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## A Plethora of Plates: A Teaching Perspective

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# **A Plethora of Plates**

(A Teaching Perspective)

Written and compiled by

**Paul Nolan Hyde**

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# A Plethora of Plates

(A Teaching Perspective by Paul Nolan Hyde, Ph.D.)

*0.0* The coming forth of the Book of Mormon in the spring of 1830 was not only an act of God the eternal Father at the dawn of the Dispensation of the Fullness of Time, but it was also the culmination of a process begun in the days of Joseph, the son of Jacob, who was sold into Egypt by his brethren. From that seemingly insignificant first step a tradition emerged, with regard to family records, that continued for two millennia. A set of brass plates initiated by Pharaoh's vice-regent established a pattern of record keeping that would be perpetuated in subsequent generations until the whole history of a covenant people would be preserved for the children of men that they might come to know for themselves the truths of Heaven, the veracity of the atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the hope of salvation through willing obedience to the principles and ordinances of the Gospel. The example set by Joseph would be the catalyst that would provide humanity with the blessings of eternity, even as many as will.

## ***1.0* The Brass Plates of Laban**

*1.1* The earliest records noted in the Book of Mormon were preserved upon what have come to be known as the Brass Plates of Laban. This is a bit of a misnomer, inasmuch as Laban was hardly more than a caretaker for the record that eventually became the inspiration of obedience for the family of Lehi. Around the year 600 BC, according to our present calendaring system, the man Lehi, a resident of land of Judea, became convinced that the words of the prophets of Israel, particularly those of the prophet Jeremiah, indeed reflected the intentions of the Lord God of Israel with regard to the inhabitants of the city of Jerusalem. The city, together with the Temple of Solomon, was going to suffer utter ruin at the hands of the Nebuchadnezzar and his Babylonian troops. Lehi sought for further light and knowledge on the matter and found grace in the eyes of the Lord. He and his family were commanded to depart from the land of Judea and seek refuge in a place that would be shown them after they had proven themselves faithful to the mind and will of God. Lehi's family was eventually joined by Ishmael and his family, together with Zoram, a servant of aforementioned Laban, as they embarked into the desert wilderness south and west of the city of Jerusalem. This cadre of the faithful would eventually be led away to a promised land a half a world away.

*1.2* Lehi's entourage prepared themselves for their rather lengthy journey in every practical way. As a result, they were able to endure eight years in the Arabian peninsula without suffering irreparable loss. After sojourning by the sea for a short time at the southern extremity of that vast desert, they way their way eastward across the great ocean sea until they arrived on the western shores of what is now known as South America. There they began to prosper materially. Unfortunately, there were portions of their small community that incited rebellion against the guidance of Lehi and his divinely appointed heir, Nephi. The two parties separated and engaged in one form of warfare or another for the subsequent one thousand years. The final battles between the Lamanites and the Nephites, took place in the latter half of the fourth century after the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. The result of those conflicts was the termination of the Nephites who had ostensibly been the more

righteous of the two. The righteousness of the Nephites had for the most part been facilitated because they had with them a collection of brass plates that aided them in acceptable worship before God the Father. These plates were obtained in the early days of the flight of Lehi and his family from the city of Jerusalem.

### *1.3 The Language of the Plates of Brass*

*1.3.1* In his lament about the inadequacy that he felt about finishing his father's work, the prophet Moroni provided a clue as to the nature of the language in which the records of the Nephites were preserved.

Behold, I speak unto you as though I spake from the dead; for I know that ye shall have my words. Condemn me not because of mine imperfection, neither my father, because of his imperfection, neither them who have written before him; but rather give thanks unto God that he hath made manifest unto you our imperfections, that ye may learn to be more wise than we have been. And now, behold, we have written this record according to our knowledge, in the characters which are called among us the reformed Egyptian, being handed down and altered by us, according to our manner of speech. And if our plates had been sufficiently large we should have written in Hebrew; but the Hebrew hath been altered by us also; and if we could have written in Hebrew, behold, ye would have had no imperfection in our record. But the Lord knoweth the things which we have written, and also that none other people knoweth our language; and because that none other people knoweth our language, therefore he hath prepared means for the interpretation thereof. And these things are written that we may rid our garments of the blood of our brethren, who have dwindled in unbelief. And behold, these things which we have desired concerning our brethren, yea, even their restoration to the knowledge of Christ, are according to the prayers of all the saints who have dwelt in the land. (Mormon 9:30–36)

*1.3.2* Moroni was writing some four hundred years after the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. His father, his friends, his comrades in arms had all perished in the final conflict between the Lamanites and the Nephites. We do not know the year that Moroni was born, but if we assume that Mormon married some time during his mid-twenties, his son may have come into the world about the year 335. Moroni, then would have been just shy of his 50th year of mortality during the battle at the hill Cumorah and about 65 years of age as he wrote the concluding two chapters of the book concerning his father's life. He would then be about 86 years of age when he wrote his last upon the plates, 421 years after the birth of the Savior. Moroni knew that no one of his generation would ever read his words as mortals, but he had every confidence that there would come a time when the entire earth would have an opportunity to contemplate that which he and his father had transcribed upon the plates.

