

Parallels between Nephi's vision of the Tree of Life and Proverbs

There are a large number of images in Proverbs which seem to parallel the language of Lehi's dream Nephi's vision. In Proverbs the connection between Wisdom and the Tree of Life is made explicit: Wisdom is the "tree of life to those who firmly hold her" (Proverbs 3:13, 18; 11:30). Wisdom invites people to eat and drink (Prov. 9:1-6, esp. 9:5, 1:31, 8:19) just as Lehi invites his family to eat of the fruit (1 Ne. 8:12), and presumably drink of the waters of the fountain of life. Coming to the house of Wisdom brings life (Prov. 9:6), requiring that the follower "walk on the path of understanding" (Prov. 9:6). The Two Ways motif is also significant elsewhere in Proverbs (Prov. 2:6-22; 4:10-27). Likewise, those in Lehi's dream must walk the "strait and narrow path" (1 Ne. 8:20) that leads to "the tree of life" (1 Ne. 11:25), and must hold or cling to the iron rod to reach the Tree of Life (1 Ne. 8:24, 15:24).

On the other hand, Folly summons (Prov. 9:13-18) those who are already on the straight path to leave it and come to her house (Prov. 9:15), just as the inhabitants of the great and spacious building summon those on the "strait and narrow path" to leave it (1 Ne. 8:27-8, 33). In both texts, those in the house of Folly mock and scorn those who stay with Wisdom (Prov. 9:7-8, 1:22, 14:6, 24:9; 1 Ne. 8:27, 33). When Wisdom sends her maidens to summon people to her banquet, she sends them to call from the "highest places of the town" (Prov. 9:3), strongly implying that her house is not there. Folly, on the other hand, already lives in the "highest places of the town," (Prov. 9:14), and therefore tries to draw people from the "right path" (Prov. 9:15) to her house in the "highest places" (Prov. 9:14). Like Folly's house, the great and spacious building stands "high above the earth" (1 Ne. 8:26).

What the foolish do not know is that in reality the house of Folly is the "depths of hell" (*'imqay she'ol*) (Prov. 9:18). According to Nephi, many of those who leave the right path for the great and spacious building likewise drown "in the depths of the fountain" (1 Ne. 8:31), which is a metaphor for "that awful hell" (1 Nephi 15:26-29). Finally, it is worth noting here that the same root in Hebrew for deep (*'amoq*, pl. *'amoqim* = depths) also can mean valley (*'emeq*). It may have been used in precisely this sense by Nephi who describes the river and the "awful gulf" (1 Nephi 15:28) or "awful hell" (1 Nephi 15:29) which separates the wicked in the great and spacious building from the Tree of Life (1 Ne 8:13, 26 15:26-9)