated as *men* in Genesis 6:1, 2, 4; 11:5; Leviticus 27:29; Numbers 5:6, 12:3, 16:29 (twice), 16:32, 18:15, 31:11. It is translated as *men* in 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, multiple times in Psalms, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekial, and in the minor prophets.
22. Benjamin does the same thing with the phrase “the transgression of Adam.” In Mosiah 3:11, the phrase “those who have fallen by the transgression of Adam” is used as a parallel to the phrase “as in Adam or by nature they fall” in Mosiah 3:16. The inverted order of the words *fallen/fall* and *Adam* in these two phrases reflects that fact that together, Mosiah 3:11, 16 form a small chiasm, even as these two verses serve as the P and P’ sections of a larger P Q R Q’ P’ chiasm in Mosiah 3:11–16. Thus, it appears that Benjamin uses “the transgression of Adam” as a metaphor for our “human nature.” John W. Welch, “Parallelism and Chiasmus in Benjamin’s Speech,” in *King Benjamin’s Speech: That Ye May Learn Wisdom*, ed. John W. Welch and Stephen D. Ricks (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1998), 348–49. See also Moses 6:55.
23. In the KJV, the phrase translated here as “to till the *earth*” is translated as “to till the *ground*” (Genesis 3:23). The words *earth* and *ground* are both acceptable translations of the Hebrew word *ʾādāmâ*. See Blue Letter Bible, s.v. “H127—ʾādāmâ—Strong’s Hebrew Lexicon (kjk),” [blueletterbible.org/lexicon/h127/kjv/wlc/0-1/](http://blueletterbible.org/lexicon/h127/kjv/wlc/0-1/). This translation choice supports the hypotheses that Lehi used a Hebrew text to structure these teachings and that the Egyptian characters that Nephi used to record Lehi’s sermon on the small plates were used to record the Hebrew words that Lehi spoke rather than an Egyptian translation of those words. See Stubbs, “Book of Mormon Language,” *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 1:179. It is also an indication that Joseph Smith was not just copying from the KJV Bible.
24. Some may question the idea that this choice was mutually exclusive based on details contained in the account of Lehi’s tree of life dream. In the narrative of that dream, some who had partaken of the fruit from the tree of life later “fell away into forbidden paths and were lost” (1 Nephi 8:26–28). They effectively made the other choice after having partaken of the fruit from the tree of life. But this apparent contradiction between Lehi’s dream and how Lehi read the Creation narratives does not necessarily present a problem. There are enough similarities between the garden narrative in Genesis and the narrative of Lehi’s dream to understand that they are connected. See Corbin T. Vollus, “Lehi’s Dream of the Tree of Life: Springboard to Prophecy,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 2, no. 2 (1993): 34–37, [scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jbms/vol2/iss2/3/](http://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jbms/vol2/iss2/3/); and Calabro, “Lehi’s Dream,” 269, 287. While Calabro proposed that Lehi had access to a “variant account” of the garden narrative to explain the differences (Calabro, “Lehi’s Dream,” 295–96), an alternative explanation

could be that the dream narrative serves to illustrate how the story of Adam and Eve represents our story. Differences in the dream narrative, such as the larger scale for the setting (1 Nephi 8:8–10, 20), may just reflect the fact that the garden story is a simplified narrative that was intended to be acted out in temple ritual. Thus, it does not allow for the portrayal of all alternatives and outcomes. Choosing "one [fruit] or the other" is one act of obedience or disobedience, depending upon the choice. All have many choices between right and wrong, all commit many sins, and all do many good deeds. While a choice between two trees serves as a good, simple illustration of the doctrine of the two ways in a temple setting, that choice must represent more choices for mortal partakers. The same may be said about the consequences of those choices. While in the narrative of Lehi's dream, there is one path to the tree of life (1 Nephi 8:20), there isn't a need for a forbidden fruit because there are many "forbidden paths" that may be taken (1 Nephi 8:27–28). There is not a need for a serpent because temptations come from multiple sources (1 Nephi 8:23, 26–28). The significance of these differences, however, diminishes when considering the figurative nature of these teachings.