*1.3.3* The son of Mormon warned his readers to be wary regarding their criticism of the text of his father's work. This represents only one of the many times that Moroni cautioned the readers of the Book of Mormon to be careful how they regarded the testimonies that had been preserved of the Nephite dealings with their God. He was painfully aware of the great difficulty that there was in making the characters upon so small and delicate a surface, especially for men who had been pri-



marily trained as military men rather than as literati. We have been fortunate indeed that plates devised by Mormon have not been subjected to the sort of academic scrutiny that exists in our day. Faithless analysis is no analysis at all.

*1.3.4* The written language of the Nephite people differed somewhat from their spoken language. We may not, at present, understand completely the advantages associated with preserving their records in what they called “reformed Egyptian”, but they successfully did so for more than a thousand years. As is the case with all forms of communication, written or verbal, the symbols used change over time. We may speculate at length about the origins of “reformed Egyptian”; perhaps it was an idiom developed by Joseph the son of Jacob or any one of a number of Israelite exiles dwelling in that foreign land. However it came to be, it had been successfully codified upon the Plates of Brass which Lehi and his family took with them at the time they fled the city of Jerusalem about the year 600 BC. This became their primer in the preservation of their permanent records. We are not privy as to the nature of any further developments of the writing system during the thousand years that the Nephites used it, except that Moroni states that it did change and apparently for that reason, Moroni sensed that the whole book might be criticized as a result. This would have been particularly true when comparing the writings preserved upon the Small Plates of Nephi with that which Mormon and Moroni had produced upon their own plates.

*1.3.5* We may argue at length about the properties of the Nephite written language that derived from Hebrew and those that derived from Egyptian. At present we do not know how the Hebrew written language was used among the Nephites. A dialect of spoken Hebrew was certainly current among them so long as there were devoted parents who were willing to correctly perpetuate the language among their children. The fact of the matter is that we know little or nothing regarding the system, even though some of the individual characters have been preserved in the records of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. Scholars have supposed that one of the great advantages of “reformed Egyptian” was that a great deal of information could be condensed into a small number of characters and, thus, a relatively small space. Rationally speaking, the denser the linguistic representation of complex intellectual concepts becomes, the more difficult the translation process or even the reading process becomes. Mormon and Moroni may have supposed that they had correctly represented the history of their forefathers, but there was always the possibility that they might have misread some of the ancient inscriptions. Moroni simply states that in nothing should the Lord or his teachings be brought into question.

*1.3.6* Moroni had long since learned of the existence of the “interpreters”, the Urim and Thummim, which had been preserved among the Nephites for centuries. We do not know precisely who fabricated the breastplate, the piece of armor upon which were mounted the instruments of translation, but it seems likely that Mormon was the man. We can only surmise as to how and why Mormon would think their proximity to him was important to him as he compiled his own work. Perhaps the differences between the early written records and the latter inscriptions were greater than we have heretofore supposed. Perhaps Mormon was perfectly aware as to how his plates would ultimately be translated and was inspired to create a place of safety for the two stones. It seems clear that Moroni wore his father’s armor after the latter’s demise, and certainly used the interpreters as he made his synopsis of the plates of Ether. The process of translating the plates into English involved

the wearing of the breastplate, leaving the hands free to manipulate the various plates of the record. The depository that held Mormon's plates for fourteen hundred years also was the receptacle of the breastplate and the accompanying Urim and Thummim, suggesting that the depository was somewhat larger than the usual artistic conception. As an aside and contrary to popular conception, the sword of Laban was not included with the plates and the breastplate. This instrument was ensconced in the larger repository within the hill Cumorah itself.

*1.3.7* The Book of Mormon was written in order to provide a means whereby the posterity of the Nephites and the Lamanites might have an opportunity to know of the faith of their fathers, receive the teachings of Christ, and then come unto him in humility and peace. That singular opportunity would eventually be the means of bringing millions upon millions of the children of Lehi into the fold of Christ, both from among the living and from among the dead. The cry of Mormon and Moroni for the children of Lehi to repent and be baptized would echo up and down the corridors of time as the fullness of the Gospel would be taken into all of the world and into the innermost recesses of the world of spirits.

*1.3.8* Once the restoration of the Church and Kingdom of God had taken place, faith, repentance, and saving ordinances having been performed according to the righteousness of the children of men, the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ would be taken into all of the world. Of particular interest, however, would be the posterity of Lehi, to whom the record of their fathers would be taken. Those among the Gentiles who had accepted the truth of the Gospel and the writings to be found in the pages of the Book of Mormon would be inspired to immediately resort to the descendants of the covenant people, which they did soon after the establishment of the Church.

*1.3.9* At the very beginning of his smaller record, Nephi treats this conjoining of Egyptian and Hebrew in his father's recorded language.

