

1 Nephi 2 — The Wilderness Threshold, Covenant Naming, and the Younger Son

Lehi's departure from Jerusalem into the wilderness, c. 600 BC.

Lehi obeys a dream to depart, leaves his *nachalah* behind, travels three days into the wilderness, builds an altar of stones, and names the river and valley after his two oldest sons in performative prophetic-blessing form. They murmur on the first night. The fourth son cries unto the Lord, is visited (*paqad*), and his heart is softened (*lev rakh*) — and the Lord answers with the inverted-primogeniture promise that will set the Lamanite-Nephite division running for the rest of the book.

Ten Insights

1. **lekh-lekha — the Abrahamic call.** Lehi's commandment in v. 2 uses Abram's Gen. 12:1 verb. The exodus is being placed inside the Abrahamic pattern.
2. **The dream as patriarchal office.** Public throne-theophany in ch. 1 → private patriarchal dream in ch. 2:2. The mode of revelation matches the mode of the call.
3. **Leaving *nachalah*.** Lehi walks away from the visible covenant-portion that anchors Israelite identity. The proof of covenant is that you can leave its tokens.
4. **Three days into the wilderness.** Ex. 3:18 / 15:22 — sacred-threshold journey marker. The whole exodus pattern in one phrase.
5. **Altar of uncut stones (v. 7).** Patriarchal-priestly worship outside the temple; Ex. 20:25; Deut. 27:5. Lehi as priest of his household where there is no Levitical infrastructure.
6. **Performative naming (vv. 8–10).** Lehi *names* the river and valley after the sons and prays they would be like them. Heart-breaking unanswered prophetic-blessing prayers.
7. **Murmuring as *talun*.** Ex. 16:2; Num. 14:2. Laman/Lemuel's first sin is named in the exact verb of Israel's wilderness sin — the old pattern returning in a new wilderness.
8. **The *lev rakh* of v. 16.** Ezek. 36:26's new-covenant heart given six centuries before Ezekiel preaches it. Nephi lives the doctrine before it is articulated.
9. ***Paqad* at conversion.** The Lord *visits/musters* Nephi — same verb as Mosiah 26's separation of the believers and unbelievers. To be *paqad*-ed is to be counted on the register.
10. **Deuteronomic conditional (v. 20).** *Inasmuch as ye keep* — the first appearance of the BoM's constitutional formula; the legal grammar of every covenant verse from here to Mormon.

Cross-References

Gen. 12:1 (*lekh-lekha*); Gen. 21:1 (*paqad*); Gen. 27 (Jacob & Esau); Gen. 48 (Ephraim over Manasseh); Ex. 3:18; Ex. 15:22, 24; Ex. 16:2; Ex. 20:25; Num. 14:2; Deut. 15:12–18; Deut. 27:5; 1 Sam. 16:7; Ps. 130:1; Isa. 1:19–20; Jer. 1; Ezek. 36:26; 2 Ne. 1:20; Alma 9:13; Hel. 12:1; D&C 121:45.

Apocryphal Correlations

- Jubilees 12:21–24.** Expanded Abram's *lekh-lekha* call with a private dream-revelation. The Abrahamic-dream tradition Lehi inherits.
- 1 Enoch 91 (Apocalypse of Weeks).** The *elect-of-the-elect* motif — remnant called out of an apostate generation. Lehi's exit in Enochic grammar.
- Sirach 44:19–21.** Wisdom-encomium for Abraham who *kept the law of the Most High* and was tested. The tested-patriarch frame Lehi enters.
- Testament of Levi 9.** Patriarchal priest builds an altar away from central sanctuary — direct precedent for v. 7.
- 4 Ezra 3:13–15.** God chooses one (Abraham) out of many at the founding of a covenant lineage — the election-out-of-the-many logic of vv. 19–22.

Hebrew Word Studies

lekh-lekha (לֵךְ-לְךָ, "get thee out / go for yourself") — vv. 1–3. Abram's call verb in Gen. 12:1. Lehi placed in the Abrahamic pattern — the promised-land migration begins with the same imperative.

nachalah (נַחֲלָה, "inheritance / allotted portion") — v. 4. The covenant land-portion allotted at conquest — the visible token of belonging. Lehi walks away on God's word alone.

lun / talun (לֹון, "murmur / grumble") — vv. 11–12. The signature wilderness sin of Israel (Ex. 16:2; Num. 14:2). The old pattern returning in a new wilderness.

paqad (פָּקַד, "visit / muster / claim") — v. 16. To be *paqad*-ed by the Lord is to be counted on the covenant register. Same verb as Sarah (Gen. 21:1) and Mosiah 26.

lev rakh (לֵב רַךְ, "soft / tender heart") — v. 16. The new-covenant heart of Ezek. 36:26 — given six centuries before Ezekiel preaches it.

chaphets (חָפֵץ, "delight / weighty inclination") — v. 16, *great desires*. Nephi wants God in a way that produces action. The verb of weighty volition.

Personal Application

Two verses to pocket. First, v. 4 — Lehi walks away from his nachalah. Whatever has been given you is not the covenant; what you can walk away from at the Lord's word is. Second, v. 16 — I cried unto the Lord; and behold he did visit me, and did soften my heart that I did believe. That sentence is a covenant of its own. The crying, the visiting, the softening, the believing — all one piece, available to any of us without birthright credentials of any kind.