25. Trent D. Stephens, D. Jeffrey Meldrum, with Forrest B. Peterson, *Evolution and Mormonism: A Quest for Understanding* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2001), 135, 181–85.
26. See Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, *Temple Themes in the Book of Moses* (Salt Lake City: Eborn, 2010), 64. Bradshaw cites Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1–17* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 209.
27. Roberts suggested that at the time of their transgression, Adam and Eve did not yet "know the way to the tree of life." Roberts, *The Truth, The Way, The Life*, 388. Ginzberg noted the ancient legend that, "In Paradise stand the tree of life and the tree of knowledge, the latter forming a hedge about the former. Only he who has cleared a path for himself through the tree of knowledge can come close to the tree of life." Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews: All Four Volumes—Complete*, trans. Henrietta Szold (n.p.: Adanson Press, 2018), 35. See also, Bradshaw, *Temple Themes in the Book of Moses*, 77. In this sense, the tree of knowledge may have served as a veil to prevent access to the tree of life. This may explain why Adam and Eve were not also prohibited from eating its fruit while they were in their state of innocence. They may not have had access to it.
28. See note 19.
29. Donald W. Parry, "Garden of Eden: Prototype Sanctuary," *Temples of the Ancient World*, ed. Donald W. Parry (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1994), 126–27; Margaret Barker, *Temple Theology: An Introduction* (London: SPCK, 2004), 4; and John H. Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One: Ancient Cosmology and the Origins Debate* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 104, 117. Alma understood that in the garden, Adam and Eve enjoyed the Lord's presence in both a temporal and a spiritual sense (Alma 12:31; 42:7).
30. The tenth Article of Faith notes that "the earth will be renewed and receive its paradisiacal glory" not "return to its paradisiacal glory." *History of the Church*, 4:535–41.

31. In the LDS edition of the KJV, there is a note in Genesis 2:15 indicating that “to dress it” is translated from the Hebrew meaning “to till it.”
32. Both Joseph Fielding Smith and Bruce R. McConkie advocated for this reading. Smith, “Faith Leads to a Fullness of Truth and Righteousness,” 148–49 and Bruce R. McConkie, “Christ and the Creation,” *Ensign* (September 1983): 9–15, [churchofjesuschrist.org/study/liahona/1983/09/christ-and-the-creation](http://churchofjesuschrist.org/study/liahona/1983/09/christ-and-the-creation).
33. See appendix B for a discussion of the parallels in each of the five lines and of how the content of each panel aligns with the content of one of the two creation narratives in Genesis (Genesis 1:1–2:4a; 2:4b–25).
34. See appendix D.
35. This might be called the natural state because Lehi would have had no understanding of the natural/supernatural dichotomy. Walton noted that, “there is no concept of a ‘natural’ world in ancient Near Eastern thinking. . . . The Israelites, along with everyone else in the ancient world, believed instead that every event was the act of deity. . . . No ‘natural’ laws governed the cosmos.” Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One*, 20. Thus, while Lehi adequately described the natural world in 2 Nephi 2:11–13, he did not call it that. Later discussions about the “*natural* man” by Benjamin (Mosiah 3:19), or mankind’s being “carnal, sensual, and devilish *by nature*” by Alma (Alma 42:10, compare with Moses 6:49), serve as functional equivalent translations of what was recorded on the plates. The Lord told Joseph Smith that he spoke unto him “that you may *naturally* understand,” even while noting that “all things unto me are *spiritual*” (Doctrine and Covenants 29:33–34).
36. With only one exception, after the completion of each stage of the Creation, as described in Genesis 1 and Moses 2, the reader is told that “God saw” that the work that was accomplished was “good.” (Genesis 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25; Moses 2:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25). The one exception was the creation of the firmament on day 2.
37. The ancient Hebrew understanding was not about describing the origin of the materials from which all things are made. As John Walton described it, “To distinguish something from other things is to create it; to name something is to create it.” See Walton, *The Lost World of Adam and Eve*, 33.
38. Robert J. Matthews, “Fall of Adam.” *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 2:485.
39. Reading Mosiah 3:16 and 19 together might suggest that Benjamin views Adam as a natural man already, before he ate the forbidden fruit. Indeed, Benjamin also understands the metaphor of *creation from dust* (Genesis 2:7) to imply mortality (Mosiah 2:25–26).
40. Robert Alter, *Genesis* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1996), 8n16–17.
41. Other biblical passages that use this wording (“thou shalt surely die” in the KJV) to issue a death sentence include Genesis 20:7; 1 Samuel 14:44; 1 Kings 2:37, 42.
42. Walton, *The Lost World of Adam and Eve*, 145.
43. In the KJV Bible, in twenty-one of the twenty-three times that the phrase “children of men” is used, the Hebrew noun translated as “men” is ‘*ādām*. Blue

