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LABOR DILIGENTLY TO WRITE: THE ANCIENT MAKING OF A MODERN SCRIPTURE

Brant A. Gardner

[Editor's Note: We are pleased to present the fifth installment from a book entitled *Labor Diligently to Write: The Ancient Making of a Modern Scripture*. It is being presented in serialized form as an aid to help readers prepare for the 2020 *Come Follow Me* course of study. This is a new approach for *Interpreter*, and we hope you find it helpful.]

Chapter 12: Book of 2 Nephi

2 Nephi Chapter I (1–2)

The first, and perhaps most important structural element in 2 Nephi is that there is a 2 Nephi at all. The text we have from the small plates of Nephi are holographic. That is, they are in the hand of the original writers. There is no Mormon standing between the original text and our final version, such as we find in the material from Mosiah to 4 Nephi (or Moroni's treatment of Ether's record). We have the chapters just as Nephi created them. We also have the anomaly of two separate books by the very same writer, something that never occurs again in known Nephite history.

That Nephi intentionally planned the division into two books is verified in his synoptic header. With such a header, Nephi lays out what he planned for his second book, just as he did for his first book. The conceptual problem with the second book is that it describes only the events listed up to 2 Nephi IV (5). To make matters somewhat more difficult, the beginning of Nephi's second book feels like a continuation of the first.

Nephi opens with: "And now it came to pass that after I, Nephi, had made an end of teaching my brethren, our father, Lehi, also spake many things unto them, and rehearsed unto them, how great things the

Lord had done for them in bringing them out of the land of Jerusalem” (2 Nephi 1:1). This very clearly returns to the way Nephi ended 1 Nephi. However, as I noted for 1 Nephi VII (22), that ending is more likely to have been literary than a description of an actual event. When Nephi refers to it at the beginning of his second book, he is carefully linking the two books. They are his books and respond to his reasons for creating them.²⁹⁶

We cannot tell if Nephi began writing his second book soon after ending the first or if the link to the aside resulted from re-reading the material before beginning. Regardless of when he began writing 2 Nephi, the contents of the header strongly suggest that Nephi intended the second book to continue along the same historical themes as did the first. I suggest that Nephi viewed the books as being conceptually divided by events pertaining to the Old World in 1 Nephi and events in the New World in 2 Nephi.

The first book (after the obligatory identification and qualification of the author) began with Lehi. The second book begins with Lehi. Lehi’s Old World prophecy predicted Jerusalem’s destruction and set the family on their exodus to a land of promise. The second book also begins as a fulfillment of the promise to Lehi with the subsequent story of Nephi as the teacher and ruler of a new people.

Nephi understood that a destruction of his people would eventually come (1 Nephi 13:35) and perhaps saw Lehi’s discussion of the promise of the land as a similar prophetic promise for the future. After recapitulating the destruction of Jerusalem (2 Nephi 1:4), Lehi declared:

Wherefore, I, Lehi, have obtained a promise, that inasmuch as those whom the Lord God shall bring out of the land of Jerusalem shall keep his commandments, they shall prosper upon the face of this land; and they shall be kept from all other nations, that they may possess this land unto themselves. And if it so be that they shall keep his commandments they shall be blessed upon the face of this land, and there shall be none to molest them, nor to take away the land of their inheritance; and they shall dwell safely forever.

But behold, when the time cometh that they shall dwindle in unbelief, after they have received so great blessings from the hand of the Lord — having a knowledge of the creation of the earth, and all men, knowing the great and marvelous works of the Lord from the creation of the world; having power given

296. See the section, “The Break between 2 Nephi Chapters IV (5) and V (6–8).”

them to do all things by faith; having all the commandments from the beginning, and having been brought by his infinite goodness into this precious land of promise — behold, I say, if the day shall come that they will reject the Holy One of Israel, the true Messiah, their Redeemer and their God, behold, the judgments of him that is just shall rest upon them.

Yea, he will bring other nations unto them, and he will give unto them power, and he will take away from them the lands of their possessions, and he will cause them to be scattered and smitten.

Yea, as one generation passeth to another there shall be bloodsheds, and great visitations among them; wherefore, my sons, I would that ye would remember; yea, I would that ye would hearken unto my words. (2 Nephi 1:9–12)

The prophecy of Jerusalem’s destruction had no qualifiers. In contrast, there are clearly two paths open to Lehi’s descendents. Faithfulness to God would assure prosperity, but a lack of faithfulness would assure destruction.

Lehi’s prophesies for the future were generic for the whole family while specifically linked to each son’s family (including Zoram in the prophetic family). The setting for the opening of 2 Nephi is Lehi’s farewell blessings to his sons. This event is simultaneously historical and prophetic. Nephi included it for the prophetic beginning more than to faithfully represent history.

Crucial initial historical events that might have described integration with existing populations with learning the essentials of surviving in a new land and climate and what must have been significant adjustments to a new life are entirely absent. They happened, but that is not the point. In both his books, Nephi’s intent was to use history for a greater purpose. He had another set of plates on which to record history as history (to which Nephi will again refer in 2 Nephi 4:14).

Lehi began with a generic blessing on the family. He also admonished those who had murmured against Nephi to cease and to follow Nephi (2 Nephi 1:24). This statement is buried in the larger sermon Lehi gave, but it is the prophetic justification of the emergence of Nephi as the teacher and ruler, which was the subject of the first book. This statement has Lehi endorsing Nephi as the teacher and ruler. The New World story of the Nephites would continue to demonstrate the ongoing fulfillment of that prophetic declaration. When the generic blessing is over, Lehi turns to specific sons to pronounce lineage blessings. These are foundational blessings that set the prophetic destiny of the tribes descending from these lineage fathers.

It is probable that Nephi manipulated the facts of the blessings to fit another purpose because the first blessing goes to Jacob rather than to Laman. We are left to guess why Nephi placed Jacob's blessing first when that position rightly belonged to Laman.

The chapter ends with: "I have spoken these few words unto you all, my sons, in the last days of my probation; and I have chosen the good part, according to the words of the prophet. And I have none other object save it be the everlasting welfare of your souls. Amen" (2 Nephi 2:30).

2 Nephi Chapter II (3)

Chapter II is directed to Joseph, but the discussion is about Joseph of Egypt and future events. The intent is that Joseph of Lehi follow the righteous example of Joseph of Egypt and assist in moving toward the prophesied future. The chapter ends with: "And now, blessed art thou, Joseph. Behold, thou art little; wherefore hearken unto the words of thy brother, Nephi, and it shall be done unto thee even according to the words which I have spoken. Remember the words of thy dying father. Amen" (2 Nephi 3:25).

2 Nephi Chapter III (4)

The testificatory *Amen* at the end of the previous chapter required Nephi to finish the subject of that chapter at the beginning of chapter III:

And now, I, Nephi, speak concerning the prophecies of which my father hath spoken, concerning Joseph, who was carried into Egypt.

For behold, he truly prophesied concerning all his seed. And the prophecies which he wrote, there are not many greater. And he prophesied concerning us, and our future generations; and they are written upon the plates of brass.

Wherefore, after my father had made an end of speaking concerning the prophecies of Joseph, he called the children of Laman, his sons, and his daughters, and said unto them: Behold, my sons, and my daughters, who are the sons and the daughters of my firstborn, I would that ye should give ear unto my words. (2 Nephi 4:1-3)

There wasn't much remaining to be said about Joseph of Egypt. Although Nephi says he will "speak concerning the prophecies of which my father hath spoken," he really does not say anything new at all. He simply finishes by saying Lehi had said more and that the prophecies are on the brass plates. Then he ends speaking of the prophecies of Joseph and continues with the

theme for the next chapter. From prophecies based on Joseph of Egypt, Lehi returned to blessings and prophecies about his sons.

One of the critical conditions of the Lord's land of promise is the conditional nature of the promise. Lehi succinctly states: "For the Lord God hath said that: Inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments ye shall prosper in the land; and inasmuch as ye will not keep my commandments ye shall be cut off from my presence" (2 Nephi 4:4). Thus, the interesting beginning blessing is that if his sons and daughters are cursed, that they might be blessed to have the cursing removed and "be answered upon the heads of your parents" (2 Nephi 4:4). After that comes the blessings upon Laman, Lemuel, and Sam.

The historical requirement — and probably the initial function of this chapter — was fulfilled with the blessings. Nephi provides no information about when Lehi died. As Nephi writes of his father's death, he is again reminded of his author-voice task of writing on the plates. That recognition spurs another author-voice insertion that has become known as the Psalm of Nephi (2 Nephi 4:16–35). We can see Nephi transitioning from record-keeping to a personal lament:

For I, Nephi, was constrained to speak unto them, according to his word; for I had spoken many things unto them, and also my father, before his death; many of which sayings are written upon *mine other plates*; for a more history part are written upon mine other plates.

And *upon these I write the things of my soul*, and many of the scriptures which are engraven upon the plates of brass. For my soul delighteth in the scriptures, and my heart pondereth them, and writeth them for the learning and the profit of my children.

Behold, my soul delighteth in the things of the Lord; and my heart pondereth continually upon the things which I have seen and heard.

Nevertheless, notwithstanding the great goodness of the Lord, in showing me his great and marvelous works, my heart exclaimeth: O wretched man that I am! Yea, my heart sorroweth because of my flesh; my soul grieveth because of mine iniquities. (2 Nephi 4:14–17).

The essential trigger is the mention of the difference between the historical function of the large plates and the more personal function of the small plates. When Nephi says, "upon these I write the things of my soul," he indulges in a literary inclusion that examines those things

of his soul. Although constructed with poetic parallelisms, they were the result of Nephi's competence rather than a planned text.²⁹⁷ This is a spontaneous entry on the plates.

The chapter ends with Nephi's *Amen*, testifying to his expression of the things of his soul.

2 Nephi Chapter IV (5)

Just before Nephi mentioned writing on plates in 2 Nephi 4:14, which triggered the aside that led to the Psalm of Nephi, he said: "And it came to pass that not many days after his death, Laman and Lemuel and the sons of Ishmael were angry with me because of the admonitions of the Lord" (2 Nephi 4:13).

When the next chapter begins, Nephi writes:

Behold, it came to pass that I, Nephi, did cry much unto the Lord my God, because of the anger of my brethren.

But behold, their anger did increase against me, insomuch that they did seek to take away my life. (2 Nephi 5:1–2)

The first sentence is the repetitive resumption that echoes 2 Nephi 4:13, and which confirms that 2 Nephi 4:14–35 should be seen as an author-voice aside. After connecting the beginning of chapter IV to content in chapter III, Nephi moves the discussion from anger to attempted fratricide. Without the author-voice insertion, this information would have been the next event in chapter III. Its presence in a separate chapter was caused by the testificatory *Amen*, which was not a planned part of the text. That small item tells us that while Nephi planned his text, he did not necessarily plan every chapter. Some of the chapters in 1 Nephi do appear to have had a plan behind them, but many chapters end because what Nephi wrote required the chapter to end whether it was part of the plan or not.

2 Nephi 5:3 continues the theme of Nephi as the teacher and ruler over his brothers from the first book, but is now used as Laman and Lemuel's justification for their rebellion against Nephi. That prophecy that Nephi would be a ruler and a teacher is still the subtext of Nephi's story which is now moving to the most important part, which is the actual creation of Nephi's people (over whom he would be the teacher and the ruler).

297. I examined the structure and parallelisms of these verses in Brant A. Gardner, *Second Witness: Analytical and Contextual Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, 6 vols. (Salt Lake City, Greg Kofford Books, 2007), 2:76–85.

2 Nephi 5:4 is an interesting verse: “Now I do not write upon these plates all the words which they murmured against me. But it sufficeth me to say, that they did seek to take away my life” (2 Nephi 5:4). Nephi makes a reference to plates in an author-voice statement, but it does not lead away from the planned text. As pure speculation, I suggest that when Nephi finished chapter III, he stopped writing. I would assume that the emotions displayed in the Psalm of Nephi had to be strong, and he stopped writing after finishing those words.

