
1 Nephi 3 — I Will Go and Do — Casting Lots, Failed Strategies, and the Sacred Archive

First return to Jerusalem; the brass-plates mission begins, c. 600 BC.

Three attempts to retrieve the brass plates. The lot falls on Laman by divine direction — and Laman fails. The sons offer their father's *nachalah* as bribe — Laban's *chamad* condemns him by the very Tenth Commandment engraved on the plates he hoards. Each strategy costs more than the last. And then an angel re-issues to a beaten Nephi the inverted-primogeniture promise of 1 Ne. 2 — at higher cost. This is the chapter where the covenant ratchet first becomes visible.

Ten Insights

1. **Three-fold the Lord hath commanded.** vv. 2, 4, 5 refuse to ground the mission in human strategy. Everything that follows must be read against the Lord's direct command.
2. **Brass plates as current archive.** v. 3 + ch. 5:13. Jeremiah's contemporary prophecies are on them. Laban hoards the *living word*, not an ancient artifact.
3. **I will go and do = na'aseh v'nishma.** Israel's Sinai answer (Ex. 24:7). Doing before understanding.
4. **The second half of v. 7.** *The Lord prepareth a way* — verb *kun*. Faith is stepping onto a path the Lord has already built. The chapter's load-bearing doctrine.
5. **Goral — divinely-guided lots.** v. 11; Josh. 18:6; Acts 1:26. The lot points; agency still chooses. Laman selected and refusing.
6. **Laban breaks the Tenth Commandment.** *Chamad* of v. 25 = *chamad* of Ex. 20:17. He covets the bribe offered for the tablet that says *thou shalt not covet*.
7. **The covenant ratchet.** Each strategy raises the cost. Abrahamic staircase: leave Ur → circumcise → send Ishmael → offer Isaac. Each yes makes the next yes possible.
8. **Angel's re-issued promise (v. 29).** Same inverted-primogeniture given in ch. 2:22 — now re-spoken under threat and at greater cost. Lord re-issues commissions when mission cost rises.
9. **This because of your iniquities.** Angel adds the verdict: Nephi's selection is also the brothers' indictment. Inverted primogeniture becomes inescapable.
10. **Mission as covenant transmission.** The plates are not for retrieval; they are for *the children*. Without the archive, the next generation has no covenant grammar.

Cross-References

Ex. 20:17 (*chamad*); Ex. 24:7 (*na'aseh v'nishma*); Lev. 16:8; Num. 27:21 (Urim/Thummim); Josh. 7:14; Josh. 18:6; 1 Sam. 14:41–42; Ezra 2:62; Prov. 16:33; Jer. 1:7–9; Ezek. 36:26; Mt. 19:30; Acts 1:24–26; Heb. 11:8; Mosiah 1:3–5; Alma 37:1–9; D&C 10:38–46.

Apocryphal Correlations

- 1 Maccabees 2:24–27.** Mattathias's zeal for the law under imperial pressure — the same covenant-defending posture Nephi displays at Laban's house.
- Sirach 24:23–34.** Wisdom identified with the *Book of the Covenant* — *all these things are the book of the covenant of the most high God*. The brass-plates doctrine in proverbial form.
- Testament of Joseph 11–17.** Younger-son covenant typology: the sold-and-preserved Joseph becomes the household's saviour. Nephi standing inside the Joseph-pattern.
- 4 Maccabees 18:11–13.** A mother recites Israel's heroes to fortify her sons — Abel, Isaac, Joseph. The escalating-obedience-under-threat narrative ratchet.
- Didache 4:13.** *Thou shalt not forsake the commandments of the Lord... neither adding nor taking away* — the archive ethic the mission enacts.

Hebrew Word Studies

na'aseh v'nishma (נַעֲשֶׂה וְנִשְׁמָע, "we will do and we will hear") — v. 7. Israel's Sinai answer (Ex. 24:7). Doing precedes understanding. Nephi answers his father in the same grammar Israel answered Moses.

kun (כּוּן, "prepare / establish") — v. 7. The Lord *kun*-s the way before He commands. Same verb returns in 1 Ne. 9:6 — the same doctrine in two applications.

sefer ha-zikkaron (סֵפֶר הַזִּכְרוֹן, "book of remembrance") — vv. 3, 19. The covenant archive of scripture and genealogy. To lose the *sefer* is to dissolve the people.

goral (גּוֹרָל, "lot / allotted portion") — v. 11. Divinely-guided lot (Josh. 18:6; Prov. 16:33; Acts 1:26). The lot points; agency still chooses.

chamad (חָמַד, "covet / desire intensely") — v. 25. The verb of the Tenth Commandment (Ex. 20:17). Laban *chamads* the very treasure offered for the tablets that contain *thou shalt not chamad*.

charath (חָרַח, "engrave / incise") — Implicit. The brass plates are *charath*-grade inscription. Only the engraved survives — paper burns, scrolls rot, ink fades.

Personal Application

Memorize the second half of v. 7. Most of us know I will go and do. The doctrine is in the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way. The path is already there. Your job is not to build it; your job is to step onto it. And if you are in a season where the Lord seems to be asking harder things — recognize the ratchet. He is training you for the next thing. Each yes makes the next yes possible.