Letter Bible, s.v. "Children of Men," [blueletterbible.org/search/search.cfm?Criteria=Children+of+Men&t=KJV&ss=1#s=s\\_primary\\_0\\_1](http://blueletterbible.org/search/search.cfm?Criteria=Children+of+Men&t=KJV&ss=1#s=s_primary_0_1).

44. Walton provides a good discussion of the full range of meaning for, and the complex use of the Hebrew noun *'adam* in the early chapters of Genesis. Walton, *The Lost World of Adam and Eve*, 59–62.
45. See Skousen's discussion of this proposal in Royal Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon* (Provo, UT: FARMS and BYU Studies, 2004), 1:506–7, [interpreterfoundation.org/atv-p1](http://interpreterfoundation.org/atv-p1). This remained unchanged in the second edition.
46. In B. H. Roberts's quote of 2 Nephi 2:22–24, the names *Adam* and *Eve* were placed in brackets after the first use of *they* in verse 23. Roberts, *The Truth, The Way, The Life*, 388. When Bruce R. McConkie cited 2 Nephi 2:23, he put "our first parents" in brackets after the first use of the word *they*. McConkie, "Christ and the Creation," 9–15.
47. The Hebrew conjunction *waw* may be translated as *and* or *but*. These alternatives are used interchangeably in the Book of Mormon. See David E. Bokovoy and John A. Tvetnes, *Testaments: Links Between the Book of Mormon and the Hebrew Bible* (Tooele, UT: Heritage Distribution, 2003), 221–22.
48. As previously noted, King Benjamin may have understood that Adam was a natural man *when* he transgressed (compare Mosiah 3:16, 19), and Moses 3:8–9 shows that the trees were growing naturally in the garden.
49. While it is not certain if or how Lehi used the definite article *ha*, his use of the noun *'ādām* with all the meanings associated with it in Genesis 1–5 is another indication that he is likely using a Hebrew text to structure these teachings.
50. In Moses 6:45 and 48, one sees the same thing—a reference to *death* in general, where the context could limit its use to just mankind, in this case, to "our fathers."
51. *Bible Dictionary*, s.v. "Fall of Adam and Eve" (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1979), 670, [churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/bd/fall-of-adam-and-eve](http://churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/bd/fall-of-adam-and-eve). As previously noted, King Benjamin understands the metaphor of *creation from dust* (Genesis 2:7) to imply mortality (Mosiah 2:25–26). Thus, he may have disagreed with this use of the word *mortality*.
52. Jeffrey Bradshaw recognized that "eating of either tree in an unprepared state may bring dire consequences." Bradshaw, *Temple Themes in the Book of Moses*, 67.
53. James E. Talmage, *The Articles of Faith* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1899), 67–68, [archive.org/details/articlesfaithas00talmgoog/page/68/mode/2up](http://archive.org/details/articlesfaithas00talmgoog/page/68/mode/2up).
54. Bradshaw, *Temple Themes in the Book of Moses*, 140.
55. The Garden of Eden was a stage for learning. Opposition was present, represented by the two trees. The trees were all bearing fruit as Adam and Eve were told they could eat from all of them except the tree of knowledge. Thus, there was procreation in the garden. The presence of both the Lord and Lucifer

means that good and evil were represented there as well. Death must also have been represented, else what would the warning that “thou shalt surely die” have meant to Adam and Eve?