When he again took up the stylus to write, he had to re-read what he had written to be able to return to the planned text. He read the sentence we call 2 Nephi 4:14 and understood that he needed to use that language to resume. That verse not only spoke of anger but also contained the phrase that had precipitated the author-voice aside: “... for I had spoken many things unto them, and also my father, before his death; many of which sayings are written upon mine other plates; for a more history part are written upon mine other plates” (2 Nephi 4:14). When Nephi began chapter IV, he started by repeating the anger of his brothers, but there was something of the idea of plates from that same sentence. That triggered the statement “Now I do not write upon these plates all the words which they murmured against me” (1 Nephi 5:4). In most cases, Nephi’s thinking about what he was currently writing triggered an aside. In this case, he was thinking more about tying his new chapter to the previous one than about the task of writing itself. Thus, this reference doesn’t trigger an aside because it didn’t represent a new thought he pondered but rather a reference to a previous text. His mind was already set on returning to the planned narrative.

The next verses are significant because they mark the creation of the new people over whom Nephi would rule. The reference to an exodus is brief, and there is an intentional repetition of the theme of the arrival in the New Land — it was a land of promise because they could prosper:

Wherefore, it came to pass that I, Nephi, did take my family, and also Zoram and his family, and Sam, mine elder brother and his family, and Jacob and Joseph, my younger brethren, and also my sisters, and all those who would go with me. And all those who would go with me were those who believed in the warnings and the revelations of God; wherefore, they did hearken unto my words.

And we did take our tents and whatsoever things were possible for us, and did journey in the wilderness for the space of many

days. And after we had journeyed for the space of many days we did pitch our tents.

And my people would that we should call the name of the place Nephi; wherefore, we did call it Nephi.

And all those who were with me did take upon them to call themselves the people of Nephi.

And we did observe to keep the judgments, and the statutes, and the commandments of the Lord in all things, according to the law of Moses.

And the Lord was with us; and we did prosper exceedingly; for we did sow seed, and we did reap again in abundance. And we began to raise flocks, and herds, and animals of every kind.

And I, Nephi, had also brought the records which were engraven upon the plates of brass; and also the ball, or compass, which was prepared for my father by the hand of the Lord, according to that which is written.

And it came to pass that we began to prosper exceedingly, and to multiply in the land. (2 Nephi 5:6–13)

There are two significant additions to this abbreviated exodus/ethnogenetic text. The first is that they “did observe to keep the judgments, and the statutes, and the commandments of the Lord in all things.” This was the requirement to prosper in the land. This leads directly to verse 13: “And it came to pass that we began to prosper exceedingly, and to multiply in the land.”

The second addition was the declaration that they brought the brass plates and the Liahona. These would become important sacred relics tying the Nephite nation to an antiquity in an Old World, from which they brought their legitimacy and it was verified by the possession of these sacred objects (which would later include the sword of Laban; see Mosiah 1:16).

The final definition of the Nephite people was against their declared ancient enemies (as required in the ethnogenetic formula).²⁹⁸ Nephi established the Lamanites as opposite of the Nephites. The Nephites

298. Ann E. Killebrew, *Biblical Peoples and Ethnicity: An Archaeological Study of Egyptians, Canaanites, Philistines, and Early Israel, 1300–1100 B.C.E.*, Society of Biblical Literature Archaeology and Biblical Studies 9 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005), 149: “the existence of an ancestral enemy or enemies that cement group cohesion.”

were blessed (2 Nephi 5:13). The Lamanites were cursed (2 Nephi 5:21), so cursed that intermarriage with Lamanites would bring the curse upon a Nephite (2 Nephi 5:23). The Nephites were civilized cultivators (2 Nephi 5:11). The Lamanites “did become an idle people, full of mischief and subtlety, and did seek in the wilderness for beasts of prey” (2 Nephi 5:24). Finally, the enmity was declared to be dangerous: “They shall be a scourge unto thy seed, to stir them up in remembrance of me; and inasmuch as they will not remember me, and hearken unto my words, they shall scourge them even unto destruction” (2 Nephi 5:25).

The ending of chapter IV and the beginning of chapter V are unusual both in the way chapter IV ends and the complete departure from Nephi’s planned text as seen in chapter V. That break deserves its own analysis.

The Break between 2 Nephi Chapters IV (5) and V (6–8)

The difference between our current 2 Nephi chapters 5 and 6 is stark. As Frederick Axelgard described it:

Everything Nephi has to offer in the way of historical information is presented between 1 Nephi 1 and 2 Nephi 5: his family’s travels from Jerusalem to the promised land, the conflicts between Nephi and his brothers, their division into separate colonies of Lamanites and Nephites, and so on. *Abruptly and without explanation*, Nephi’s remaining chapters move on to a sermon by Jacob (2 Nephi 6–10), quotations from Isaiah (2 Nephi 12–24), and Nephi’s final prophecies and teachings (2 Nephi 11, 25–33).²⁹⁹

Examining the way 2 Nephi IV (5) ends, I suggest that Nephi had reached the end of his intended content in his second book.³⁰⁰ The

299. Frederick W. Axelgard, “1 and 2 Nephi: An Inspiring Whole,” in *BYU Studies* 26, no. 4 (1986): 54, emphasis added.

300. This analysis suggests that, contrary to Axelgard and Spencer, Nephi did not have an overarching plan for 2 Nephi that originally included the material from 2 Nephi 6 to the end of the book. It is also contrary to Noel B. Reynolds, “On Doubting Nephi’s Break Between 1 and 2 Nephi: A Critique of Joseph Spencer’s *An Other Testament: On Typology*,” in *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 25 (2017): 89, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/on-doubting-nephis-break-between-1-and-2-nephi-a-critique-of-joseph-spencers-an-other-testament-on-typology/>. Reynolds notes: “In Axelgard’s case, the whole exercise ironically brings him to a general conclusion that I would strongly support for different reasons than those he advances. Nephi’s writings do constitute an inspiring whole — contrary to the prevailing academic opinion in the 1980s that 2 Nephi was a random collection of leftovers.”

beginning of the end comes when Nephi wraps up the historical/political purposes he had for the small plates:

And it came to pass that they would that I should be their king. But I, Nephi, was desirous that they should have no king; nevertheless, I did for them according to that which was in my power.

And behold, the words of the Lord had been fulfilled unto my brethren, which he spake concerning them, that I should be their ruler and their teacher. Wherefore, I had been their ruler and their teacher, according to the commandments of the Lord, until the time they sought to take away my life. (2 Nephi 5:18–19)

Nephi reports that he had been made king against his initial desire. The impact of that statement was not self-aggrandizing but to show that “the words of the Lord had been fulfilled.”³⁰¹ Having mentioned prophecy and his brothers, he turns to the next fulfilled prophecy:

Wherefore, the word of the Lord was fulfilled which he spake unto me, saying that: Inasmuch as they will not hearken unto thy words they shall be cut off from the presence of the Lord. And behold, they were cut off from his presence.

And he had caused the cursing to come upon them, yea, even a sore cursing, because of their iniquity. For behold, they had hardened their hearts against him, that they had become like unto a flint; wherefore, as they were white, and exceedingly fair and delightsome, that they might not be enticing unto my people the Lord God did cause a skin of blackness to come upon them.

And thus saith the Lord God: I will cause that they shall be loathsome unto thy people, save they shall repent of their iniquities.

I see a change in the way Nephi wrote, but rather than random additions, I see them as having been triggered by previous content.

301. Although Nephi says “the words of the Lord had been fulfilled unto my brethren, which he spake concerning them, that I should be their ruler and their teacher. Wherefore, I had been their ruler and their teacher, according to the commandments of the Lord, until the time they sought to take away my life” (2 Nephi 5:19), Nephi never gives an example of where that statement had been true. He had shown numerous examples of where he had been a teacher, but he was not clearly a ruler until after the separation from his brothers.

And cursed shall be the seed of him that mixeth with their seed; for they shall be cursed even with the same cursing. And the Lord spake it, and it was done.

And because of their cursing which was upon them they did become an idle people, full of mischief and subtlety, and did seek in the wilderness for beasts of prey.

And the Lord God said unto me: They shall be a scourge unto thy seed, to stir them up in remembrance of me; and inasmuch as they will not remember me, and hearken unto my words, they shall scourge them even unto destruction. (2 Nephi 5:20–25)

Having underscored the fulfillment of prophecy, Nephi provides a simple “and it was good” type of description of his people:

And it came to pass that I, Nephi, did consecrate Jacob and Joseph, that they should be priests and teachers over the land of my people.

And it came to pass that we lived after the manner of happiness. (2 Nephi 5:26–27)

With this, Nephi finishes the story of the creation of the Nephite people; the ethnogenetic story is complete. Finally, Nephi describes the making of the plates upon which he is writing:

And thirty years had passed away from the time we left Jerusalem.

And I, Nephi, had kept the records upon my plates, which I had made, of my people thus far.

And it came to pass that the Lord God said unto me: Make other plates; and thou shalt engraven many things upon them which are good in my sight, for the profit of thy people.

Wherefore, I, Nephi, to be obedient to the commandments of the Lord, went and made these plates upon which I have engraven these things.

And I engraved that which is pleasing unto God. And if my people are pleased with the things of God they will be pleased with mine engravings which are upon these plates.

And if my people desire to know the more particular part of the history of my people they must search mine other plates. (2 Nephi 5:28–33)

The next verse gives the date again. Ten years have passed since the previous date. We cannot tell if Nephi wrote the fulfillment of the prophecy right after noting the passage of thirty years, however, it is certainly possible. A reasonable reconstruction has Nephi ending his book and then realizing he had not written the explanation of the creation of the small plates. He noted that thirty years had passed and added that tidbit. Then he stopped. Ten years later he returned to his text, perhaps intending to continue the history of his people. He therefore began a new section:

And it sufficeth me to say that forty years had passed away, and we had already had wars and contentions with our brethren.
(2 Nephi 5:34)

Then nothing happens. This is speculative, but I suggest this verse is not an ending. Nephi noted in verse 27 that “we lived after the manner of happiness.” That contrasts with “we had already had wars and contentions with our brethren.” To this point in his text, Nephi hasn’t dealt with wars and contentions. He didn’t say they hadn’t happened but only that they were the subject of his other plates. Nevertheless, when he puts this sentence in his record, he clearly sets the stage to discuss something about wars and contentions. Except he stops. Speculation doesn’t allow for any understanding of why Nephi stopped at this point, but I suggest some external reason why Nephi stopped writing after this sentence. And some time passed before he wrote again.

When Nephi wrote again, I suggest that he reviewed what he had written and knew he had intended to speak of wars and contentions. I believe he decided to examine contentions but also to change the way he was writing. Rather than narrate a story of contentions, he entered a sermon from Jacob designed and delivered to ease the contentions. I have suggested that Jacob’s sermon makes the most sense in a situation where Old World Israelites and New World peoples merged into the same city.³⁰² The tensions that might have arisen between the groups would explain why Isaiah’s description of the Gentiles saving the house

302. Brant A. Gardner, “A Social History of the Early Nephites” (paper, FairMormon Conference, Provo, UT, August 2001), <https://www.fairmormon.org/conference/august-2001/a-social-history-of-the-early-nephites>. See also John Gee and Matthew Roper, “I Did Liken All Scriptures unto Us’: Early Nephite Understandings of Isaiah and Implications for ‘Others’ in the Land,” in *The Fulness of the Gospel: Foundational Teachings from the Book of Mormon* (Sperry Symposium 2003), eds. Camille Fronk Olson, Brian M. Hauglid, and Thomas A. Wayment (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2003), 51–65.

of Israel would have been a present need rather than a sermon related only to a distant future.³⁰³

There is certainly a dramatic break between the end of chapter IV (5) and V (6–8), but the subject that Nephi treats was triggered by the last sentence of chapter V. Jacob’s sermon covers Chapters V–VII (6–10). Nephi closes chapter VII with Jacob’s testificatory *Amen*. At the beginning of the next chapter, Nephi adds information about Jacob that would have been relevant after the close of the sermon. Then, after finishing with Jacob, Nephi indicates: “And now I write some of the words of Isaiah, that whoso of my people shall see these words may lift up their hearts and rejoice for all men. Now these are the words, and ye may liken them unto you and unto all men” (2 Nephi 11:8).