I, Nephi, having been born of goodly parents, therefore I was taught somewhat in all the learning of my father; and having seen many afflictions in the course of my days, nevertheless, having been highly favored of the Lord in all my days; yea, having had a great knowledge of the goodness and the mysteries of God, therefore I make a record of my proceedings in my days. Yea, I make a record in the language of my father, which consists of the learning of the Jews and the language of the Egyptians. And I know that the record which I make is true; and I make it with mine own hand; and I make it according to my knowledge. (1 Nephi 1:1-3)

*1.3.10* Nephi's motivation for committing his life's story to writing in part revolved around his association with the God of Heaven. In every dispensation God the eternal Father and His Son Jesus Christ have commissioned their servants, the prophets, seers, and revelators, to testify of the principles of salvation in both spoken and written word. Some of these have come down to modern times as the scriptural accounts contained in the Old and New Testaments. These two volumes were compiled from various writings which had been preserved from the original writers. The Book of Mormon was also derived from a vast collection of writings preserved from the days of Nephi until the time that Mormon was commanded by the Lord to synthesize them into the volume which we possess today.

*1.3.11* When Lehi and his family had first arrived in the land promised to them, Nephi was commanded to take of the abundant metals available to him and make plates upon which he was to record the affairs of his people, including the detailed account previously written by his father. He kept that record for approximately twenty years, calling his writings the Plates of Nephi. At the end of that twenty year period, the Lord commanded Nephi to make another record which would specifically preserve the spiritual history, or the religious life of the family. Nephi was obedient to that commandment and produced the record from which the above citation is taken, which is usually referred to as the Small Plates of Nephi. The first record and all ensuing secular additions to that record are generally called the Large Plates of Nephi, in reference to their number rather than their physical dimensions. Mormon would initially use the Large Plates of Nephi as the resource for his own composition. When he eventually discovered these Small Plates, he physically appended them to his own collection of plates because of his delight in them and the whisperings of the Spirit of God who commended the notion to him.

*1.3.12* Nephi has confidence in his own writings for several reasons, not the least of which is the fact that he had lived those experiences about which he was writing. In addition he had the Large Plates which in some respects constitutes his “journal”, written as a first-person primary document. He could be accurate in producing the Small Plates thirty years after the fact because he had been accurate in the first instance when he had produced the Large Plates in that earlier period of his life. His testimony should commend his practice to us in our own record-keeping, that we might have a history as accurate as his because we were diligent from day to day recording our thoughts and experiences.

*1.3.13* During the preparations to travel to the western hemisphere, the prophet Lehi was commanded to retrieve a family heirloom that was in the keeping of a man named Laban, a distant relative of both Lehi and Ishmael. Lehi’s four sons were sent back to the city of Jerusalem by divine commandment. Laman, the eldest son of Lehi, was initially unsuccessful of obtaining the Brass Plates, Laban being a rather grasping sort of fellow who would not relinquish his control over them. Laman returned to his three brothers utterly defeated. Nephi, the youngest of the siblings, responds to his brother’s fatalism.

But Laman fled out of his presence, and told the things which Laban had done, unto us. And we began to be exceedingly sorrowful, and my brethren were about to return unto my father in the wilderness. But behold I said unto them that: As the Lord liveth, and as we live, we will not go down unto our father in the wilderness until we have accomplished the thing which the Lord hath commanded us. Wherefore, let us be faithful in keeping the commandments of the Lord; therefore let us go down to the land of our father’s inheritance, for behold he left gold and silver, and all manner of riches. And all this he hath done because of the commandments of the Lord. For he knew that Jerusalem must be destroyed, because of the wickedness of the people. For behold, they have rejected the words of the prophets. Wherefore, if my father should dwell in the land after he hath been commanded to flee out of the land, behold, he would also perish. Wherefore, it must needs be that he flee out of the land. And behold, it is wisdom in God that we should obtain these records, that we may preserve unto our children the language of our fathers; And also that we may preserve unto them the words which have been spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets,

which have been delivered unto them by the Spirit and power of God, since the world began, even down unto this present time. (1 Nephi 3:14–20)

*1.3.14* Laman and Lemuel's tolerance for opposition is lacking. If Nephi's elder brothers could not perceive the value of the Brass Plates to their immediate family and then to their posterity, they would consider the risk of their lives for the record to be an act of foolishness. To Laman, the book appears to be hardly more than a tome of ancestors' names; he does not even understand the value of the Plates as a primer for his children, that they might learn how to read and write properly. The scriptural value was apparently beyond him as well. That his father thought them worthwhile was clear, but he could foresee no personal impact upon him, and therefore the Plates were not worth the trouble involved in obtaining them. This had been his stance ever since the moment that Lehi had asked him to take the responsibility of retrieving the Plates. The threat against his life by the keeper of the record had fully justified his initial fears. He and Lemuel proposed an end to the matter, having given their all.

*1.3.15* Nephi testifies to his brethren that their father and the Lord had not sent them to fail; they had sent them to succeed. Therefore it was incumbent upon them to exhaust every possible avenue to do what had been commanded of them. They simply had not discovered what they should do in order to be successful. But they had learned for themselves that casting lots may not have been the best approach.