56. Daniel Ludlow noted the following:

The scriptures do not say Adam and Eve *could not* have children; they say Adam and Eve *would not* have had children if they had remained in a state of innocence, not knowing good from evil. . . . This scripture seems to indicate that Adam and Eve were physically capable of having children in the Garden of Eden (thus they could have had children), but so long as they remained in their state of innocence, they never would have had children.

Daniel H. Ludlow, “Q & A,” *New Era*, September 1973, 13–14, [churchofjesuschrist.org/study/new-era/1973/09/q-and-a-questions-and-answers/why-did-the-lord-command-adam-and-eve-to-multiply-in-the-garden-of-eden-when-they-could-not-have-children-before-the-fall](http://churchofjesuschrist.org/study/new-era/1973/09/q-and-a-questions-and-answers/why-did-the-lord-command-adam-and-eve-to-multiply-in-the-garden-of-eden-when-they-could-not-have-children-before-the-fall).

57. This illustrates a significant difference between Lehi’s dream and the two garden scenarios he presents to his sons. In the dream, those who partake of the fruit from the tree of life do so only after having pressed forward on the path all the way to its end. They can do this because they held fast to the rod of iron through the mists of darkness (1 Nephi 8:21–24). On the other hand, in both of Lehi’s garden scenarios, Adam and Eve partake of the fruit while in a state of innocence. They have not even entered the path that leads to eternal life. While Adam and Eve are given a second chance after choosing the forbidden fruit, it appears that the consequences for eating the fruit from the tree of life while in an unprepared or an unworthy state would have been irreversible. That would explain the perpetuation of their state of innocence in the hypothetical garden scenario, and it would also explain why cherubim with a flaming sword were placed at the garden’s entrance to prevent Adam and Eve from partaking *also* of the tree of life, after they had partaken of the forbidden fruit (Genesis 3:22; Alma 42:3–5).

58. This statement is like something revealed to Enoch: “Because that Adam fell, we are; and by his fall came death; and we are made partakers of misery and woe” (Moses 6:48). If something like this passage were on the brass plates, then it may have served as Lehi’s source for this teaching. Alma’s teachings in Alma 12:23–24 may also have been influenced by this same passage, Moses 6:45, 48 (see note 50). Jeff Lindsay has persuasively linked other teachings in Alma 12 to teachings in the Book of Moses. Lindsay, “Further Evidence,” 420–24.

59. Moses 5:10–11 reads that Adam and Eve rejoice greatly after learning about the plan of redemption. Using different words, they rejoice about the same things in the same order, except that Eve adds something to the top of the list that Adam does not mention. There are nuances in the words that they use that make sense in a context where Adam rejoices in the realization that he may yet enjoy certain blessings that he thinks he is giving up by choosing to remain with Eve, whereas Eve wants to emphasize the fact that he would not have enjoyed those blessings with her by his side, had he remained in the garden. Thus, Adam notes that “because of *my* transgression *my* eyes are opened, and in this life *I* shall have joy” and “in the flesh *I* shall see God,” whereas Eve

uses plural pronouns, noting that "were it not for *our* transgression we never should have had seed [children], and [*we*] never should have known good and evil and the joy or *our* redemption." By focusing on blessings that he thought he had lost, Adam overlooked the blessing that he gained by following Eve, the blessing of having children with her. Considering this current understanding of Lehi's teachings, one no longer needs to read Moses 5:10–11 as teaching that none of these blessings would have been available to Adam and Eve had they remained in the garden. They could have become available, and there is support for this in contemporary temple teachings.