Orson Pratt separated our chapter 11 from 12 so chapter 12 would be directly parallel to Isaiah 2 as found in the Bible. Nephi had no break at this point. His intent was to follow Jacob’s sermon with a set of chapters from Isaiah. I suggest this addition was also a triggered addition. Jacob’s sermon was based on Isaiah, and Nephi intended to add his vision of the future that would be grounded in the chapters of Isaiah that he added.

Although it is easy for modern readers to make a division between the historical and spiritual and therefore to see 2 Nephi 6–33 as the “more spiritual” content,³⁰⁴ doing so suggests that Nephi spent at least ten years writing on the small plates before he ever got around to fulfilling the reason for which they were written. Noel B. Reynolds provides an appropriate rule for analyzing an ancient text: “The reader must allow the author to guide his interpretation through explicit statements, culturally recognized rhetorical devices, and textual organization. The reader should not twist the text to accommodate philosophical, doctrinal, or historical theses or insights the reader has brought to the exercise.”³⁰⁵

2 Nephi Chapter V (6–8) [Reconstructed Header]

Grant Hardy noticed that the first verse of 2 Nephi 6 fits the style of chapter headers we see later in Mormon’s work.³⁰⁶ All the synoptic headers, both for books and chapters, were separated by the compositor

303. Gardner, “A Social History of the Early Nephites.”

304. Axelgard, “1 and 2 Nephi: An Inspiring Whole,” 55, and Joseph M. Spencer, *An Other Testament: On Typology* (Salem, OR: Salt Press, 2012), 34.

305. Noel B. Reynolds, “On Doubting Nephi’s Break Between 1 and 2 Nephi,” 90.

306. Grant Hardy, ed., *The Book of Mormon, Another Testament of Christ*, rev. ed. (Provo, UT: Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship and the Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2018).

and do not represent any marks that can be seen in the printer's manuscript. Thus, in this case the compositor added the sentence to the text but later created chapter headers. Hardy is clearly correct that this represents a chapter header: "The words of Jacob, the brother of Nephi, which he spake unto the people of Nephi."

Importantly, it has the same function as the chapter headers in Mormon's editing. It identifies material taken from a separate source. In this case, it represents a record from Jacob. Also of interest, it is not taken from the record Jacob will create on the small plates.

Although Jacob perhaps recorded this sermon on some separate record to which Nephi had access, Nephi includes it because it was given at Nephi's express command: "wherefore, I will read you the words of Isaiah. And they are the words which my brother has desired that I should speak unto you" (2 Nephi 6:4). That information is sufficient to provide the reason that Nephi included this sermon in his own record. Everything else in both books is directly related to Nephi. Even when we are given Lehi's words, the intent is to provide their context for Nephi's life. In this case, Nephi does not explicitly make the connection between this sermon and his life, but the fact that he, as king (as underscored in 2 Nephi 6:2), requests the sermon and the topic suggests that it is also related to Nephi, even if he does not make it clear how it applies.

Nephi's influence on this sermon is clearly apparent in the basic construction. Jacob quotes two chapters of Isaiah in their entirety (Isaiah 50, 51; 2 Nephi 7, 8), and then elaborates on a meaning specifically designated as intended for his current audience: "And now, the words which I shall read are they which Isaiah spake concerning all the house of Israel; wherefore, they may be likened unto you, for ye are of the house of Israel" (2 Nephi 6:5). For Nephi's use of *liken*, see 1 Nephi 19:23.

2 Nephi Chapter VI (9)

After citing Isaiah, Jacob introduces his theme by explicitly connecting Nephites with the house of Israel:

And now, my beloved brethren, I have read these things that ye might know concerning the covenants of the Lord that he has covenanted with all the house of Israel —

That he has spoken unto the Jews, by the mouth of his holy prophets, even from the beginning down, from generation to generation, until the time comes that *they shall be restored to the true church and fold of God; when they shall be gathered*

home to the lands of their inheritance, and shall be established in all their lands of promise.

Behold, my beloved brethren, I speak unto you these things that ye may rejoice, and lift up your heads forever, because of the blessings which the Lord God shall bestow upon your children. (2 Nephi 9:1–3)

Note the bolded phrases in verse 2. As the prophet who lived through the scattering of the ten tribes, Isaiah speaks much about their restoration. For Nephi and Jacob, the Nephites represent a parallel scattering which participates in the same promised blessings of restoration. Even at this point in Nephite history, the gathering will not necessarily be to the Old World but to the house of Israel. Rather than an Old World gathering, the whole house of Israel will continue to be “established in all their lands of promise.”

The chapter ends because Jacob has been speaking of the Atoning Messiah and bears testimony. It also appears that there was a temporal break in the sermon. Jacob indicates “on the morrow I will declare unto you the remainder of my words.”

2 Nephi Chapter VII (10)

This chapter picks up on the next day and continues with the sermon, which covers the blessings that will come to those of scattered Israel. The sermon ends with *Amen*, and so, therefore, does the chapter.

2 Nephi Chapter VIII (11–15)–2 Nephi Chapter X (23–24)

The testificatory *Amen* at the end of chapter VII (10) required the chapter to close before Nephi concluded what he wanted to say about Jacob, the sermon, and the Nephite people. That is provided at the beginning of this chapter (2 Nephi 11:1–7). Nephi then transitions into his next intended section, which will copy a large amount of text from Isaiah. Orson Pratt kept the Isaiah chapters corresponding to the chapters as found in the King James version, therefore he placed a chapter break after 2 Nephi 11:8. That was originally Nephi’s transition and was included within chapter VIII with no break before beginning the Isaiah quotations.

The transitional verse is: “And now I write some of the words of Isaiah, that whoso of my people shall see these words may lift up their hearts and rejoice for all men. Now these are the words, and ye may liken them unto you and unto all men” (2 Nephi 11:8). The function of these verses is to “liken them unto you and unto all men.”

The original chapter breaks followed the *inquit* statements,³⁰⁷ as noted in the section “Nephi Ending Chapters.”

2 Nephi XI (25–27)

The retrieval of the brass plates had to have made a significant impression on young Nephi. After all, the importance of those scriptures had led the Spirit to command Nephi to kill Laban (1 Nephi 4:10). Lehi certainly read them (1 Nephi 5:11–16). Nephi read them well enough to reference prophecies from the brass plates prophets Zenos, Zenock, and Neum (1 Nephi 19:10). While Nephi might have referenced other brass-plate prophets, the only one from whom he copies large texts was Isaiah. In 2 Nephi he copies thirteen chapters of Isaiah onto the plates.³⁰⁸ In 1 Nephi 20 and 21 he also added two entire chapters.³⁰⁹

Why is there so much of Isaiah as opposed to any other prophet from the brass plates? It is probable the answer lies in Nephi’s scribal training. Van der Toorn suggests that the presence of multiple copies of Deuteronomy, Isaiah, and the Psalms among the Dead Sea Scrolls is an “indication of their position in the scribal curriculum.”³¹⁰ As one of the classic texts taught in the scribal schools, Nephi would have had more experience with Isaiah than many of the other prophets.³¹¹ Specifically, Van der Toorn notes that “the Book of Isaiah, finally, taught the scribes ways in which to construe the past, the present, and the future; it provided them with a means of dealing with history and its vicissitudes.”³¹² It is therefore unsurprising that this is precisely the way Nephi uses Isaiah as he likened Isaiah to his own new people in a new setting.

As John W. Welch has noted, Nephi and Jacob are the two writers who most often cite Isaiah — and are particularly those who cite large

307. From the Latin “he said ...”. These statements create more logical divisions in Isaiah than our inherited chapters, which were added later.

308. Chapters XIII, IX, and X as Nephi wrote them. The thirteen chapters are based on the way they appear in the Bible, which Orson Pratt used as the model for dividing these chapters in 1879.

309. The chapters were originally integrated into Chapter VI.

310. Van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible*, 102.

311. John Gee, “Choose the Things that Please Me’ On the Selection of the Isaiah Sections in the Book of Mormon,” in *Isaiah in the Book of Mormon*, eds. Donald W. Parry and John W. Welch (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1998), 73: “Nephi seems to indicate that he is aware of the narrative structure of Isaiah as well as its content when he says that he understands Isaiah because ‘I, of myself, have dwelt at Jerusalem, wherefore I know concerning the regions round about’ (2 Nephi 25:6)

312. Van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible*, 103.

passages from Isaiah.³¹³ It is interesting to note that Jacob's citations of Isaiah come only after direction from Nephi. We do not see him citing Isaiah in the book of Jacob.

Garold N. Davis also noticed that not only are the long citations of Isaiah confined to Nephi and Jacob, but also references to the house of Israel (and the synonymous house of Jacob) are almost exclusively found in Nephi and Jacob.³¹⁴ This is not a coincidence but part of the conscious selection of themes Nephi wants to emphasize.

Davis noted Nephi's summary of Isaiah chapters 48 and 49 that he read to his brothers after their father's discourse on his vision:

Nephi returns from having been "carried away in the spirit" (1 Nephi 15:1) to find his brothers engaged in a dispute because they cannot understand Lehi's words concerning the scattering of Israel and the subsequent gathering through the fulness of the gentiles (see verses 7, 13). Nephi's explanation of these concepts follows the same pattern as that noted above in 1 Nephi 10:3–14: the house of Israel will be scattered (see verses 12, 17, 20), the Messiah "shall be manifested in body unto the children of men" (verse 13), and "at that day shall the remnant of our seed know that they are of the house of Israel, and that they are the covenant people of the Lord" (verse 14). Nephi then reveals that he used the prophet Isaiah as his scriptural support for these teachings: "I did rehearse unto them the words of Isaiah, who spake concerning the restoration of the Jews, or of the house of Israel; and after they were restored they should no more be confounded, neither should they be scattered again" (verse 20).³¹⁵

John W. Welch sees this basic pattern in all of the longer quotations of Isaiah. He suggests a fourfold pattern:

1. Christ's coming;
2. His rejection and the scattering of the Jews;
3. The day of the Gentiles; and

313. John W. Welch, "Getting Through Isaiah with the Helaman of the Nephite Prophetic View," in *Isaiah in the Book of Mormon*, 19.

314. Garold N. Davis, "Pattern and Purpose of the Isaiah Commentaries in the Book of Mormon," in *Mormons, Scripture, and the Ancient World. Studies in Honor of John L. Sorenson*, ed. Davis Bitton (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1998), 279. The theme of the house of Israel returns in Christ's sermons in 3 Nephi.

315. *Ibid.*, 282–83.

4. The restoration of Israel and the ultimate victory of good over evil.³¹⁶

Recognizing these patterns in the way Nephi and Jacob use Isaiah suggests that both Nephi and Jacob had a particular type of concern for this new people of Nephi. First, they were concerned that this new people see themselves as a continuation of the promises to the house of Israel. Thus they make certain to connect this people with the promises of the past through Isaiah and the brass plates. Of course, they are also interested in the future of this new people. To provide a vision to the people of their future, they use the Lehite exodus to include them in the scattered of Israel. The scattering removed them from the unified home of the house of Israel, so the promise is of a gathering back into the house of Israel. The people of Nephi might be separated now, but they will be redeemed through their faithfulness.

The interesting prophetic step is the role of the Gentiles. Just as the emphasis on the house of Israel is localized primarily in Nephi and Jacob, so too is any discussion of the Gentiles.³¹⁷ A modern reader of Isaiah, Nephi, and Jacob will see in the reference to the Gentiles a foretelling of the role of a much later group of Gentile believers in Yahweh and the scriptures. However, that is not likely to have been the intended reason Nephi and Jacob would have spoken of the Gentiles. We must remember that the idea of the *peshet* was to liken the scriptures to the current population. The events modern readers recognize were still in the far distant future for the people of Nephi. I suggest the most likely explanation is that the people of Nephi consisted of the combination of the Old World immigrants with a population already present in the New World when they arrived and who served as the Gentiles to the newly arrived Israelites.³¹⁸

All this tells us why Isaiah was important in Nephi and Jacob's writings. As Grant Hardy noted: "Nephi's general pattern for interpreting scripture is to follow a direct quote — often rather lengthy — with a discussion that incorporates a few key phrases but does not provide a comprehensive or detailed commentary."³¹⁹

316. Welch, "Getting Through Isaiah with the Helaman of the Nephite Prophetic View," 22.

317. Davis, "Pattern and Purpose of the Isaiah Commentaries in the Book of Mormon," 281.

318. Gardner, "A Social History of the Early Nephites."

319. Grant Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon: A Reader's Guide* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 65.