*1.3.16* Father Lehi had been faithful in doing all that had been required of him thus far, including the abandonment of all of his material wealth. Should not his sons follow that stellar example and do everything that was within their power to do? Perhaps, Nephi suggests, the Lord had required the abandonment of the family wealth just for this very purpose, that it might be used to persuade Laban to relinquish the plates. Laban certainly was not concerned for the literary value of the book; he was not the sort of sentimentalist who perceived the Plates as a family treasure; he was interested solely in its material value. That is why he accused Laman of being a robber.

*1.3.17* Lehi had learned for himself the degree of wickedness into which the Jews had inundated themselves. He had been instructed in these matters by the prophets of his day and by the Lord's own voice. He had read an account of their sins and abominations as recorded in the book that he had seen in vision. He was obedient to the commandments of the Lord in every detail because he understood the consequences of disobedience. Shortly before his death, he would receive another revelation wherein he would witness for himself the doleful effects of persistence in sin.

*1.3.18* If Lehi had remained in the land of Jerusalem after his interview with God, he would have been rejecting the word of the Lord just as surely as the Jews when they rejected the words of the prophets. The consequences of his actions would have physically placed him in harm's way when the advancing armies of the Babylonians descended upon the city and the nation. In addition, inasmuch as Lehi had enjoyed the confidence of the Lord God of Israel, refusal to obey would have endangered his eternal prospects as well. He would have "perished" in every way possible.

*1.3.19* The elder brothers of Nephi were short-sighted, they could not perceive the liabilities they were inflicting upon their children without first obtaining a stabilizing influence by which one generation might communicate its wisdom to another. We are the aggregate of those who went before us. Our wisdom and intelligence are built upon that which has been transmitted to us

through the centuries by our ancestors. As one wisely said long ago, “Those who fail to learn the lessons of history, are doomed to repeat them”. The Brass Plates not only would provide the content by which the posterity of Lehi could progress, they also provided the means by which they would be able to communicate their own wisdom many generations into the future. We need only look at the fate of the Mulekites to perceive the folly of not looking beyond one’s own time.

*1.3.20* The record contained upon the Brass Plates was apparently comprehensive. The prophecies of the seers and revelators of the House of Israel had been preserved upon the Plates. The writings of Moses, Joseph, and scores of others back to the time of Noah would have been included as well. And what of the Antediluvians? Would not their Book of Remembrance, or goodly portions of that sacred record been inscribed as well? This was not only a treasure of the house of Joseph and his children; this was an unrivaled treasure pertaining to the righteous in every generation. We may yet look upon its pages in wonder.

*1.3.21* The linguistic value of the Brass Plates would be confirmed several centuries later when as remnant of the Nephite peoples fled the land of Lehi-Nephi northward through the narrow strip of wilderness into region which had come to be known as the land of Zarahemla. There they found a remnant of the court of king Zedekiah of Judea who had nearly perished because of internal dissention. Although when they left the land of Jerusalem they spoke the same sort of Hebrew as Lehi and his family, because of their lack of training materials, they had lost much of what they had once known. They had lost a great portion of their culture as well which Mosiah, the leader of the Nephites, was able to restore to them. Amaleki, one of the last persons to write upon the Small Plates of Nephi, describes this series of events.

Behold, I am Amaleki, the son of Abinadom. Behold, I will speak unto you somewhat concerning Mosiah, who was made king over the land of Zarahemla; for behold, he being warned of the Lord that he should flee out of the land of Nephi, and as many as would hearken unto the voice of the Lord should also depart out of the land with him, into the wilderness— And it came to pass that he did according as the Lord had commanded him. And they departed out of the land into the wilderness, as many as would hearken unto the voice of the Lord; and they were led by many preachings and prophesyings. And they were admonished continually by the word of God; and they were led by the power of his arm, through the wilderness until they came down into the land which is called the land of Zarahemla. And they discovered a people, who were called the people of Zarahemla. Now, there was great rejoicing among the people of Zarahemla; and also Zarahemla did rejoice exceedingly, because the Lord had sent the people of Mosiah with the plates of brass which contained the record of the Jews. Behold, it came to pass that Mosiah discovered that the people of Zarahemla came out from Jerusalem at the time that Zedekiah, king of Judah, was carried away captive into Babylon. And they journeyed in the wilderness, and were brought by the hand of the Lord across the great waters, into the land where Mosiah discovered them; and they had dwelt there from that time forth. And at the time that Mosiah discovered them, they had become exceedingly numerous. Nevertheless, they had had many wars and serious contentions, and had fallen by the sword from time to time; and their language had become corrupted; and they had brought no records with them; and they denied the being of their Creator; and Mosiah, nor the people of Mosiah, could understand them. But it came to pass that Mosiah caused that they should be taught in his language. And it came to pass that after they were taught in the

language of Mosiah, Zarahemla gave a genealogy of his fathers, according to his memory; and they are written, but not in these plates. And it came to pass that the people of Zarahemla, and of Mosiah, did unite together; and Mosiah was appointed to be their king. (Omni 1:12–19)

*1.3.22* If our proposed chronology be correct, then Amaleki would have been born in the year 270 BC and would have been about fifty years of age at the time of the exodus from the land of Nephi to the land of Zarahemla. He would have witnessed the entire reign of Mosiah 1 and perhaps as much as six years of the reign of King Benjamin.