60. According to the Book of Moses, when God confronted Eve with the question, "What is this thing which thou hast done?" (Moses 4:19), the allegation from Adam was that she had given him the forbidden fruit. Adam did not mention that she also had partaken of that fruit. He left it to Eve to make that confession, but in his own confession, Adam had offered Eve's defense for persuading him to do what she had done: "The woman thou gavest me, *and commandest that she should remain with me*, she gave me of the fruit of the tree and I did eat" (Moses 4:15–18). For that defense to be understood, when Eve was confronted by God, she needed only to offer the confession that she, too, had partaken of the forbidden fruit. She did not need to address the allegation at hand because God would understand why she gave the fruit to Adam. The Lord himself implicates Eve in Adam's transgression when he turns to Adam and says: "*Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife*, and hast eaten of the fruit of the tree . . . cursed shall be the ground for thy sake" (Moses 4:23). This is the basis for understanding Eve's reference to "our transgression" as a reference to her role in Adam's transgression.
61. See appendix B.
62. Joseph M. Spencer, *An Other Testament: On Typology* (Salem, OR: Salt Press, 2012), 42, 46–49. Spencer notes that Barker's work on temple theology, presented using the pattern of Creation, broken Covenant, Atonement, and divine wisdom, "expresses both the spirit and the letter of Nephi's pattern," which Spencer describes as Creation, Fall, Atonement, and veil. Barker, *Temple Theology*, 13, 33, 53, 75; and Spencer, *An Other Testament*, 49. Later, Spencer notes that Nephi equated current temple experience at the veil with redemption. Spencer, *An Other Testament*, 57.
63. One parallel between Creation and redemption is the fact that both lead to a new stage of life for man—temporal life followed by eternal life or eternal death. The Fall and the Atonement represent an antithetical parallel.
64. The Atonement of Christ provides universal redemption from the consequences of Adam's Fall that, for no fault of one's own, affect all mankind. Lehi notes that it is because of the Atonement that all begin this life in a state of innocence and that all can exercise their agency to make choices. In addition, regardless of the choices one makes, all will be resurrected to stand in God's presence for judgment, because of the Atonement (2 Nephi 2:26–27; Moses 6:54).
65. The Atonement of Christ also provides the means and the way by which all may be redeemed from their own sins and thus ultimately receive the gift of eternal life in God's presence (2 Nephi 2:28; Moses 6:55–57). However, in Lehi's presentation of the two ways, not all who meet the Lord at the veil (2 Nephi 2:10)

will be redeemed and thus allowed to enter into his presence for eternity. In 2 Nephi 2:29, Lehi also describes the devil's modus operandi or the way by which *he* may bring the wicked into captivity and, ultimately, "eternal death" (2 Nephi 2:27, 29).

66. The content of the first and second panels of this passage corresponds directly with the content of the first and second creation accounts in Genesis 1:1–2:4a and Genesis 2:4b–25, respectively.
67. The A lines in these two panels refer to the creator. Lehi uses the two names or titles for the creator, *God* and *Lord God*, in a manner consistent with their use in the first three chapters of Genesis. Genesis 1 refers to the creator as God (Elohim), whereas the narrative in chapters 2 and 3 refers to him as the LORD God (*Yahweh Elohim*). The first panel of these teachings from Lehi refers to the creator as God. The second panel refers to him by using the possessive pronoun "his." This passage leads to Lehi's discussion of the two trees introduced in the second creation account, and this discussion refers to the creator as the Lord God (2 Nephi 2:16).
68. The B lines reflect the scope of the two creation accounts in Genesis. The scope of the first account is more universal and could be said to relate to the creation of "all things." Indeed, the phrase "the heaven(s) and the earth" is a merism that represents everything that was created. The second account in Genesis begins with the creation of the man and culminates with the creation of the woman. Thus, it is appropriate to say that the scope of this account relates to the creation of "our first parents."
69. The C lines contain phrases specific to the two biblical accounts; "the heaven(s) and the earth" from the first (Genesis 1:1, 2:4a) and "the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air" from the second (Genesis 2:19). These phrases complement each other not only because they both use the Hebrew noun *šāmayim* (*heavens* and *air* both translate this noun), but because "the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air" represent all creatures that occupy "the heavens and the earth" that are described in the first creation account (see Genesis 1: 8, 10, 20, 24, 25).
70. Each panel ends with the theme of opposition using phrases that bracket Lehi's preceding discussion about "opposition in all things" (2 Nephi 2:11–13), albeit in reverse order. See note 87.
71. Lehi's need to cite this source may suggest that, like Genesis, the Hebrew narrative with which Lehi's sons were familiar did not include this narrative of the fallen angel.
72. Lehi's use of a literary structure with three parallel panels, where the latter two are offset one line from the previous panel and add a new line at the end, creates the impression of a staircase and thus simulates a descent. This may have served to illustrate how an angel would fall from God's presence in heaven and end up on earth. Lehi's use of three panels could equate with the three tiers of sacred space represented in the temple by the most sacred Holy of Holies, the sacred Holy Place, and the profane outer court. As the High Priest left the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement, he would descend into the Holy Place and then descend again to enter the outer court.