That contrasts with the modern method of quoting only the specific verses required. The immediate difference between the two methods is that when a single verse is used, it is incumbent upon the understanding of the reader to supply any needed context from the surrounding text. The nature of the wide readership is that the writer cannot predict the reader's scriptural competence, and hence it is possible to extract verses and use them in ways contrary to their original intention.

With Nephi and Jacob that is not possible. With the entire chapter available, the reader has all the information necessary to understand both the original context and the way in which the context has been shifted, or likened, to the current population.

The next probability has to do with the limited nature of copies of scriptural texts. Nephi had to return to Jerusalem to retrieve the brass plates. He did not have his own separate copy of the scriptures. He had his memorization of Isaiah from the scribal schools, but for the whole book, and for others, he had only the brass plates. While we can deduce that some copies were made because the brass plates stayed in Zarahemla, and the priests of Noah appear to have had access to at least Isaiah, that post-dated Nephi. When Nephi was writing, there was no way to know if his readers would have access to Isaiah. Without the chapters of Isaiah, the reader would not be able to see how Nephi re-couched his Old World vision into a new form based on Isaiah. Why, then, copy so many chapters? The best supposition is that it was to make certain they would be available to a future audience who might not have had access. We can only wish that Nephi had done the same with Zenos and Zenock, which demonstrates that at least part of Nephi's fears for missing scripture really did come to pass.

Nephi's Introduction to Isaiah in 2 Nephi

The insertion of thirteen complete chapters of Isaiah in 2 Nephi led to four (original) chapters that flowed from themes included in the Isaiah chapters. Nephi attempts to explain why he included those chapters, and what he means to do with them:

2 Nephi 25:1–8, with Comments	
Verse	Comment
1 Now I, Nephi, do speak somewhat concerning the words which I have written, which have been spoken by the mouth of Isaiah. For behold, Isaiah spake many things which were hard for many of my people to understand; for they know not concerning the manner of prophesying among the Jews.	Nephi introduces his own take on Isaiah’s words. He emphasizes the idea that his people find Isaiah difficult because they “know not concerning the manner of prophesying among the Jews.” It is tempting to see this as a reference to the specific training Nephi would have had in the scribal school.
2 For I, Nephi, have not taught them many things concerning the manner of the Jews; for their works were works of darkness, and their doings were doings of abominations.	Although Nephi clearly links works of darkness to the Jews in the Old World, his vision of the future will see his own people succumbing to the “works of darkness rather than light” (2 Nephi 26:10).
3 Wherefore, I write unto my people, unto all those that shall receive hereafter these things which I write, that they may know the judgments of God, that they come upon all nations, according to the word which he hath spoken.	Nephi writes to his people and likens the works of darkness of the Old World to those that will happen in the New. For that reason he declares “the judgments of God, that they come upon all nations.” The Nephites will be one of those nations.
4 Wherefore, hearken, O my people, which are of the house of Israel, and give ear unto my words; for because the words of Isaiah are not plain unto you, nevertheless they are plain unto all those that are filled with the spirit of prophecy. But I give unto you a prophecy, according to the spirit which is in me; wherefore I shall prophesy according to the plainness which hath been with me from the time that I came out from Jerusalem with my father; for behold, my soul delighteth in plainness unto my people, that they may learn.	<p>Nephi repeats the idea that Isaiah is hard to understand. In this version, he doesn’t claim Isaiah is elucidated by training but by prophecy.</p> <p>What Nephi will write is not exegesis but prophecy triggered by themes in Isaiah.</p> <p>As we examine the prophecy, it is clear that Nephi ties the prophecy not only to Isaiah but also to his and his father’s visionary experience with the vision of the Tree of Life.</p> <p>The statement that he came out from Jerusalem is repeated in the next sentence.</p>

2 Nephi 25:1–8, with Comments	
Verse	Comment
<p>5 Yea, and my soul delighteth in the words of Isaiah, for I came out from Jerusalem, and mine eyes hath beheld the things of the Jews, and I know that the Jews do understand the things of the prophets, and there is none other people that understand the things which were spoken unto the Jews like unto them, save it be that they are taught after the manner of the things of the Jews.</p>	<p>This appears to be an oblique reference to his scribal training. The Jews understood these things, and Nephi understands them because he is also from Jerusalem.</p> <p>To know these things, one must be “taught after the manner of the things of the Jews.”</p>
<p>6 But behold, I, Nephi, have not taught my children after the manner of the Jews; but behold, I, of myself, have dwelt at Jerusalem, wherefore I know concerning the regions round about; and I have made mention unto my children concerning the judgments of God, which hath come to pass among the Jews, unto my children, according to all that which Isaiah hath spoken, and I do not write them.</p>	<p>Nephi repeats the information from verse 2 that he has not taught his people after the manner of the Jews. He repeats verse 5’s declaration that Nephi came from Jerusalem.</p>
<p>7 But behold, I proceed with mine own prophecy, according to my plainness; in the which I know that no man can err; nevertheless, in the days that the prophecies of Isaiah shall be fulfilled men shall know of a surety, at the times when they shall come to pass.</p>	<p>Nephi repeats the declaration from verse 4 that he will provide his own prophecy. In verse 4 he noted the plainness of his prophecy. He repeats that statement.</p> <p>He declares that when the prophecies are fulfilled, people will recognize their fulfillment.</p>
<p>8 Wherefore, they are of worth unto the children of men, and he that supposeth that they are not, unto them will I speak particularly, and confine the words unto mine own people; for I know that they shall be of great worth unto them in the last days; for in that day shall they understand them; wherefore, for their good have I written them.</p>	<p>The prophecy will be of great worth because when they are fulfilled, people will understand them.</p>

Most striking in these eight verses is the amount of repetition that has no literary function.³²⁰ Strangest is perhaps the end of verse 4 and the beginning of 5: “I shall prophesy according to the plainness which hath been with me from the time that *I came out from Jerusalem* with my father; for behold, my soul *delighteth in plainness* unto my people, that they may learn. Yea, and my soul *delighteth in the words of Isaiah, for I came out from Jerusalem.*” The delight in plainness might be a nice parallel to delighting in the words of Isaiah, except Nephi has declared that Isaiah is hard to understand — not plain.

The lack of directness in discourse is something new for Nephi. Up to this point, repetitions have more likely been for poetic emphasis, but here I suggest we are seeing a more stream of consciousness writing than the previous text that so clearly followed an outline. Nephi is writing directly to the plates, and his clarity of expression suffers for lack of the prior editing or planning.

As Nephi begins his prophecy in plainness, he references the coming Messiah:

But, behold, they shall have wars, and rumors of wars; and when the day cometh that the Only Begotten of the Father, yea, even the Father of heaven and of earth, shall manifest himself unto them in the flesh, behold, they will reject him, because of their iniquities, and the hardness of their hearts, and the stiffness of their necks.

Behold, they will crucify him; and after he is laid in a sepulchre for the space of three days he shall rise from the dead, with healing in his wings; and all those who shall believe on his name shall be saved in the kingdom of God. Wherefore, my soul delighteth to prophesy concerning him, for I have seen his day, and my heart doth magnify his holy name. (2 Nephi 25:12–13)

After Nephi finishes with his prophecy in plainness based on Isaiah, he begins a new chapter — in which he again seems to repeat himself:

And now I, Nephi, make an end of my prophesying unto you, my beloved brethren. And I cannot write but a few things,

320. Donald W. Parry, *Poetic Parallelisms in the Book of Mormon: The Complete Text Reformatted* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University, The Neal Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, 2007), 109–10 provides several places where these verses can be formatted as different types of parallels. There is clearly a lot of repetition, but the attempt to format them as though they were intentional poetic forms obscures the murky unclarity of the text.

which I know must surely come to pass; neither can I write but a few of the words of my brother Jacob.

Wherefore, the things which I have written sufficeth me, save it be a few words which I must speak concerning the doctrine of Christ; wherefore, I shall speak unto you plainly, according to the plainness of my prophesying.

For my soul delighteth in plainness; for after this manner doth the Lord God work among the children of men. For the Lord God giveth light unto the understanding; for he speaketh unto men according to their language, unto their understanding.

Wherefore, I would that ye should remember that I have spoken unto you concerning that prophet which the Lord showed unto me, that should baptize the Lamb of God, which should take away the sins of the world. (2 Nephi 31:1–4)

The opening discussion of a prophecy in plainness is the same. The topic of the coming Messiah is the same. In this case, however, Nephi is not teaching about resurrection but of atonement from sin. Of course, both are aspects of the Messiah. The prophecy in plainness based on Isaiah will reprise themes from the vision that Nephi and his father had about the future of the house of Israel and its struggles before its restoration.

The prophecy in plainness in the last three chapters of 2 Nephi is where Nephi applies the mission of the Savior to the individual rather than to the greater society.

Nephi's Prophetic Peshet on Isaiah in 2 Nephi

John W. Welch categorized Nephi's use of Isaiah in 2 Nephi 25–30 according to the fourfold structure he noted for the way Isaiah was used in Nephi and Jacob.³²¹ He notes that “Nephi draws individual words and phrases from Isaiah 2–14 to corroborate and substantiate his now familiar four-phased prophetic view as he follows the pattern again.”³²² Nephi also uses specific phrases to help his readers understand that the prophecy he is founding upon Isaiah was the very same true prophecy that he had seen in a vision when he desired to see his father's vision of the tree — and to know the meaning thereof.

321. Welch, “Getting Through Isaiah with the Helaman of the Nephite Prophetic View,” 28–30.

322. *Ibid.*, 28.

The following chart correlates verses from Nephi’s prophecy based on Isaiah with phrases or themes from his earlier vision in the Old World:

Isaiah-Based Theme	Tree of Life-Based Theme
2 Nephi 25:11–13	1 Nephi 11:33–34 (reference to “healing in his wings)
2 Nephi 25:16	1 Nephi 11:34–35
2 Nephi 25:17	1 Nephi 14:7
2 Nephi 25:18	1 Nephi 14:21–25. 39–41
2 Nephi 26:1	1 Nephi 12:6 (Christ appearing to Nephites)
2 Nephi 26:2	1 Nephi 12:3 (many generations pass away)
2 Nephi 26:6	1 Nephi 12:4 (thunderings and earthquakes)
2 Nephi 26:9	1 Nephi 12:12–13 (four-generation prophecy)
2 Nephi 26:10	1 Nephi 12:12–20 (destruction of Nephites)
2 Nephi 26:14	1 Nephi 14:20–29 (description of last days)
2 Nephi 26: 15	1 Nephi 13;14–15 (gathering of the Gentiles against Nephi’s seed)
2 Nephi 26:17	1 Nephi 13:34–36 (coming of the Book of Mormon)
2 Nephi 26:21 “many churches” functions as the great and abominable church. The great and abominable church is explicit in 2 Nephi 28:18	2 Nephi 26:21 (great and abominable church)

Nephi does not present a new or different vision of the future; that vision was correct when first he saw it. This newer version is a second witness based on Isaiah rather than on the prophetic vision of the tree.

Chapter XI ends with an interesting rendering of Isaiah 29. While most of the chapter copies Isaiah 29, much has been recast to clarify the connection between the coming forth of the Book of Mormon and the event described in Isaiah. Chapter XI ends (2 Nephi 27:35) because Isaiah 29 ends at that point.