*1.3.23* We are not told how long this journey took, but if subsequent attempts are any indication, it was a long and arduous experience, fraught with danger and privation. One wonders if the faithful who followed Mosiah used the Liahona in their travels. It is certain that Mosiah and his companions would have carried away with them all of the artifacts of the Nephite people together with the vast collection of plates that had been produced during the more than 350 years since Nephi began the Large Plates called by his name. As has been demonstrated before, if the Liahona was employed during their escape from the land of Nephi, Mosiah 1 would have had to continually admonish his people in much the same fashion that Nephi had counseled with his family. Hopefully, they were more tractable than Laman and Lemuel and their party.

*1.3.24* We do not know precisely when the land of Zarahemla was settled. We are certain, however, that the Mulekites had arrived in the Americas about the year 580 BC and perhaps somewhat earlier. We do not know if the land of Zarahemla was named such because of the man, Zarahemla, who greeted Mosiah or whether the man was named Zarahemla because of a similar tradition followed by the Nephites to have their kings take the name of “Nephi” upon themselves in honor of the son of Lehi who had preserved them from all of the enemies. As it will be seen, the Mulekites had lost their religion and their language such that they could not even read their own inscriptions made generations earlier. They were in an unhappy state of affairs and the appearance of an enlightened and educated people who had it in their power to restore them to their former state was welcomed indeed.

*1.3.25* Lehi departed from the land of Jerusalem six hundred years before the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ, a fact that is mentioned repeatedly in the text of the Book of Mormon. Nephi tells us that this occurred during the first year of the reign of Zedekiah. By all accounts, the destruction of the city of Jerusalem took place in the eleventh year that Zedekiah wore the crown of the Kingdom of Judah; that is to say, 591 BC. Scholars laboring without the benefit of the Book of Mormon have proposed a wide variety of dates for the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians, none of which can muster the authority accompanying the testimony of those who were there.

*1.3.26* One wonders how the Mulekites were led from the land of Judea to the Americas by the “hand of the Lord” Were they aware of the guidance? Had they a prophet among them? We have no record of the journey and thus no specific detail as to what transpired. We are not told which wilderness is meant, and there is a plethora to choose from. Lehi and his family traveled in the wilderness to the south of Jerusalem, into the vast wastes of the Arabian peninsula. They set sail into the Indian Ocean, voyaging south and then eastward through the southern Pacific Ocean until they reached the northern shoreline of what is now called South America. It is unlikely that Mulek and his entourage followed that same path. As other scholars have long since concluded, it is probable that those who

escaped the wrath of Nebuchadnezzar fled westward across the Sinai, through Egypt and northern Africa. How they acquired ships to sail the Atlantic we are not told, the details undoubtedly lost through the Mulekites' failure to preserve much of their history. Although there have been many sites recommended, it is likely that the Mulekites landed somewhere on the northeastern shores of what is now South America. When Lehi and his family arrived at the land which they called Bountiful on the shores of southern Arabia, they encountered the "many waters" of the Indian Ocean, which they called Irreantum". Some scholars have attempted to equate those waters with the "great waters" mentioned here, suggesting that Mulek and his people followed essentially the same path as Lehi and his party. There is no warrant for this proposal. By the same token, however, an argument could be made that the Mulekites followed the same track as did the Jaredites many centuries before when they traveled to their promised land from the Tower of Babel. It seems reasonable to accept the latter proposal over the former inasmuch as the Mulekites came in contact with the Nephites first rather than the Lamanites. Had the Mulekites followed the same wind and ocean currents as Nephi's ship, they probably would have arrived near the place that Lehi first established his family. Yet, there was no contact between the Mulekites and the posterity of Lehi for nearly four hundred years. It seems likely, then, that the Mulekites traveled westward, rather than eastward, across the "great waters", settling in a land which was separated from both the Nephites and the Lamanites by a strip of almost impenetrable wilderness.

*1.3.27* And thus we see the wisdom of the Lord having commanded Lehi to send his sons back to Jerusalem to obtain the Brass Plates from Laban. Had Nephi failed to obtain the records, the posterity of Lehi would have suffered the same fate; they would have lost their language, their faith, and what natural affection they had for each other.

*1.3.28* The Mulekites had been bereft of a standard for language education for four centuries and the changes in the speech patterns would have been substantial. If modern linguists have really discovered the forces that bring about change in spoken language, we may conclude that while the vocabulary may have changed some, given the new environment in the Americas, most of the changes would have been phonetic, the manner in which they articulated their words. Once Mosiah perceived what the phonetic differences were, it would have been a relatively simple matter to restore the Mulekites to their mother tongue.

