

## **TREE OF LIFE**

(1 Nephi 2:40-85)

Lehi sees a vision of the tree of life. He partakes of its fruit and desires his family to do likewise. He sees a rod of iron, a straight and narrow path, and the mists of darkness that enshroud men. Sariah, Nephi, and Sam partake of the fruit, but Laman and Lemuel refuse.

In relating this vision Lehi's primary concern is for Laman and Lemuel. Note the recounting is both preceded and followed by comments aimed at them, cf. v. 4, 35-38. Lehi is so concerned about them that he fails to perceive all of the aspects of the vision.

The Tree of Life symbolism goes all the way back to the Genesis account of the Creation (Gen. 2:9). Separation from God prohibits free access to the Tree of Life, and one must pass by the cherubim with the flaming swords in order to gain access to it, cf. Gen. 3:22-24. Those that overcome are permitted to eat of the Tree of Life (cf. Rev. 2:7), which is in heaven (cf. Rev. 22:2, Rev. 22:14). The figure of the Tree of Life is subsequently used quite a bit in the book of Alma. Oddly enough, given its preeminence in the Book of Mormon, the figure is never used in the D&C.

Lehi's faith and reliance upon the Lord in a time of distress and hopelessness exhibit his character.

"Rod of iron", the typical view of this rod is that of a hand railing. Such a railing might be an anachronism, and then again, it might not, cf. Deut. 22:8 (the KJV on "battlement" would be better rendered "parapet"). All other iron rods in the Scriptures are presented as rods of rulership occasionally wielded as weapons.

V63 "straight and narrow path", this is not a NT novelty (see Isaiah 26:7, 30:11, 40:14, Psalms 119:35, Proverbs 1:15).

V65-83 "numberless concourses of people...others...other multitudes", rather than to represent any specific historical population, the presentation is intended to show the possible outcomes: one group starts out in the path but never grabs the iron rod and so they wander off in the mists of darkness (v. 65-67); one group takes hold of the rod and makes it to the tree, but are ashamed after eating it because of the ridicule of those in the building (v. 68-76); one group that grabs hold of the rod, persists, and makes it to the tree (v. 78); and one group never seeks the path or rod, they instead wander off, with some heading straight for the building (v. 79-83).

- 1. Describe (a) the tree and (b) the process by which Lehi came to partake of the fruit of the tree.**
- 2. Describe the course and destination of each group Lehi saw in his vision.**
- 3. What, according to Lehi, was necessary to avoid falling away?**