2 Chronicles 3:4 explains that the porch in front of the holy place was elevated from the courtyard, and an elevated floor for the Holy of Holies would explain the observation that its height was ten cubits less than that given for the whole temple edifice (1 Kings 6:2, 16–20). Indeed, a precipitous descent, such as being “driven” from the garden (Genesis 3:24; 2 Nephi 2:19) or temple (in heaven or on earth), could be viewed as a fall.

73. Calabro shows why Lehi’s identification of the angel who became “a devil” as “that old serpent,” and Jacob’s description of “that angel who fell . . . and became the devil” as an “awful monster,” one who “transformeth himself nigh unto an angel of light” (2 Nephi 9:8–10, 19, 26), fit quite well into an ancient Near Eastern context. Calabro, “Ancient Israelite Temple Ritual,” 354–55.
74. In Lehi’s paraphrase of Genesis 3:5, he reads that verse to say “ye shall be as God” rather than “ye shall be as gods,” as in the KJV (Genesis 3:5) and in the Book of Moses (Moses 4:11). Noting that “In Hebrew it is possible to translate the word ordinarily translated as ‘God’ as ‘gods,’” Avram Shannon made this observation: “This has implications for the underlying language of the Book of Mormon. This translation choice derives from the Hebrew text, which suggests that both Lehi and Alma had access to and could understand something like the Hebrew text.” Avram R. Shannon, “The Documentary Hypothesis and the Book of Mormon,” in *They Shall Grow Together: The Bible in the Book of Mormon*, ed. Charles Swift and Nicholas J. Frederick (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, BYU, 2022), 265–66, 274n51, rsc.byu.edu/they-shall-grow-together/documentary-hypothesis-book-mormon.
75. The first four lines identify the path to follow when one is heeding the promptings of the Holy Spirit and “act” to choose eternal life. Lehi illustrates this path by walking his audience back through the previous four sections of this sermon, using keywords or ideas from these sections in reverse order. Interestingly, these keywords and ideas equate with each part of the journey that Nephi later outlines for his audience as they enter the path that leads to eternal life and press forward to its end: faith in Christ (the great Mediator), obedience to the *commandments* to repent and be baptized, and to feast on the words of Christ while pressing forward to the end of the path—which is eternal life (2 Nephi 31:17–21, 33:4). The reference to “his words” in the third line represents the antithesis of the words that the devil used to tempt Eve in the second section of this sermon, 2 Nephi 2:18. Those words led to the Fall.
76. If Nephi’s doctrine of Christ may be called “the way of eternal life,” then these teachings in verse 29 may be called “the way of everlasting death” (2 Nephi 10:23). All the details of the devil’s “way,” as described in Moses 4:4, are found in the account of Nephi’s vision or in allusions to it in the discussions that Nephi has with his brothers. See 1 Nephi 13:4–9, 26–28; 14:3–4, 9–10, 17; 15:24; 16:38.
77. There is remarkable consistency in the details of the devil’s modus operandi in the garden narrative from the Book of Moses in Nephi’s vision and in the story of Zeezrom (Alma 12:1–7, 11). In the Book of Moses, Satan works through the serpent to “beguile Eve” (Moses 4:6). In the end, the serpent is the only individual who is cursed (Moses 4:20). In Alma, the adversary works through Zeezrom to get the people of Ammonihah to cast out and even try to destroy Alma and Amulek (Alma 12:1, 4). As Alma notes, these people ultimately will suffer the

same fate (Alma 12:6, 11). In Nephi's vision, the devil uses those who belong to the church of the devil to persecute the early Christians, using the same method. Eventually, those people are subjected to the same thing (1 Nephi 14:3, 4). In all these teachings, the devil conducts his evil works by using agents to inflict pain and suffering on others; however, in time, he subjects these agents to the same fate.