*1.3.29* There were far more Mulekites than there were Nephites. One wonders at the motivation at having Mosiah be their king. Mosiah certainly was not of any royal or priestly lineage. He was gifted, to be sure, and had been the means of restoring the Mulekites to a degree of their heritage. He also had made available the Brass Plates by which the Mulekites could reinstate proper temple worship among themselves. Had there been any among those who traveled with Mulek who were of the tribe of Levi, who were priests of Aaron? We do not know, we cannot say. Certainly, in the religious arena, the Nephites were far more advanced by having among them bearers of the Melchizedek Priesthood. Yet, one wonders at the great wars and contentions that the Mulekites as a people had endured. Were they war-weary? Did they recognize the deleterious effects of factionalism? Were they then willing to have a respite from all of the political wrangling that had plagued their society for generations by selecting a wise man to be their king who had no outward agenda involving the royalist feelings of the Mulekites? One wonders if these sentiments, which were put to

rest for a time with the selection of Mosiah, would rise again to distress the people. We may have to conclude that much of the political turmoil between the kingmen and the freemen has its roots in the original contentions that prevailed among the Mulekites.

*1.3.30* King Benjamin, the son of the man Mosiah who was made the first king over the combined community of the Nephites and the people of Zarahemla, taught his sons the benefit of the Brass Plates and Lehi's personal facility with the language of the Egyptians.

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. And it came to pass that he had three sons; and he called their names Mosiah, and Helorum, and Helaman. And he caused that they should be taught in all the language of his fathers, that thereby they might become men of understanding; and that they might know concerning the prophecies which had been spoken by the mouths of their fathers, which were delivered them by the hand of the Lord. And he also taught them concerning the records which were engraven on the plates of brass, saying: My sons, I would that ye should remember that were it not for these plates, which contain these records and these commandments, we must have suffered in ignorance, even at this present time, not knowing the mysteries of God. For it were not possible that our father, Lehi, could have remembered all these things, to \*have taught them to his children, except it were for the help of these plates; for he having been taught in the language of the Egyptians therefore he could read these engravings, and teach them to his children, that thereby they could teach them to their children, and so fulfilling the commandments of God, even down to this present time. 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. (Mosiah 1:1-7)

*1.3.31* Plainly put, Benjamin had seen to it that his sons were training in reading and writing Reformed Egyptian, a gift that allowed them to peruse the history of their people and the writings of the prophets of God who had guided the Nephites spiritually. There is no more effective way for a man to become a man of understanding, save he have the Heavens opened to him in vision.

*1.3.32* The Plates of Brass had not only served as the authoritative source by which the Law of Moses was observed in its fullness among the Nephites, it also served as the primer by which the written language of the people was preserved. For a thousand years the language remained constant because of the faithful adherence the Nephites gave to that holy book. Not only would the people have suffered ignorance in the absence of the Brass Plates, they also would have fallen quickly into apostasy, a state of unbelief in the which they would have perished.



*1.3.33* Nephi and Enos specifically refer to the great blessings that came into their lives because their respective fathers had taught them how to read and write Reformed Egyptian. As other Nephite prophets have testified, this was no easy task. As to the spoken language of the Nephites we know but little, although originally it was a dialect of Hebrew. Moroni clearly states that both the spoken and written languages changed over time, the latter have been adapted because of alterations in the former. It is a matter of record that since the days of Adam and Eve, the faithful have felt the divine responsibility to teach their children to read and write in the languages in which their sacred records were preserved.

*1.3.34* The injunction to read and study the writings of the prophets, seers, and revelators is not simply a commandment to be academically sound. The knowledge and power that comes when we draw upon the experiences of the past, serves as a spiritual bastion for even those who may have had the Heavens opened unto them. No one is exempt from becoming familiar with those things which the Lord in His wisdom has had His servants preserve. Not only could Benjamin's three sons see the effects of illiteracy in the lives and circumstances of their brethren the Lamanites, but they were not so far removed from their grandfather's time that they would not have been quite familiar with the degenerate circumstances that their fellow countrymen in the land of Zarahemla were in when Mosiah 1 first came in among them. The Mulekites had not only lost the facility to maintain a constancy of their written and spoken language, they had lost their faith. They knew they were descendants of Jewish kings, but they could recall little if any of their religion. The blessing of having their language and their rituals restored to them had such an extraordinary impact on their society that they made Mosiah 1 their king in the place of Zarahemla himself. It is doubtful that Zarahemla ever regretted his abdication.

*1.3.35* Benjamin assures his sons that as surely as the various collections of plates are before their eyes, just so certainly are the words written upon them a sure reflection of that which had really taken place. These were not fabrications, but an accurate history of the relationship between the House of Israel and their God, and between their immediate Nephite ancestors and the God of Heaven. Benjamin can bear his testimony as to the truthfulness of those things upon the plates because he had read them himself and had received a fervent witness borne by the power of the Holy Ghost to his soul of their veracity.

*1.3.36* King Benjamin had encouraged his sons all of their lives to read the records that were before them, both secular and religious. Benjamin knew, however, that the time remaining to him in mortality was short and that he would no longer be around to prompt them. "Remember" to study; "remember" to take regular spiritual substance into their lives. For the Nephites, there would never be true prosperity without obedience to the principles and ordinances of the Gospel of Christ, without living by every word that proceeds forth from the mouth of God.

