

The Ways of Life and Death

The Visionary Perception of Lehi and Nephi

Key Scriptures 1 Nephi 8; 11–15; 2 Nephi 31:17–32:5

Explanation Lehi and Nephi spoke clearly in terms of the ways of life and death. These well-known, largely metaphorical discussions of the tree of life lay insightful groundwork relevant to nearly every chapter in the Book of Mormon. In the visions of the tree of life, Lehi and Nephi saw a straight and narrow path leading to the tree of life, the only way of life. By contrast, the mists of darkness, fountain of filthy water, forbidden paths, strange roads, and great and spacious building all represent the “broad roads” of the way of death (1 Nephi 12:17). Nephi explains further that, depending on the way he or she chooses, a person belongs to either the church of God or the church of the devil. This view sets the stage for the dualistic discourse apparent elsewhere in the Book of Mormon.

Source Mack C. Stirling, “The Way of Life and the Way of Death in the Book of Mormon,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 6/2 (1997): 180–86.

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