



Type: Magazine Article

The Book of Mormon

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Source: *Relief Society Magazine*, Vol. 4, No. 12 (December 1917), pp. 709–712

Published by: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Abstract: Presents a discussion about the various metal plates connected with the Book of Mormon, including the Jaredite plates and the plates of Nephi that Mormon abridged. Provides a list of the historians and the dates that their records were made.

Guide Lessons.

LESSON I.

Theology and Testimony.

FIRST WEEK IN JANUARY.

THE BOOK OF MORMON.

Historians and Custodians of the Book of Mormon. The story told in the Book of Mormon is the story of a Semite colony who came from the Tower of Babel and settled in North America, but who perished after centuries of expansion and prosperity, because of their sin and corruption. Also it is the story of a colony of Hebrews who left Jerusalem in the time of Zedekiah, crossed the sea in ships of their own building and landed in South America, finally peopling both continents again. The disobedient portion of this people at last conquered, and remained a dark-skinned race to be discovered by Columbus. These people kept records engraved upon plates of ore and plates of gold, and it is of these plates we shall speak in this lesson.

The Records or Plates. The records made by the colonies of people who settled up North America were engraved upon brass and golden plates. This was for a wise purpose divinely ordained. Most other substances would have decayed, corroded and gone into complete annihilation, but gold being one of the most enduring substances known, was selected by the historians of the ancient Americans. The Chinese anciently engraved their records, first upon bamboo slips, or wood, with a special knife, then bones were used, next bronze and stone were used by these ancient students and historians.

The Jaredite Plates. When the first colony came out from the Tower of Babel and into the Promised Land, they were led by one Jared and his brother. These people kept very little in the way of records, yet there were twenty and four plates with engravings on them, discovered later by the Nephites, which gave an account of the Jaredites and which were translated and called the Book of Ether. (Omni, verses 18, 20; Mosiah, ch. 8.)

The Plates. In addition to these twenty-four Jaredite plates spoken of in the Book of Mormon are a set of brass plates which are called the Plates of Laban; then there are the two sets of

plates prepared by Nephi, the large and the small plates; there is Mormon's abridgment on a set of small golden plates, with the twenty-four Jaredite plates, and Moroni's additional book.

Plates of Nephi. Soon after the arrival of Lehi and his little colony on the promised land, Nephi received a commandment from the Lord to make certain "plates of ore" upon which to engrave a record of the doings of his people, and on these for many generations the secular history of the people was recorded. Some time later, or between thirty and forty years after the departure of Lehi from Jerusalem, Nephi was told by the Lord to "make other plates; and thou shalt engraven many things upon them which are good in my sight for the profit of thy people." Nephi, accordingly made this second set of plates, and upon them were engraven the sacred records of the first few Nephite prophets.

The two sets of plates manufactured by Nephi were both called the Plates of Nephi; but their contents were not identical. Upon the first set was engraven the political history of the Nephites, and these were continued from century to century; upon the second their religious growth and development for only four hundred years. The one described the acts of their kings, and the wars, contentions and destructions which came upon the nation from Lehi down to the days of Mormon; the other ran down only to Mosiah's time and contained the story of the dealings of the Lord with that people, the ministry of his servants, the teachings and prophecies of that comparatively short period. Of the contents of the first set of plates of Nephi with the secular history on we know only through Mormon's abridgment; but the second set of plates is given to us in full in the first five books with the few words of Mormon added.

Mormon's Abridgment. When Mormon was ten years of age he was taken by Ammaron, the last Nephite historian, to the hill called Shim, and was there shown the sacred engravings hidden in a cave containing records of his people. He found there the brass plates of Laban which had been brought at so much sacrifice and suffering out from Jerusalem by Nephi, and which contained the genealogy of Lehi's fathers as well as the history of the Jewish people down to the time of Zedekiah, at which time Lehi with his family left Jerusalem (I Nephi 5:10-22), and which, no doubt, were very cumbersome compared with the small golden plates which Nephi used for the sacred history. There are many of these larger plates as the history of the wars and contentions of the people, their travels and settlements here and there were all given in these plates. From the account given us by the Prophet Joseph Smith these plates were numerous and might have been of varying sizes. Here also he found the four and twenty plates containing the brief record of the Jaredites.