2 Nephi Chapter XII (28–30)

Having set the scene with the quotation of Isaiah 29, Nephi proceeds to the prophetic description of the latter days that was triggered by this chapter. The remainder of chapter XII (28–30) consists of the religious

conditions at the time the Book of Mormon will come forth. This is explicit in the description of the reaction to the Book of Mormon:

And also, that I may remember the promises which I have made unto thee, Nephi, and also unto thy father, that I would remember your seed; and that the words of your seed should proceed forth out of my mouth unto your seed; and my words shall hiss forth unto the ends of the earth, for a standard unto my people, which are of the house of Israel;

And because my words shall hiss forth — many of the Gentiles shall say: A Bible! A Bible! We have got a Bible, and there cannot be any more Bible. (2 Nephi 29:2–3)

Nephi ends this excursion into prophecy by reprising Isaiah 11:1–9 and then adding his own conclusion. The final sentence is “And now, my believed brethren, I make and end of my sayings” (2 Nephi 30:18).

There is no testificatory *Amen*, though Nephi’s testimony of these words is clear. Nevertheless, the ending is different. In a sense, it feels final. This could be an end to the book. Nephi has provided the prophetic future of his people and the prophetic future of his people’s writings. It might have been a fitting end. Except it wasn’t.

2 Nephi Chapter XIII (31)

At the end of chapter XII, Nephi had said: “And now, my believed brethren, I make and end of my sayings” (2 Nephi 20:18). Now, with the very next sentence (although following a chapter break) he says: “And now, my believed brethren, I make and end of my sayings” 2 Nephi 31:2). Those two sentences are essentially the same. Typically, finding such parallels would indicate that the intervening material was an insertion and that the second was the intentional repetitive resumption. Similar to my suggestion about that apparent repetitive resumption from 1 Nephi 7:2 and 1 Nephi 7:3, I think we are seeing a temporal insertion rather than a textual insertion. Nephi finished what he thought he had to say at the end of 2 Nephi 30 — and ended. At some later point, he had more to say (something we see from Moroni as well, Moroni 1:1). When he began again, he added a repetitive resumption from literary habit.

The next sentence is also interesting: “And I cannot write but a few things, which I know must surely come to pass; neither can I write but a few of the words of my brother Jacob” (2 Nephi 31:1). The idea that Nephi “cannot write but a few things” is not particularly new. In 1 Nephi 17:6 he noted that he could not write all the afflictions his family suffered in the

wilderness. Jacob will note that he “cannot write but a little of my words” (Jacob 4:1). Nevertheless, it is a statement that must look to future writing, as it comes near the end of two books Nephi wrote. He is not reflecting on what he has written but on the difficulty of writing much more.

Nephi also refers to being unable to write “but a few of the words of my brother Jacob.” This is a difficult sentence to understand because he never again writes any of the words of Jacob. Perhaps he was reflecting on all he had written and that it could not represent all that had happened. In any case, if Nephi was looking forward, he did not write more of Jacob’s words, and he will finish his book in three short chapters, including this one.

It is possible this is an undeclared sermon. Nephi specifically says “the things which I have written sufficeth me, save it be a few words which I must speak” (2 Nephi 31:2). We will see a little more evidence that it was a recorded speech in the next chapter.

Nephi’s long inclusion of Isaiah was used as a foundation upon which he could recount his vision of the future of the house of Israel and particularly the Messiah. He had not discussed his vision of the Messiah’s baptism from his vision (1 Nephi 11:27). This chapter expands on that subject. Nephi concludes with the testificatory *Amen*, which ends the chapter.

2 Nephi Chapter XIV (32)

The previous chapter ended with a discussion of how one entered the path (perhaps here analogous to the path with the iron rod from the dream). He said: “And then are ye in this strait and narrow path which leads to eternal life; yea, ye have entered in by the gate; ye have done according to the commandments of the Father and the Son; and ye have received the Holy Ghost, which witnesses of the Father and the Son, unto the fulfilling of the promise which he hath made, that if ye entered in by the way ye should receive” (2 Nephi 31:18).

This chapter continues the theme that was interrupted by the testificatory *Amen*. Nephi states: “And now, behold, my beloved brethren, I suppose that ye ponder somewhat in your hearts concerning that which ye should do after ye have entered in by the way. But, behold, why do ye ponder these things in your hearts?” (2 Nephi 32:1). Had there been no *Amen*, this would have been the next sentence in the preceding chapter.

Verse 8 says: “And now, my beloved brethren, I perceive that ye ponder still in your hearts; and it grieveth me that I must speak concerning this thing” (2 Nephi 32:8). This is the type of address we see in speeches to a present audience rather than in a text written to some audience in the future.

Regardless of whether it was a recorded sermon but particularly if it was, this chapter ends quite abruptly. Nephi doesn't allow the written record to end on the dark note of his concern over his people's problem with prayer, but the quick statement that they should pray doesn't feel like a sufficient ending of encouragement to his people.

This chapter ends at a place where I wouldn't expect Nephi to end a sermon; it ends without the testificatory *Amen* or with any other ending words. I suggest it ended for other, unknown reasons. I have speculated that Nephi was ordering his affairs because he understood his death was not far off. Perhaps some health episode interrupted his recording of this sermon.

2 Nephi Chapter XV (33)

The first sentence of this chapter reprises Nephi's inability to write much: "And now I, Nephi, cannot write all the things which were taught among my people" (2 Nephi 33:1). This might reprise the opening verse of 2 Nephi 31:1, which was: "And I cannot write but a few things, which I know must surely come to pass." I see an important distinction, however. In the verse beginning 2 Nephi 31:1, Nephi speaks of the problem in writing things "which I know must surely come to pass." That appears to look forward to something he will be writing. Indeed, he writes prophecy of the future.

The opening of this chapter is not a repetitive resumption, for all that the statements appear similar. Where the earlier statement of "not being able to write much" looked forward, this similar statement looks back over what he did write. "But I, Nephi, have written what I have written, and I esteem it as of great worth, and especially unto my people. For I pray continually for them by day, and mine eyes water my pillow by night, because of them; and I cry unto my God in faith, and I know that he will hear my cry" (2 Nephi 33:3).

This is a man at the end of life, reviewing his life's work. Nephi knows that he will write no more:

behold, I bid you an everlasting farewell, for these words shall condemn you at the last day.

For what I seal on earth, shall be brought against you at the judgment bar; for thus hath the Lord commanded me, and I must obey. Amen. (2 Nephi 33:14–15)

Section 4:

Making Mormon's Book

It is enticing to think that if we had the book of Lehi, we might more easily discern Mormon's agenda in compiling what we know today as the Book of Mormon. Perhaps he gave some indication of why he selected certain types of information to include or exclude. He probably did not. As an ancient writer, Mormon would have assumed his readers would understand that he was constructing his text and pay attention to what he did to learn the meta-lessons he wanted to teach. We modern readers are not that audience, and we approach the Book of Mormon much as we approach the Bible. It contains lessons to teach us spiritual things as we read it according to what we expect to find in it. There is nothing wrong with that; such an approach is literally what Nephi suggested when he said he likened the scriptures to what his people needed to hear (even if the original text pointed to a different people and different circumstances).

This book is an examination of Mormon's writing, not Mormon's reading. Therefore, the question is what Mormon intended. The beginning of Mormon's Book of Mormon was the lost book of Lehi. I have suggested some of the things probably there and some things that likely were not (see Part 1, "The Problem of the Lost Pages"). What we can reconstruct for the book of Lehi covers much of the story as we have it in the book of 1 Nephi. From the viewpoint of the beginnings of the Nephite peoples, we are not missing anything very significant and perhaps have even more detail that Nephi gave us.

Between the Nephite beginnings and the time we begin to read Mormon's edited work in the book of Mosiah, somewhat over three hundred years have passed. What might we have missed by missing the part of the book that covered that period? Again, I suggest we are missing very little. The small plates don't record much of what happened during those years, save for conflicts with the Lamanites. Based on the way Mormon treats war (see Part 1, "Mormon Writing about War"), he would have mentioned the conflicts but not given many details.

What great sermons might we have missed? That, of course, is impossible to know. The probable answer, however, is that we are probably missing very little. From the evidence of what Mormon extracted from the large plates, he did not have access to sermons from that account unless they were given by kings, and probably for political purposes. Thus we have Benjamin's great sermon that certainly has religious

content but which had an overarching political purpose (see the section “Mosiah chapter I (1–3)”).

Mormon wants his readers to better understand God and the gospel, but to provide significant religious content, he is required to use alternative sources (the personal records of Alma₂ and Nephi₃). If Mormon did not have access to similar external sources, there would have been little to include.

Finally, how much text would he use to cover the time from Nephi₁'s death to the time of Mosiah₁? I speculate that he would not have used much space at all. Mormon's themes about the destruction of the Nephites were clearly on his mind, and they begin in force only after the merger of the Nephites with the people of Zarahemla. Therefore, for Mormon's purposes, there wasn't a lot happening of interest until Mosiah₁ was commanded to take some of the people and flee to a new land.

Chapter 13: Book of Mosiah

Mosiah Chapter I (1–3)

All evidence points to the Nephite continuation of Nephi's original mandate for the large plates. They were to record the wars and contentions of the people (1 Nephi 9:4, 19:4). It is therefore unsurprising that Mormon tells us in the first extant sentence that there was no more contention (Mosiah 1:1). However, where a modern reader might think that was the point of writing, for Mormon this is a filler statement indicating nothing was happening (of interest to Mormon). Perhaps the best evidence of Mormon's lack of interest in times of no contentions comes in the aftermath of the Savior's visit in 4 Nephi.

Mormon's least explicated time comes precisely in the greatest time of peace and of the highest implementation of Christ's gospel. Marilyn Arnold expresses sentiments no doubt felt more universally: “A fuller account would have been especially gratifying because, except for a little trouble at the end, the first two centuries of this period were years of matchless tranquility initiated by the Savior's coming. Given the non-tranquil character of 200 years of American history, or almost any country's history, unruffled peace for two centuries seems nothing short of miraculous.”³²³ Right where we might expect details, Mormon demonstrates no interest.

323. Marilyn Arnold, *Sweet is the Word: Reflections on the Book of Mormon — Its Narrative, Teachings & People*, (American Fork, UT: Covenant Communications, 1996), 289.

Thus, the extant beginning of the book of Mosiah serves to highlight what is missing. The first extant sentence — “And now there was no more contention in all the land of Zarahemla, among all the people who belonged to king Benjamin, so that king Benjamin had continual peace all the remainder of his days” (Mosiah 1:1) — is a conclusion, not a beginning.³²⁴ Compare this sentence to the opening sentence of Alma chapter II (4): “Now it came to pass in the sixth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi, there were no contentions nor wars in the land of Zarahemla” (Alma 4:1). The difference is the functional use of “now it came to pass” and “and now.” *And now* is used for a continuation of events, and “now it came to pass” opens new themes. The presence of *and now* serves to reinforce the missing beginning of the book that was lost with the book of Lehi on the 116 manuscript pages because “and now” should be linking the new text to the previous.

Mosiah chapter I will end with *Amen* (at the end of our Mosiah 3:27). In between we have the first section of Benjamin’s speech with a preface where Benjamin is speaking to his sons. Well has John W. Welch noted that “As a work of sacred literature and masterful oratory, Benjamin’s speech deserves deep respect.”³²⁵ Welch and Stephen D. Ricks note that “Mormon may well have copied the text directly from Benjamin’s original.”³²⁶ If by “original” Welch and Ricks mean the copy included on the official plates of Nephi, then that is certainly correct — Mormon copied the speech rather than restating it.

The question for the present inquiry is why this speech was on the large plates. As records of the wars and contentions, this speech would be an unusual entry. However, as an act of the King, it is perfectly suited to the material to be included on the large plates. That tells us why the speech itself was recorded, and its quality and spiritual impact testify to

324. J. N. Washburn, *The Contents, Structure and Authorship of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954), 34, notes that the sentence begins with *and*, indicating that it was a continuation rather than a beginning.

325. John W. Welch, “Benjamin’s Speech: A Masterful Oration,” in *King Benjamin’s Speech: “That Ye May Learn Wisdom,”* eds. John W. Welch and Stephen D. Ricks (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1998), 55.