*1.3.37* We have suggested throughout this section of our text that the creation of "reformed Egyptian" was probably initiated by Joseph the son of Jacob who was sold into Egypt by his brethren. This also implies that the fabrication of the Brass Plates was also a project of Joseph, or perhaps a copy of that which he had originally made. It is clear that the particular copy obtained by Nephi and his brethren pertained to the family of Joseph, and undoubtedly Lehi could lawfully request possession of the work from Laban who had somehow become its curator. Both Lehi and Ishmael

were direct descendants of Joseph, as was Laban. Ishmael descended from Ephraim, Joseph's younger son; Lehi and Laban from the elder, Manasseh. All linguistic considerations aside, the Brass Plates would prove to be of inestimable value to the Lehi's entourage and posterity.

#### *1.4 The Contents of the Brass Plates: Family Records*

*1.4.1* Other than serving as a language primer for the posterity of Lehi and Ishmael, the Brass Plates also served the cultural and religious needs of the small colony. The content of the plates established their identity with the past, who they were and where they came from. This knowledge would undoubtedly been lost had the people not had a resource from which they could refresh their collective memory from time to time. From the very beginnings of the text, the Book of Mormon relates what were considered to be the benefits of having the Brass Plates among them. The first blessing to be obtained by the retrieval of the plates was an accounting of Lehi's ancestry. After failing to impress his elder sons with the importance of returning to Jerusalem, Lehi inspired his youngest son with the task.

AND it came to pass that I, Nephi, returned from speaking with the Lord, to the tent of my father. And it came to pass that he spake unto me, saying: Behold I have dreamed a dream, in the which the Lord hath commanded me that thou and thy brethren shall return to Jerusalem. For behold, Laban hath the record of the Jews and also a genealogy of my forefathers, and they are engraven upon plates of brass. Wherefore, the Lord hath commanded me that thou and thy brothers should go unto the house of Laban, and seek the records, and bring them down hither into the wilderness. (1 Nephi 3:1-4)

*1.4.2* We do not know where Nephi went to offer up the desires of his heart in behalf of his brethren. Did he have his own separate quarters where he might have some privacy or did he go into the wilderness a short distance? We may not know at this point, but suffice it to say that Nephi had learned for himself what it was like to be as his father was. Lehi had petitioned the Lord regarding the people of Jerusalem, his people; Nephi had done the same. Lehi had received a commission from the Lord; now Nephi, too, was under a covenant with stipulations and promises.

*1.4.3* Nephi perceived the importance of the genealogical record, perhaps because he understood the importance of the hereditary blessings that had been promised since the foundation of the House of Israel. An individual's faith, his motivation for doing difficult things, in part has to do with his view of himself in connection with the rest of his society and the world of men in general. The Brass Plates would in large measure provide that cultural identity.

*1.4.4* Nephi was promised that if he were obedient to the voice of the Lord that he and his posterity would be blessed. The difference between Nephi and his two older brothers was that he had learned for himself, through prayer, that Lehi's voice was as the voice of the Lord. Nephi would become a ruler and a teacher of his brethren because he had first been subject to divine authority and a student of the mind and will of God through his father. This is the way the Kingdom of God is established and prospered and there is no other way to obtain true happiness in this life. The task would not be easy. The trip through the wilderness from the tent of Lehi to the city of Jerusalem was

certainly in excess of two hundred miles and may have been considerably more. The task must have taken close to a month, at best, to accomplish that which had been asked of them to do, the majority of the time in grueling travel through a parched and merciless land.

*1.4.5* Why Laban was in possession of the Brass Plates we may not know. Many students of the Book of Mormon have postulated opinions, but none with any degree of certainty. We will discover, however, that Laban, though also a resident of Jerusalem, was in exile as was Lehi and his family. Neither had inheritance in Judea inasmuch as they were both of the family of Joseph. Lehi was of the tribe of Manasseh, but we are not informed as from which of the two sons of Joseph Laban was descended. That he was a wealthy, arrogant, and acquisitive aristocrat from one of the tribes of Joseph we may easily discern. The Brass Plates was a true Book of Remembrance, of family history and that which made the family possible, the covenants and principles of salvation and exaltation.

*1.4.6* The instructions from the Lord to Lehi regarding the acquisition of the Brass Plates could not have been clearer. It is intriguing that the Lord chose to send four young men in their late teens and early twenties to accomplish such an extraordinarily important task. A moment's reflection, however, would reveal that the Lord God of Heaven has in these latter days frequently assigned similarly difficult and essential tasks to the same age group.

*1.4.7* Once the Brass Plates had been retrieved from Jerusalem, Lehi discovered, in some detail, the relationship that he had with the patriarch who had inherited the rights of the firstborn in the days of Jacob. Lehi immediately copied out into his own personal record that which he had learned from his perusal of the plates. Nephi later notes the following.