78. Lehi uses the expression *w't(h)*, "and now," to introduce each of the blessings given to his sons and to Zoram, and Nephi uses it to introduce his narration of the blessings that Lehi gives to the children of his rebellious brothers. The use of this verbal or transitional marker is an indication that Lehi and Nephi were trained as scribes. See William M. Schniedewind, "Adaptation in Scribal Curriculum: Examples from the Letter Writing Genre," in *The Scribe in the Biblical World: A Bridge Between Scripts, Languages and Cultures*, ed. Esther Eshel and Michael Langlois (Boston: De Gruyter, 2023), 220; and Brant A. Gardner, *Engraven Upon Plates, Printed Upon Paper: Textual and Narrative Structures in the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2023), 91–92.
79. While Nephi does not include his blessing in this narrative of the blessings that Lehi gives to his sons and their families, the blessing to Zoram indicates that Nephi has also received a blessing from Lehi. Grant Hardy offers a reasonable proposal for why Nephi's blessing isn't included. See Grant Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon: A Reader's Guide* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 50–52.
80. The phrases "And now my sons I speak unto you" and "I have spoken . . . unto you all my sons" may serve as the inclusio for Lehi's teachings to all his sons at the center of this chiasm (2 Nephi 2:14, 30).
81. By grouping the blessings given to the children of Lehi's rebellious sons together in his narration (section A'), Nephi was able to preserve the parallel with section A in the overall chiasmic structure of this passage.
82. In 2 Nephi 5:6, Zoram is listed before Sam in the list of those who followed Nephi into the wilderness. Zoram was older than Sam and likely was blessed and listed before him for that reason.
83. One of the keyword phrases shared in 1 Nephi 10:17–19 and 2 Nephi 2:4 is one found only in the New Testament. The phrase "the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever" is found in Hebrews 13:8. However, this may just be the New Testament way of teaching an idea that is found in the Old Testament: "But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end" (Psalm 102:27). Its use by both Lehi and Nephi and its similarity to Psalm 102:27 would argue that it serves as a functional equivalent for what was recorded on the plates.
84. The keyword repetitions are in bold italics and phrases that are also found in the New Testament are underlined. The keyword repetitions reveal that these teachings were presented in two panels, each with similar framing. The phrases *that they know* or *that they may know* are used at the beginning, and the phrases *ends of the law* or *ends of the atonement* are used at the end. The intervening material reveals other parallels.
85. The symmetry or balance between the two panels is disrupted by the inclusion in

verses 8–10 of a cluster of phrases that are found in the KJV New Testament. Skousen has noted that the Book of Mormon contains other clusters of phrases from all over the Bible. Royal Skousen, "The Language of the Original Text of the Book of Mormon," *BYU Studies Quarterly* 57, no. 3 (2018): 104–5, [scholarsarchive.byu.edu/byusq/vol57/iss3/5](http://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/byusq/vol57/iss3/5). In this passage, these phrases address the Resurrection and Judgment and likely serve as functional equivalent translations of what was inscribed on the plates.

86. For the definitions of the terms in this column, see Lundbom, *Biblical Rhetoric*, 33, 133, 168, 177, 178, 184, 186. While an *inclusio* usually includes words found only at the beginning and ending of a passage, an additional use of the phrase *all things* is required in the body of this passage to show how *all things* must become *one thing* (*a compound in one, one body, a thing, this thing*) in a world without opposition.
87. Scholars note that the six days of creation in Genesis 1 may be divided into two parallel triads of events. In Lehi's version of this framework hypothesis, the first triad describes the creation of *things to be acted upon*, and the second describes the creation of *things to act* (2 Nephi 2:14–15). Mankind (*we*) and *the earth* were created on the last day of their respective triad and thus represent all that was created *to act* and *to be acted upon*, respectively. See Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One*, 111–12; C. John Collins, *Genesis 1–4: A Linguistic, Literary, and Theological Commentary* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2006), 73; and Charles E. Hummel, *The Galileo Connection: Resolving Conflicts Between Science and the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 205.





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