326. John W. Welch and Stephen D. Ricks, *King Benjamin’s Speech: “That Ye May Learn Wisdom,”* ix. They also suggest that it might have been copied from “one of the copies that Benjamin caused to be ‘written and sent forth among those who were not under the sound of his voice,’ (Mosiah 2:8).” That suggestion is unlikely, as part of what is recorded is an extemporaneous continuation of the planned speech. Only the planned speech could have had copies prepared in advance, and the presence of the rest of the material tells us this speech was recorded after the fact.

Mormon's choice to include it. What is the more interesting question is why Mormon included what we have from Mosiah 1:2–17. These verses were spoken to King Benjamin's sons, not to the people. At least on the surface, a father's instructions to his sons would not appear to be a proper subject for the affairs of the Nephite kingdom. In this case, however, the entire discussion with his sons is absolutely political and serves to set the stage for the political significance of a speech.

Because the great civil conflict in Zarahemla was lost with the early part of the book of Mosiah and is known from the end of Omni and the end of Words of Mormon, it is easy to separate the story of Benjamin's speech from the political upheaval that precipitated the event. There had been a civil war. The uneasy combination of the people of Nephi with the people of Zarahemla exploded into violence. The statement that "there was no more contention in all the land of Zarahemla" (Mosiah 1:1) is the concluding statement of the missing episode of civil war; its very meaning was that there *had been* contention if there was, at this point, *no more* contention. It is an indication that the war ended and there was sufficient peace and recovery in the land that Benjamin could move to this next issue.

When the Nephites merged with the people of Zarahemla, the Nephite political claims gained ascendance. Since the Nephites wrote the record, and we read the Book of Mormon as a religious text more often than as a history, we miss how the Nephites became dominant politically in a city that already had established rulers. Benjamin reiterates those reasons for his sons prior to giving the important political speech.

In Mosiah 1:2, Benjamin notes their connection to an ancient sacred location in the Old World. In verse 3, he notes that they brought the brass plates with them. Thus they have a tangible connection to the sacred, distant, location. This leads to:

I say unto you, my sons, were it not for these things, which have been kept and preserved by the hand of God, that we might read and understand of his mysteries, and have his commandments always before our eyes, that even our fathers would have dwindled in unbelief, and we should have been like unto our brethren, the Lamanites, who know nothing concerning these things, or even do not believe them when they are taught them, because of the traditions of their fathers, which are not correct.

O my sons, I would that ye should remember that these sayings are true, and also that these records are true. And behold, also the plates of Nephi, which contain the records and the sayings

of our fathers from the time they left Jerusalem until now, and they are true; and we can know of their surety because we have them before our eyes.

And now, my sons, I would that ye should remember to search them diligently, that ye may profit thereby; and I would that ye should keep the commandments of God, that ye may prosper in the land according to the promises which the Lord made unto our fathers.

And many more things did king Benjamin teach his sons, which are not written in this book.

And it came to pass that after king Benjamin had made an end of teaching his sons, that he waxed old, and he saw that he must very soon go the way of all the earth; therefore, he thought it expedient that he should confer the kingdom upon one of his sons. (Mosiah 1:5–9)

Benjamin explains the importance of the plates as the foundation of Nephite civilization (contrasting them with the Lamanites — here without reiterating that many Zarahemlaites had defected to become Lamanites, see Words of Mormon 1:16). Benjamin testifies that the records are true (again reinforcing the connection to the ancient source of legitimacy). Then he ends with conferring the kingdom upon Mosiah₂. The function of this section, and the reason Mormon included it, is to provide both the argument for legitimacy as well as provide the historical context for the naming of the people and coronation of Mosiah₂.

Both the introduction and the speech itself was copied onto the large plates. Mormon copied from the large plates. This first chapter ended with the *Amen* that was the conclusion of the first part of Benjamin's speech.

Mosiah Chapter II (4)

The end of chapter I (1–3) came at the end of the planned speech, though it is unclear whether or not Mormon understood (or even cared about) that distinction. The testificatory *Amen* closed the chapter. As with other chapters that end with a testificatory *Amen*, the story hadn't ended. At the beginning of chapter II (4), Mormon describes the impact of the planned portion of Benjamin's speech. After a narrative beginning, Mormon continues with the copied text from the large plates.

There is no *Amen* ending creating the close of this chapter. However, there is a natural break in the sermon when there was a large amount of intervening time. At the beginning of the next chapter we find: "And now,

it came to pass that when king Benjamin had thus spoken to his people, he sent among them, desiring to know of his people if they believed the words which he had spoken unto them” (Mosiah 5:1). It is possible the text Mormon copied had an indication of this temporal break. No matter how it was accomplished, sending out servants on any type of interview (likely of groups rather than individuals) and the subsequent reporting must have taken time. I suggest this chapter break reflects something on the large plates indicating either a chapter on the large plates, or at least the passage of time, which Mormon abbreviated in his description.

The chapter continues with more quoted material. This time, the chapter concludes with the testificatory *Amen*.

Mosiah Chapter III (5)

Mosiah chapter III is the people’s response and covenant made in response to Benjamin’s declaration of the new people:

And now, because of the covenant which ye have made ye shall be called the children of Christ, his sons, and his daughters; for behold, this day he hath spiritually begotten you; for ye say that your hearts are changed through faith on his name; therefore, ye are born of him and have become his sons and his daughters.

And under this head ye are made free, and there is no other head whereby ye can be made free. There is no other name given whereby salvation cometh; therefore, I would that ye should take upon you the name of Christ, all you that have entered into the covenant with God that ye should be obedient unto the end of your lives.

And it shall come to pass that whosoever doeth this shall be found at the right hand of God, for he shall know the name by which he is called; for he shall be called by the name of Christ. (Mosiah 5:7–9)

This was declared as one of the reasons for the assembly of the people: “And moreover, I shall give this people a name, that thereby they may be distinguished above all the people which the Lord God hath brought out of the land of Jerusalem; and this I do because they have been a diligent people in keeping the commandments of the Lord” (Mosiah 1:11).

Mormon, as a disciple of Christ (3 Nephi 5:13), would have been very attuned to this call to take upon oneself the name of Christ. Even though he had not yet written the words on the plates of the Book of Mormon, he had certainly read Christ’s words when he appeared at Bountiful:

Have they not read the scriptures, which say ye must take upon you the name of Christ, which is my name? For by this name shall ye be called at the last day;

And whoso taketh upon him my name, and endureth to the end, the same shall be saved at the last day. (3 Nephi 27:5–6)

Mormon would have been sufficiently astute in his own cultural heritage to see the political ramifications of Benjamin's covenant, but the connection to the more religious meaning with which he was aware was unmistakable. It is probable that both the political and religious implications were behind his inclusion of King Benjamin's speech.

This chapter ends with a testificatory *Amen*.

Mosiah Chapter IV (6)

Orson Pratt left this chapter unchanged. As an original chapter, it is surprisingly short. Pratt split the original Mosiah chapter I into three separate chapters. This chapter could not be much smaller, as it consists of only seven verses and just 307 words. Two things made this a short chapter. First, the content of the chapter is the narrative conclusion to chapter II (5), which was forced to end due to the *Amen*, but the historical aftermath remained to be described. That is what we find in this chapter.

This chapter ends with the death of Benjamin three years after the coronation of his son Mosiah₂. The statements about Mosiah₂ are simply designed to indicate that he followed in his father's footsteps:

And it came to pass that king Mosiah did walk in the ways of the Lord, and did observe his judgments and his statutes, and did keep his commandments in all things whatsoever he commanded him.

And king Mosiah did cause his people that they should till the earth. And he also, himself, did till the earth, that thereby he might not become burdensome to his people, that he might do according to that which his father had done in all things. (Mosiah 6:6–7)

This is not the beginning of Mosiah₂'s story but rather the ending of his father's story. The concluding sentence highlights the nature of Mosiah 1:1 as a conclusion rather than a beginning. Mormon writes: "And there was no contention among all his people for the space of three years" (Mosiah 6:7).

Although the "no contention" phrase is the ending of a section, as we saw with our extant beginning of the book of Mosiah, it needn't create a chapter ending. In this case, I suggest that what happened is that Mormon wrote this much and then took a break from writing.

This temporal break created by default a chapter ending (as seen in the discussion of the next chapter).

Mosiah Chapter V (7–8)

Mormon opens with: “And now, it came to pass that after king Mosiah had had continual peace for the space of three years” (Mosiah 7:1). The phrase “continual peace” is parallel to “no contentions” as a filler indicating nothing happened that Mormon cared to write about. The similarity of the beginning of this chapter to the end of the previous chapter suggests repetitive resumption — but without any intervening text to require the return. I suggest this is a case where the intervening material was time rather than text. Mormon stopped writing, and when he picked up the stylus again, he began a new chapter. We don’t know what marked a chapter, but there was certainly an ending to the events associated with Benjamin, and when Mormon began to write again, he understood the previous chapters had finished Benjamin’s story, and he created a new chapter to discuss Mosiah (though he is quite willing to finish a previous chapter at the beginning of a new chapter in other circumstances).

The rest of chapter V (7–8) tells of Ammon’s expedition to find those who had left Zarahemla to return to the land of Nephi. J. N. Washburn explains this unexpected turn in Mormon’s narrative: “Chapters 7 and 8 bring the first break in the continuity and lead into the most complicated and difficult part of the whole *Book of Mormon*. Here the story of the Nephites in Zarahemla is suddenly dropped — almost before it is well begun — for no good reason at all that is apparent, that we might follow, though briefly, an expedition up to the land of Nephi. This brings us to another story, but at the *end* rather than the beginning. To put it another way, the story of Zeniff begins with the end.”³²⁷

Mormon has been using the large plates of Nephi as his source. Mosiah’s decision to send Ammon and his brethren to the land of Lehi-Nephi was probably recorded on the plates, since it was an act of a king. As Mormon is writing, he knows where his text is going, and there are many things in later Nephite history that depend upon understanding the separation and reunification of the people who had gone to Lehi-Nephi. He places it in its proper temporal context as he found it on the large plates.

After the reunification of the people, the record of Ammon was probably copied onto the large plates (there is no indication that Mormon

327. J. N. Washburn, *The Contents, Structure and Authorship of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954), 35.

changes his source for this story). Therefore, Mormon skips to an account written on the plates long after the events but which would have been the next large-plate entry about those who left for Lehi-Nephi.

That hypothesis explains why Mormon might include the story of Ammon meeting Limhi, but it doesn't explain why Mormon repeated that story in Mosiah 25:25–28 when he was taking his text from the Record of Zeniff. It also does not tell us why Mormon's initial discussion told enough of the story to discuss the finding of the plates of Ether and the ruins of the Jaredites. This is especially true since that information is part of what he knew he would describe later.

Everything we have from Mormon suggests that he did not write without a reason. Discussing the descendants of Zeniff was essential because without that story, Mormon would have a more difficult time explaining Alma₁ and the import of Alma₂'s conversion. What we need is a hypothesis that explains the intentional duplication of the stories of the finding of the plates of Ether and the discussion about finding one who might translate. That this theme is critical to Mormon's story is testified by the presence in Mosiah 28:10–18, when Mormon discusses Mosiah's translating the plates which had been found.³²⁸ I will suggest a possible reason in the discussion of chapter XII (28–28:19).

Mosiah Chapter VI (9–10) [Has Header]

Mormon includes a synoptic header to declare the different source for this chapter. It is the first time we see a separate record used as a source for Mormon's story. Mosiah chapter VI (9–10) is written in the first person. All indications are that Mormon included this chapter as a quotation from Zeniff's holographic record. The header is the only introduction we get to this new record, and by beginning with a quoted chapter, Mormon provides no linking context between what he had written and what he is now entering on the plates.

The abrupt transition from chapter V to VI is unique in Mormon's work. Later, when Mormon shifts from the large plates to Alma₂'s personal record (beginning in Alma 5), the transition is much smoother. When Mormon declares that he is taking much of 3 Nephi from a "shorter but true account" (3 Nephi 5:9–10), there is a much smoother transition. In this case, it isn't only that the transition is abrupt, it is essentially absent. Mormon ended chapter V and began chapter VI,

328. Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon: A Reader's Guide*, 227 and 319n14, recognizes the repetition is "intriguing" but offers no suggestion to understand it.

which came from a different record with a different person speaking. Only the header: “The Record of Zeniff — An account of his people, from the time they left the land of Zarahemla until the time that they were delivered out of the hands of the Lamanites,” lets the reader know that something has changed. I suggest that the header provides the narrative shift. I have noted that these headers function as narration, opening chapters with narration even when our first verse is a quotation (see “Mormon Beginning Chapters”).