After Mormon's final battle and his banishment he was inspired to make a record himself, a full account, so he tells us, of the wickedness and abominations which he himself beheld. Next and most important to us, he was inspired to prepare a small abridgment (Mormon 5:9) of these many records contained upon the plates of ore. This abridgment is contained in the books we know as: the Book of Mosiah, of Alma, of Helaman, of III Nephi, and of IV Nephi. He also made an abridgment of the records of Lehi and I Nephi which was the part first translated by the Prophet and was lost by Martin Harris. When Mormon was at work in the cave he says he "searched among the records which had been delivered into my hands, and I found these plates, which contained this small account of the prophets, from Jacob, down to the reign of this king Benjamin; and also many of the words of Nephi. And the things which are upon these plates pleasing me, because of the prophecies of the coming of Christ. * * * * * Wherefore, I chose these things to finish my record upon them, which remainder of my record I shall take from the plates of Nephi; and I cannot write the hundredth part of the things of my people. But behold, I shall take these plates, which contain these prophesyings and revelations, and put them with the remainder of my record, for they are choice unto me; and I know they will be choice unto my brethren. And I do this for a wise purpose; for thus it whispereth me, according to the workings of the Spirit of the Lord which is in me. And now, I do not know all things; but the Lord knoweth all things which are to come; wherefore, he worketh in me to do according to his will."

Thus we see that the first five books of the Book of Mormon, are the original writings of the authors; note how they spoke: "I, Nephi," "I, Jacob," "I, Jarom," etc. The next six books are the abridgment of Mormon. The last two books were prepared by Moroni.

Historians. Following are the names of the Nephite historians:

- Nephi, from — to 546 B. C.
- Jacob, from 546 to —.
- Enos, from — to 422.
- Jarom, from 422 to 362.
- Omni, from 362 to 318.
- Ammaron, from 318 to 280.
- Chemish, from 280 to —.
- Abinadom, from — to —.
- Amaleki, from — to 200 (about).
- King Benjamin, from 200 to 125.
- King Mosiah, from 125 to 91.

Alma (the younger), from 91 to 73.

Helaman (the elder), from 73 to 57.

Shiblon, from 57 to 53.

Helaman (the younger), from 53 to 39.

Nephi, from 39 to 1.

Nephi (the disciple), from 1 to 34 A. C.

Nephi, from 34 to 110.

Amos, from 110 to 194.

Amos (the younger), from 194 to 306.

Ammaron, from 306 to 320.

Mormon, from 320 to 385.

Moroni, from 385 to 421.

Sets of Plates Mentioned in the Book of Mormon.

The plates of Laban.

I Nephi, chapter 3; chapter 5, verses 10-22.

The Large Plates of Nephi (the secular history).

I Nephi 1:17; 9:2-6.

The Small Plates of Nephi (containing the religious history of Lehi, Nephi, Jacob and sons down to Mosiah, with the words of Mormon). 9:2-6; chapter 6; I Nephi 10:1; Words of Mormon, verses 3-11.

The Abridgment Plates of Mormon (must have been of the same size as the sacred plates of Nephi as the Prophet found them all fastened together with rings).

IV Nephi 1:47-49.

Book of Mormon 1:1-6; 2:17, 18.

The Twenty-four Plates of the Jaredites.

Book of Ether.

Other References: I Nephi 1:16; ch. 6; Jacob 1:1-4; 3:13, 14; 4:1-3; Enos 1:13-18; Jarom 1:1, 2, 14, 15; Omni 1:3, 9, 11, 25.

