



Source: Missouri edition

1 Nephi 1: 1 (1 Nephi 1:1, Utah edition) *I, Nephi, having been born of goodly parents, therefore I was taught somewhat in all the learning of my father; and having seen many afflictions in the course of my days -- nevertheless, having been highly favored of the Lord in all my days; yea, having had a great knowledge of the goodness and the mysteries of God, therefore I make a record of my proceedings in my days;*

1 Nephi 1:1 (1 Nephi 1:2 Utah edition) *yea, I make a record in the language of my father, which consists of the learning of the Jews and the language of the Egyptians.*

1 Nephi 1:2 (1 Nephi 1:3 Utah edition) *And I know that the record which I make is true; and I make it with mine own hand; and I make it according to my knowledge.*

The very first Tree-of-Life pattern found in the Book of Mormon involves the very first few verses in the book--1 Nephi 1:1-2 (Missouri edition); 1 Nephi 1:1-3 (Utah edition). The accompanying diagram breaks down the various components into the individual sefirot.

Each sefirah consists of a name, an assigned selection of a verse, and the verse location by number and edition. We call this arrangement by the term component. Eleven components make up the Prototype.

We will divide our study of the Prototype by looking at sefirot 1-3 first, then at 4-6, followed by 7-8, and--finally--9-11. Afterward, we shall summarize our findings. The Prototype commences with sefirah 1, also known as the crown. It means the will and power of God. The very first line of verse 1 of First Nephi serves as the component for this sphere.

Sefirot 1-3

Sefirah 1-Crown

I, Nephi, having been born of goodly parents, (verse 1, MO & UT editions)

God gave children to Lehi and Sarah to rear them properly. God's will and power manifested to the parents, and they responded by being good parents to their children. The children had an opportunity to see God in their parents' lives. Unfortunately, some of the offspring

did not grasp this understanding. Nephi did. God showers us with his will and power; however, we have the free agency to accept it or not.

Sefirah 2-Wisdom

...therefore I was taught somewhat in all the learning of my father; (verse 1, MO & UT editions)

The wisdom sefirah deals with the spark of inspiration or a new thought. In the assigned verse, we learn that this spark of inspiration came from Lehi's teaching Nephi. He learned from Lehi's teachings practical living skills and spiritual truths.

Sefirah 3-Understanding

...and having seen many afflictions in the course of my days --(verse 1, MO & UT editions)

If a person has a new thought, he can develop that thought. He can analyze this inspiration. When he does this, he is moving from wisdom to the understanding sphere. Nephi received inspiration from his father. Unfortunately, he suffered afflictions and had to analyze how to deal with them.

The old saying goes, "We learn more from our defeats than our successes." This quote may not be exact, but it reveals the truth. Trials in our life help us to grow. We get tested, and when we lose, we have to figure out how and why we lost.

In Nephi's case, he suffered afflictions mainly from the actions of others--such as his brothers. Like any man, Nephi was a sinner. Unlike many men, Nephi depended on God. He sought repentance, one of the definitions for the understanding sefirah.

Through his afflictions (trials), Nephi took what his father taught him and applied the learning to his challenges. He moved from the spark of inspiration (learning from Lehi) to the flame (to utilizing this learning). He passed through the fire.

Sefirot 4-6

We will now investigate the next three sefirot--mercy (4), strength (5), and beauty (6). The mercy sefirah means loving-kindness, divine grace, compassion, and expansiveness. The following component applies to this portion of the tree.

Sefirah 4-Wisdom

...nevertheless, having been highly favored of the Lord in all my days; (verse 1, MO & UT editions)

This "highly favored" status, which Nephi declared, came about by God's divine grace and loving-kindness towards Nephi. Throughout his whole life, Nephi sought after God and tried to do what the Lord commanded. In return, he received a blessing from God.

Unlike the mercy sefirah, which refers to the expansiveness of love, the strength sphere touches upon the more restrictive segment of the tree. The strength sefirah denotes discipline, boundaries, restraint, and strength of character.

In our relationship with others, we may want to shower them with love; but we restrain ourselves for reasons of good judgment or self-centered lack of understanding on our part. We move from the mercy sefirah to the strength circle.

What portion of verse 1 comes under the strength sefirah? Here it is.

Sefirah 5-Strength

...yea, having had a great knowledge of the goodness and the mysteries of God; (verse 1, MO & UT editions)

God granted Nephi "great knowledge" of His goodness and His secrets. However, this does not imply that God gave Nephi everything. God set boundaries and restricted Nephi from all knowledge of God's nature. As far as Nephi was concerned, he lived a life of discipline in obeying God; this strengthened his character.

Sefirah 6-Beauty

...therefore I make a record of my proceedings in my days; (verse 1, MO & UT editions)

We now move down to the 6th sefirah or beauty. The term balance represents one meaning. Harmony also works.

From the five sefirot, we see how Nephi developed an ongoing life history. He drew from his learning and his trials, and his written record in the sixth sefirah provided the balance for these experiences. It was in harmony with God's purposes.

Sefirot 7-8

Sefirah 7-Victory

...yea, I make a record in the language of my father, (verse 1, MO edition & verse 2 UT edition)

One of the definitions connecting to the Victory sefirah (7) is having a great desire. In this component of the Prototype, Nephi's great desire to make the record was to use his father's language, a more specialized form of writing not indicative of the culture at that time. It adapted well to the limited space of the plates (the record).

Sefirah 8-Glory

...which consists of the learning of the Jews and the language of the Egyptians. (verse 1, MO edition & verse 2, UT edition)

About the glory sefirah (8), Nephi had a sense of history. He knew the language was an amalgamation of two great cultures. This specialized language provided the proper physical spacing and literary nuances for this work. His great desire moved to persistence.

The victory and glory axis has another definition partnership. Victory refers to parent; glory means the child. Since all children have parents and grandparents,

this particular language of Nephi follows a similar generational pattern.

Nephi's language represents the child. The parent language would be Lehi's. The marriage between the learning of the Jews and the language of the Egyptians beget Lehi's form of expression.

Lehi's language is both a parent (victory sefirah) and the child (glory sefirah). Although not mentioned, Sarah—Nephi's "goodly" mother—probably gave her support to her husband and son in the language commonly used among the people at Jerusalem.

Sefirot 9-11

The foundation sefirah means bridge building, the connecting of the previous sefirot to the kingdom sphere. The term union also fits for a definition. The following component applies to this sefirah.

...And I know that the record which I make is true; (verse 2, MO edition & verse 3, UT edition.

Undoubtedly, truth makes a great foundation; his record bore witness to this truth. Nephi sought to share this truth. We now turn to the tenth sefirah.

...and I make it with mine own hand; (verse 2, MO edition & verse 3, UT edition)

The kingdom sefirah (10) refers to the physical manifestation in the world. A further definition means the body and flesh. Nephi alone made the record with his hand (hands). The two pronouns ("mine" and "own") emphasize his involvement in the work.

In this tree pattern, the knowledge sefirah (11), which usually remains hidden, displays itself in the final component.

...and I make it according to my knowledge. (verse 2, MO edition & verse 3, UT edition)

Through Nephi's experiences (sefirot 1-8), he acquired knowledge (sefirah 11) to make the plates (10). This record bears witness to the truth (9). This record--the Book of Mormon--now manifests itself to the world (10).