Mormon gives us no hint as to why he copied Zeniff’s record but abridged everything thereafter. Mormon’s typical reason for copying is to include an important doctrinal sermon, but we don’t see that in Zeniff’s record. I hypothesize that there were at least two reasons for including the whole record. The first is that the brevity of the account suggests the abridgment might not have been significantly shorter. Second, Zeniff’s story reinforces the Lord’s promises relative to the land, something Mormon highlights throughout his text. The promise was that if the Nephites would be righteous, they would prosper, and their enemies would not conquer them. In the case of Zeniff, Nephites have returned to a land where they are surrounded by the ancestral enemy, yet they were able to prosper. Perhaps an important line from Zeniff’s record highlights this point:

And it came to pass that we did go up to battle against the Lamanites; and I, even I, in my old age, did go up to battle against the Lamanites. And it came to pass that we did go up in the strength of the Lord to battle.

Now, the Lamanites knew nothing concerning the Lord, nor the strength of the Lord, therefore they depended upon their own strength. Yet they were a strong people, as to the strength of men. (Mosiah 10:10–11)

Also useful is Zeniff’s explanation of the reason for the Lamanite enmity. By the time Mormon copied this chapter, he had found — and probably read — the small plates of Nephi (Words of Mormon 1:3). Nephi’s text proclaimed the Nephite right to rule (it is probable that this was also present on the large plates, and Mormon might also have read it there). Thus, the explanation for why the Lamanites were enemies would continue to be relevant to Mormon’s intended audience. Therefore, the following verses in Zeniff’s writing could have been another reason for copying the record in its entirety:

They were a wild, and ferocious, and a blood-thirsty people, believing in the tradition of their fathers, which is this

— Believing that they were driven out of the land of Jerusalem because of the iniquities of their fathers, and that they were wronged in the wilderness by their brethren, and they were also wronged while crossing the sea;

And again, that they were wronged while in the land of their first inheritance, after they had crossed the sea, and all this because that Nephi was more faithful in keeping the commandments of the Lord — therefore he was favored of the Lord, for the Lord heard his prayers and answered them, and he took the lead of their journey in the wilderness.

And his brethren were wroth with him because they understood not the dealings of the Lord; they were also wroth with him upon the waters because they hardened their hearts against the Lord.

And again, they were wroth with him when they had arrived in the promised land, because they said that he had taken the ruling of the people out of their hands; and they sought to kill him.

And again, they were wroth with him because he departed into the wilderness as the Lord had commanded him, and took the records which were engraven on the plates of brass, for they said that he robbed them.

And thus they have taught their children that they should hate them, and that they should murder them, and that they should rob and plunder them, and do all they could to destroy them; therefore they have an eternal hatred towards the children of Nephi. (Mosiah 10:12–17)

Those verses provide a succinct summary of an argument Nephi made over the course of his entire first book, and at least the first chapters of his second.

The chapter ends for two reasons. Perhaps the more important was the final *Amen*, but it also marks the end of Zeniff's holographic entry. Mormon had been copying from Zeniff's record but returns to the more standard method of interacting with a source in the next chapter.

Mosiah Chapter VII (11:1–13:14)

Mosiah chapter VII is taken from the Record of Zeniff, but it is Mormon's abridgment of that record rather than a copy. As with other Nephite records, the name of the record is the dynastic name, so the fact that this

chapter begins with Noah as the new king did not require a change in the record name. As Zeniff's son, Noah carried on the dynasty.

As the official record of the dynasty, one must suppose the original record was very supportive of Noah, whereas Mormon's abridgement clearly is not. Apart from what Mormon might have copied, Mormon's desire to paint Noah in an unfavorable light must have differed from what the official historian wrote — hence it was virtually necessary for Mormon to return to a narrative abridgment.

Mormon's representation of Noah is designed to portray him as leaving the true gospel. The witnesses to his apostasy are interesting and perhaps cautionary for modern readers. Noah is painted as apostate because he seeks after and achieves prosperity. The problem is not the prosperity, however, but the fact that it is achieved on the backs of his people. The Nephite ideal is egalitarianism, and Noah is the embodiment of social, cultural, and economic hierarchies.

As an apostate (and what we may learn of his religion suggests it is the same or similar to the order of Nehors³²⁹), it is unsurprising that the Lord would send an Old World-style prophet to call him to repentance. Mormon includes the story of Abinadi to provide the origin story for Alma₁. It also pleased him that Abinadi would preach of the Messiah, and so Abinadi's defense is copied rather than summarized. The question is from where was the defense copied?

A possible complication for understanding the source is the statement in Mosiah 17:4 "But he [Alma₁] fled from before them and hid himself that they found him not. And he being concealed for many days did write all the words which Abinadi had spoken" (Mosiah 17:4). With the information that Alma₁ had written the words of Abinadi, it is tempting to suggest that we are seeing Alma₁'s copy here. However, as an official court of the king, it fits within the acts of the king that might be recorded, so the dialogue and Abinadi's speech was probably captured in the record. This perspective makes it easier to understand how we have the record of what Abinadi said after Alma₁ had already fled the court. Where there is narration, that comes from Mormon.

The chapter ending is obscured in modern editions. It comes in the middle of Abinadi's sermon, as noted in the section on Mormon's chapter endings. In this case, the chapter ends at the end of the quotation from scripture (meaning brass-plate scriptures for the Nephites). Even though there was no break in Abinadi's explanation, the ending of the quotation triggered a chapter break. Mormon is copying at this point,

329. Gardner, *Second Witness*, 4:41–51.

so it is unclear whether Mormon added the chapter break or copied it. As noted in the section on chapter endings, the similar ending after a quotation of scripture in 3 Nephi most likely occurred because it was in the original, and Mormon simply copied it. Based on that parallel, I suggest this chapter break was also in the original from which Mormon was copying, and he similarly copied the break as well as the text.

It must be noted, however, that Abinadi will cite Isaiah in the next chapter, and that quotation did not create a chapter break. I suggest this reinforces the idea that this chapter ending was copied, and we do not have enough information about the way the Record of Zeniff was created to surmise how those scribes chose to end chapters.

Mosiah Chapter VIII (13:15–16:15)

It follows no modern logic that there should be an interruption of a chapter break during a single discourse given by one person. Even when we have chapter breaks during King Benjamin's speech, they were chapter breaks that corresponded to a break in the discourse itself — either representing a timing break, or the temporary halt of the testificatory *Amen*. In this case, however, removing the chapter break conceals nothing save for the fact of the original break; it is an anomaly.

In this chapter, Mormon continues Abinadi's discourse wherein he cites Isaiah 53 in its entirety. Although it is entered as a separate chapter in our modern editions to make the correlation to Isaiah 53 more apparent, in the original it comes as part of the discourse. As noted previously, Mormon is copying this text, and the different way the decalogue and this quotation from Isaiah are treated suggest that the chapter breaks are also being copied. In Mormon's chapters, this one ends with Abinadi's testificatory *Amen*.

Mosiah Chapter IX (17–21)

Mormon shifts from copying to narrating. Nevertheless, the source is still the record of Zeniff. As the record of the deeds of the kings, the results of the court proceedings are a plausible inclusion in the record. Early in the chapter (Mosiah 17:2–3), we are introduced to Alma₁. Although Alma₁'s expulsion from the court is reasonably recorded on the official record, Mormon is narrating rather than copying, so the introduction of Alma₁ is very sympathetic where that treatment would certainly not have been the perspective of the official Record of Zeniff under Noah.

This chapter covers the sentencing of Abinadi and the cursing of Noah. It ends with the historical events that led to the bondage of Limhi's people to the Lamanites, the story of sending a party to find

Zarahemla (but instead found Jaredite remains and the plates of Ether), and the arrival of Ammon and his brethren.

This is a packed chapter and one difficult to analyze. The Record of Zeniff is the reasonable source for everything except a small section not set off from the rest of the chapter in the original but does constitute the separate chapter Mosiah 18 in our modern edition. Orson Pratt recognized it as a separate subject. That section deals with Alma₁'s small group in the wilderness.

As the section on Abinadi concludes with his dying statements and Mormon's narrative conclusion, we get a quick change that returns the narrative to the story of Alma₁, who was introduced earlier: "And now, it came to pass that Alma, who had fled from the servants of king Noah, repented of his sins and iniquities, and went about privately among the people, and began to teach the words of Abinadi" (Mosiah 18:1). This section proceeds to discuss what Alma₁ taught, based upon Abinadi's teachings, though certainly layered upon his own foundation of study of scripture.

There is a textual transition away from Alma₁'s people and refocusing on the people of Noah (and later Limhi): "And it came to pass that the army of the king returned, having searched in vain for the people of the Lord" (Mosiah 19:1). Just a few sentences earlier (Mosiah 18:33), Mormon had written: "And now the king said that Alma was stirring up the people to rebellion against him; therefore he sent his army to destroy them." The initial sentence was told from the perspective of the people of Alma₁. The return of the army is told from the perspective of the people of Noah, and the physical returning is mirrored by the narrative returning.

The textual question is where the information about Alma₁'s people came from. It could not have come from the Record of Zeniff, although everything else in this chapter could have (and most likely did). The only possibility is the record of Alma₁. Mormon formally introduces that source with a header before chapter XI (23–27). I think the inserted section in the current chapter was taken from that record, and evidence for that source can be seen in the text itself.

At the end of the section in chapter IX (17–21), Mormon writes:

And it came to pass that Alma and the people of the Lord were *apprised of the coming of the king's army*; therefore they took their tents and their families and departed into the wilderness.

And it came to pass that the army of the king returned, *having searched in vain* for the people of the Lord. (Mosiah 18:34–19:1)

When Mormon formally notes that he is taking information from a new source, he opens the text based on the new source with:

Now Alma, *having been warned of the Lord that the armies of king Noah would come upon them, and having made it known to his people, therefore they gathered together their flocks, and took of their grain, and departed into the wilderness before the armies of king Noah.*

And the Lord did strengthen them, that the people of king Noah could not overtake them to destroy them. (Mosiah 23:1–2)

I have highlighted the obvious parallels between these verses. This is a type of repetitive resumption that cuts against type. There is no intervening insertion. There is nothing about the material that follows this section (Mosiah 18) which suggests it was an unplanned insertion. On the contrary, it is critical to the story Mormon is telling.

Nevertheless, we have the very tight connection between a section that must have come from Alma₁'s record, even though unattested, and the formal beginning of that record. I believe Mormon is signaling that he did take that information from the record he introduces in Mosiah 23. Mormon had the difficult task of telling stories that overlapped in time, and in this case, he pulls information from a separate record to insert it where it made sense in both the temporal and physical location of the story. When he returned to that separate record, it was at the later time and a different geography.

The last events of the chapter concern the arrival of Ammon and his brothers. This is information covered in chapter V (7–8). Most importantly, the story of the finding of the plates of Ether is recounted. Mormon takes this account from a separate source (the Record of Zeniff, where the previous version was from the plates of Nephi). He summarizes the information here without providing the dialogue from the previous instance. Nevertheless, knowing that he had already written it, he found it important to include again:

Now king Limhi had sent, previous to the coming of Ammon, a small number of men to search for the land of Zarahemla; but they could not find it, and they were lost in the wilderness.

Nevertheless, they did find a land which had been peopled; yea, a land which was covered with dry bones; yea, a land which had been peopled and which had been destroyed; and they, having supposed it to be the land of Zarahemla, returned

to the land of Nephi, having arrived in the borders of the land not many days before the coming of Ammon.

And they brought a record with them, even a record of the people whose bones they had found; and it was engraven on plates of ore.

And now Limhi was again filled with joy on learning from the mouth of Ammon that king Mosiah had a gift from God, whereby he could interpret such engravings; yea, and Ammon also did rejoice. (Mosiah 21:25–28)

The implications of this repetition will be discussed when they appear yet again at the end of chapter XII (28:1–19).