Thus we have a wonderful record, prepared in a marvelous way. No charlatan would have invented so involved yet so clear and definite an explanation of the recording and preservation of these books. One of the best proofs of the Book of Mormon itself is the clear, lucid manner in which any problem is met in its pages and solved without contradiction or confusion. Many of our people think the Book of Mormon was written altogether by Mormon. This is only half of the truth, as this lesson indicates.

QUESTIONS.

How did the Chinese increase their early records?

What were the plates of Laban?

How were they obtained?

How many sets of plates did Nephi prepare?
What were Zarahemla's plates and what did they contain?
What can you say of Mormon's abridgment?
What did Moroni write?

How many sets of plates were there?

How many historians were there?

What became of the first 116 pages translated by the Prophet Joseph Smith?

History Preparation. Students are requested to read I Nephi and report readings at the next lesson for general discussion.

NOTICE TO OUR STUDENTS.

The General Board of the Relief Society have decided to present as this year's and next year's theology lessons the study and history of the Book of Mormon.

The genealogical lessons which will continue as usual will take up the following: Racial history lessons: Gentile Semites, Desendants of Ham, Japheth, Racial Beginnings in Europe, Further Racial Divisions in Europe, and Race History in Great Britain.

The Home Science lessons will treat on conservation of food, taking up as subjects: Plain Facts about Food, Spring Vegetables, Economy and Methods of Preparation; Cereals: rice, whole wheat flour, rye and corn bread, and bread-making; Products and by-products of the Dairy; Review of Canning and Drying lesson; Beans, peas, lentils and meat; Conservation of Clothing; Textiles and Fabrics, Choice and Care; Shoes and Hose; Conservation of Health of Children: Health the Best Gift; Conservation of Peace within; Christmas and the Prophet's Birthday.

Because of the pressure upon our time and energies through war activities, added to the regular heavy responsibilities of our Relief Society work, the Board has decided to relieve the situation somewhat by discontinuing for this year, at least, the study of Literature. We hope the result will justify our action.

Very few books need be purchased in the lesson work for the coming year. All our people have the sacred history of the Nephites, and we trust that all of our members have in the home, George Reynolds' *Story of the Book of Mormon*, as our lessons will follow his work in some detail. Lists of U. S. Bulletins suitable for the Home Science lessons will be given to be distributed from the Washington office of Senator Reed Smoot.

Our new surname book has grown to such proportions and

so many difficulties have had to be overcome, that we are unable to present it to you for a little time longer. However, students will find help for this year's lessons in any good general history. Encyclopedias and geographies will serve as text books for the Racial History lessons. May the Lord add his blessing to all our earnest students, class teachers, officers and members of the great Relief Society.

LESSON II.

Work and Business.

SECOND WEEK IN JANUARY.

LESSON III.

Genealogy and Literature.

THIRD WEEK IN JANUARY.

RACE HISTORY.

Disobedient Races Descended from Shem. Not all the descendants of Shem were obedient to his teachings and to the principles of the gospel. Many of them fell away from time to time and some became great nations. Therefore, in this lesson those ancient Semitic nations which might be called "gentile" nations in contradistinction to obedient Semites, afterwards called the Hebrews, we shall here consider.

We must call the attention of the student to the fact that we will not be able in this racial history to carry along our studies in a general or world-history chronological order, for the nations which grew out of the three great racial divisions (Semites, Hamites, and Japhethites) conquered and were conquered by each other at various times, and very often under similar circumstances. However, we shall take each race down chronologically, in the various lessons, as they developed into nations, and leave the student to join together the historical events in review questions and by the aid of maps and a study of general ancient history.

ASSYRIA. Up in the northern part of the Valley of the Tigris (2250 B. C. to 600 B. C.) were the Assyrians, descendants of Ashur son of Shem. Tiglath-Pileser I in 1130 B. C. conquered the southern provinces and visited the warring Assyrian tribes. Sardanapalus followed him, and then Tiglath-Pileser II conquered Babylon, Syria and Judea. The Assyrians had founded the great