The end of the chapter is also unusual. There is no typical marker to indicate the reason for the chapter break. For comparison, I'll show the final sentence of this chapter against the first sentence of the next:

And now all the study of Ammon and his people, and king Limhi and his people, was to deliver themselves out of the hands of the Lamanites and from bondage. (Mosiah 21:36).

And now it came to pass that Ammon and king Limhi began to consult with the people how they should deliver themselves out of bondage; and even they did cause that all the people should gather themselves together; and this they did that they might have the voice of the people concerning the matter. (Mosiah 22:1)

The sentences are certainly not identical, but they provide much of the same information. Had there been intervening text, I would have suggested a case of repetitive resumption. I suggest that this is another case where the resumption is from a temporal break rather than a textual resumption. Furthermore, I suggest that Mormon did not necessarily intend to have an end to this chapter at this point, but the chapter had a *de facto* ending when Mormon stopped to attend to whatever required that he finish writing before he finished his intended chapter.

Mosiah Chapter X (22)

As noted for the end of chapter IX (17–21), I do not believe this was intended to be a separate chapter but rather the end of the chapter IX. This chapter ends the story of the people of Limhi. At the end of the chapter, they have successfully escaped from the Lamanites and returned to Zarahemla, where “Mosiah received them with joy; and he received their records, and also the records which had been found by the

people of Limhi” (Mosiah 22: 14). Note, however, the explicit mention of the plates of Ether: “the records which had been found by the people of Limhi.” Mormon is gently emphasizing the importance of these records.

Mosiah Chapter XI (23–27) [Has Header]

Mormon’s chapter header declares that he has changed his source from the Record of Zeniff to “an account of Alma and the people of the Lord.” The confirmation that it was Alma₁ comes later in the chapter when the text focuses on his son, Alma₂, and the sons of Mosiah. While some of chapter XI could have come from the large plates, it could also have been recorded on Alma₁’s record. Mormon marks chapters when he begins working with a non-large-plate source, but he does not mark when he ends. In this case, our chapter 25 might have come from the large plates, but since Mormon didn’t mark a return to Alma₁’s record in chapter 26, it seems he used that personal record for the whole of it.

Orson Pratt divided this chapter into reasonable logical units. Chapters 23 and 24 record the events of Alma₁’s people in the land of Helam, their being brought into bondage, and their escape to Zarahemla. Chapter 25 discusses Mosiah₂’s reading of the records (Mosiah 25: 4–6) and his introduction to Alma₁. Alma₁ was extremely influential in the development of both church and state in Zarahemla, and Mormon would have wanted to tell his story for those accomplishments alone. As he was also the father of the future chief judge, there is even more reason to make certain that Alma₁’s story is part of the Mormon’s overall plan.

Alma₁ is given the floor to speak. What he does is preach what he had learned from Abinadi. This includes a renewal of the concept of baptism (and perhaps its introduction as an entry rite into a *church*). Although Mormon is narrating and not quoting, it is more likely that this overt preaching was part of Alma₁’s record rather than the large plates of Nephi. Most importantly, this chapter marks the beginning of churches in Zarahemla.

In chapter 26, Mormon introduces apostasy. He notes that:

Now it came to pass that there were many of the rising generation that could not understand the words of king Benjamin, being little children at the time he spake unto his people; and they did not believe the tradition of their fathers.

They did not believe what had been said concerning the resurrection of the dead, neither did they believe concerning the coming of Christ.

And now because of their unbelief they could not understand the word of God; and their hearts were hardened.

And they would not be baptized; neither would they join the church. And they were a separate people as to their faith, and remained so ever after, even in their carnal and sinful state; for they would not call upon the Lord their God.

And now in the reign of Mosiah they were not half so numerous as the people of God; but because of the dissensions among the brethren they became more numerous.

For it came to pass that they did deceive many with their flattering words, who were in the church, and did cause them to commit many sins; therefore it became expedient that those who committed sin, that were in the church, should be admonished by the church. (Mosiah 26:1–6)

This large apostasy (in less than a generation) is used to set the stage for two things. The first is Alma₁'s position in Zarahemla as well as before the Lord. The tight connection between religion and politics in the ancient world is manifest in Alma₁'s problem. He is a judge ostensibly dealing with a religious issue — but a religious issue that had tremendous political implications. It could have been seen as treason rather than apostasy. The Lord answers him (Mosiah 26:14–32). The end result was the de facto separation of church and state in Zarahemla, a factor that would play into virtually all future contentions in the city (at least those Mormon elected to include).

The second reason for this introduction is to provide the context for the story of Alma₂ and the sons of Mosiah. Pratt separated that story into chapter 27. The original chapter ends with the conversion of the sons of Mosiah, who preach in the land of Zarahemla. This is Mormon's narration, and he concludes the chapter with: "And thus they were instruments in the hands of God in bringing many to the knowledge of the truth, yea, to the knowledge of their Redeemer. And how blessed are they! For they did publish peace; they did publish good tidings of good; and they did declare unto the people that the Lord reigneth" (Mosiah 27:36–37). This is Mormon's comment on the sons of Mosiah and was not on the plates. Perhaps because it was Mormon's interjection, Mormon ended the chapter. However, I suspect the real reason was that the more important story of the sons of Mosiah did not occur in the land of Zarahemla but in the land of Nephi. Mormon ends the chapter with

the end of their preaching in the land of Zarahemla and prepares his readers for the next phase of the story in the next chapter.

Mosiah Chapter XII (28:1–19)

Mormon does a reasonable job of announcing when he is departing from the large plates to a separate source. He consistently fails to note when he returns to the large plates from that separate source. This chapter is evidence of that lack of marking. There is no indication that there is a change, but we have left the story that could have been on Alma₁'s record and have returned to material that makes most sense to have been on the official plates of Nephi. Although the previous chapter ended with a discussion of the sons of Mosiah, those actions paralleled Alma₂, and their close connection is reason enough to see the Zarahemla preaching tour as having been reported on Alma₁'s record.

The new discussion of the sons of Mosiah begins with their petition to the king to take a small number of companions and preach to the Lamanites in the land of Nephi. That is an act of the king, and may signal that Mormon is returning to the large plate record. After giving permission, Mormon notes that: “And they took their journey into the wilderness to go up to preach the word among the Lamanites; and I shall give an account of their proceedings hereafter” (Mosiah 28:9). Mormon sets up their departure in the correct time frame from the plates of Nephi but will provide their story as a flashback. This was necessary because Mormon couldn't tell the story until after they had returned and brought records of what had happened.

The next major event in Nephite history is the ending of the reign of the kings and instituting the reign of the judges. Mormon begins that story in Mosiah 28:10 “Now king Mosiah had no one to confer the kingdom upon, for there was not any of his sons who would accept of the kingdom.”

A part of the transfer of the kingdom was the transfer of the sacred relics. Mormon begins to tell that story, but the mention of the plates of Ether sidetracks him. Mosiah 28:11 serves as the point of departure for Mormon's aside about the plates. In most cases of repetitive resumption, Mormon returns in the same chapter. In this case, perhaps occasioned by his reference to his own writing task in his own time, the resumption occurred in the following chapter. Orson Pratt appears to have recognized that the return belonged with the departure text, so our modern editions have moved what was the first verse of the next chapter to be the last verse of the current chapter.

Departure: Therefore he took the records which were engraven on the *plates of brass*, and also *the plates of Nephi*, and all the things which he had kept and preserved according to the commandments of God, after having translated and caused to be written the records which were on the *plates of gold which had been found by the people of Limhi*, which were delivered to him by the hand of Limhi; (Mosiah 28:11)

Resumption: And now, as I said unto you, that after king Mosiah had done these things, he took the *plates of brass*, and *all the things which he had kept*, and conferred them upon Alma, who was the son of Alma; yea, all the records, and also the interpreters, and conferred them upon him, and commanded him that he should keep and preserve them, and also keep a record of the people, handing them down from one generation to another, even as they had been handed down from the time that Lehi left Jerusalem. (Mosiah 28:20)

The mention of the plates of Ether is the trigger for the third retelling of the same basic story:

... after having translated and caused to be written the records which were on the plates of gold which had been found by the people of Limhi, which were delivered to him by the hand of Limhi;

And this he did because of the great anxiety of his people; for they were desirous beyond measure to know concerning those people who had been destroyed.

And now he translated them by the means of those two stones which were fastened into the two rims of a bow.

Now these things were prepared from the beginning, and were handed down from generation to generation, for the purpose of interpreting languages;

And they have been kept and preserved by the hand of the Lord, that he should discover to every creature who should possess the land the iniquities and abominations of his people; And whosoever has these things is called seer, after the manner of old times.

Now after Mosiah had finished translating these records, behold, it gave an account of the people who were destroyed,

from the time that they were destroyed back to the building of the great tower, at the time the Lord confounded the language of the people and they were scattered abroad upon the face of all the earth, yea, and even from that time back until the creation of Adam.

Now this account did cause the people of Mosiah to mourn exceedingly, yea, they were filled with sorrow; nevertheless it gave them much knowledge, in the which they did rejoice.

And this account shall be written hereafter; for behold, it is expedient that all people should know the things which are written in this account. (Mosiah 28:11–19)

In this third telling of the story, we finally reach the end of the process. The first two accounts note the finding of the plates and the desire to translate them. They posit Mosiah₂ as one who possessed the seer stones that would allow him to translate. In this chapter, we have Mosiah₂ using the two stones and translating.

The difference here is that we have only the briefest conclusion about what was on those plates. Interestingly, Mormon doesn't tell us why "this account did cause the people of Mosiah to mourn exceedingly." The only textual antecedent was the confounding of the languages at the Tower of Babel, but that was an event with which they were already familiar. Mormon does not, therefore, elucidate the reasons for their mourning. However, as Mormon will use the plates of Ether as a subtext in his longer historical arc, he will associate the downfall of the Jaredites with secret combinations: "And whatsoever nation shall uphold such secret combinations, to get power and gain, until they shall spread over the nation, behold, they shall be destroyed; for the Lord will not suffer that the blood of his saints, which shall be shed by them, shall always cry unto him from the ground for vengeance upon them and yet he avenge them not" (Ether 8:22).

This theme will connect the Jaredites to the cause of civil disruptions, and eventually to the Gadianton robbers and the downfall of the Nephite nation. Mormon uses the triple repetition of this basic story to emphasize the role of the plates of Ether in providing the information that will assist in the Nephite demise.

Note that the last line of the original chapter was "And this account shall be written hereafter; for behold, it is expedient that all people should know the things which are written in this account" (Mosiah 28:19). The story is important to Mormon, and it needs to be known. Interestingly,

there is no indication that Mormon himself wanted to write it. Perhaps he had imagined having Moroni write it even this early in his writing.

Mosiah Chapter XIII (28:20–29:47)

The shift from chapter XII to XIII does not have a textual indicator; there is no end of a sermon, no testificatory *Amen*. There is a shift in narrative focus, and that is the probable reason to end the previous chapter and begin a new one. The previous chapter ended the focus on the land of Nephi (until it is revisited in Alma 17–27). Chapter XIII (28:20–29) focuses on the final acts of Mosiah₂, and the transition from kingship to the reign of the judges.

The chapter will end the book of Mosiah. It ends with the deaths of both Alma₁ and Mosiah₂. They both appear to have died within the same year, as Mormon mentions them together. It is also a testament to the importance and influence of Alma₁ that his death is listed along with that of a king. The conclusion of the chapter is “and thus ended the reign of the kings over the people of Nephi; and thus ended the days of Alma, who was the founder of their church” (Mosiah 29:47).

The mention of the ending of the kingship and the establishment of the church as a separate unit is important to the rest of Nephite history. The presentation of Alma₂ as “the first chief judge, he being also the high priest” (Mosiah 29:42) is meant to provide the beginning of the essential separation of church and state that occurred during Mosiah₂’s reign. It is also the beginning of the pattern discussed in the section on “Subtle Manipulation of Names,” which posits that the names of Alma₁’s lineage are used to provide the picture of a continuation of the religious line during times when the political dynastic structure was shifting.

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