AND now I, Nephi, do not give the genealogy of my fathers in this part of my record; neither at any time shall I give it after upon these plates which I am writing; for it is given in the record which has been kept by my father; wherefore, I do not write it in this work. For it sufficeth me to say that we are descendants of Joseph. And it mattereth not to me that I am particular to give a full account of all the things of my father, for they cannot be written upon these plates, for I desire the room that I may write of the things of God. (1 Nephi 6:1–3)

*1.4.8* Nephi had already begun to compile a vast daily record of his life and ministry which, when once committed to metal plates, became known as the Large Plates of Nephi. Lehi also kept of an account of his proceedings, although we do not know the kind of medium that he used to preserve his history. It is clear, however, that Nephi was concerned for its durability inasmuch as he felt it was necessary to copy his father's history on to the Large Plates of Nephi when he first began the Large Plates. In the citation above, we are reading here from that part of his record which is commonly referred to as the Small Plates of Nephi. The Small Plates of Nephi were dedicated to the spiritual affairs of Nephi and his people, the manner in which they were led and guided by the spirit in their view of themselves and their brethren. Again, the complete record of Lehi had already been preserved on the Large Plates and, given the limited space which Nephi had, he was loath to duplicate much of this history, as spiritually motivated as it may have been. Inasmuch as Nephi had already transferred the genealogy of his father's family on to the Large Plates, he did not think it necessary to transcribe it to the Small Plates. Therefore we have little of the genealogical information gleaned from the Brass Plates in the present text of the Book of Mormon. In a later account of the

ministry of Alma the younger and his companion Amulek, the latter addresses the inhabitants of the city of Ammonihah with the following introduction to himself.

I am Amulek; I am the son of Giddonah, who was the son of Ishmael, who was a descendant of Aminadi; and it was the same Aminadi who interpreted the writing which was upon the wall of the temple, which was written by the finger of God. And Aminadi was a descendant of Nephi, who was the son of Lehi, who came out of the land of Jerusalem, who was a descendant of Manasseh, who was the son of Joseph who was sold into Egypt by the hands of his brethren. And behold, I am also a man of no small reputation among all those who know me; yea, and behold, I have many kindreds and friends, and I have also acquired much riches by the hand of my industry. (Alma 10:2–4)

*1.4.9* More than five hundred years after Lehi and his entourage left the city of Jerusalem, his posterity was still able to pinpoint their direct relationship with their distant ancestors. Amulek introduces himself in terms that the people of Ammonihah would understand. We may conclude that a vast majority of the people in the city knew of Amulek's father, and many probably were acquainted with Ishmael. The legendary Aminadi would have been a name that everyone knew or it would have been non-sense to even mention him in his discourse.

*1.4.10* We know nothing of what was written by the finger of the Lord on the occasion referred to above nor may we speculate with any confidence about why it needed interpreting. There is obviously no direct connection between the interpretation made by Daniel of the writing made by the finger of the Lord on the wall of King Belshazzar's palace some five centuries before and the one spoken of here. Whether this was the temple in the city of Zarahemla, the land of Nephi, or some other place, we cannot say.

*1.4.11* Again, Amulek mentions those members of his lineage that would have significance to his audience. By means of the Brass Plates, Lehi and his family learned that they were direct descendants from the loins of Joseph. This is the only place in the Book of Mormon where Lehi is declared to be a descendant of Joseph through his son Manasseh. There is a long-standing tradition in the Church of Christ in this dispensation that Ishmael, Lehi's friend whose family joined the prophet in the wilderness, was a descendant of Joseph through the younger son, Ephraim. We have no reason to doubt that tradition.

*1.4.12* While Amulek's ancestry was notable, his own personal visibility was quite high in the city of Ammonihah and environs. His personal wealth caused him to be held in high esteem; his charisma had brought him into a rather lofty station among the people.

*1.4.13* The preservation of genealogical information had not ended with the inclusion of Lehi's lineage into his personal record or with Nephi's copying of his father's record on to his Large Plates. An emphasis on the continuing importance of family associations is depicted by later writers upon the Small Plates of Nephi, a record that had not been intended for such content.

Now behold, I, Jarom, write a few words according to the commandment of my father, Enos, that our genealogy may be kept. (Jarom 1:1)

*1.4.14* The original intent and purpose of the Small Plates had been to preserve the more plain and precious teachings previously recorded on the Large Plates of Nephi and those specifically

beneficial revelations and commentary that Nephi and his successors received afterwards. Enos, the son of Nephi's brother Jacob, followed suit in his account, recording his extraordinary exchange between himself and the God of Heaven. Jarom's observations, however, suggest that whether due to the number of blank plates remaining in Nephi's collection or a lack of new material, the son of Enos had little to say. Yet it is clear that the preservation of his relationship to Lehi qualified as one of those plain and precious things to which his ancestors referred. Throughout the book of Omni, the various contributors seem to partake of the attitude taken by Omni himself.

Behold, it came to pass that I, Omni, being commanded by my father, Jarom, that I should write somewhat upon these plates, to preserve our genealogy— Wherefore, in my days, I would that ye should know that I fought much with the sword to preserve my people, the Nephites, from falling into the hands of their enemies, the Lamanites. But behold, I of myself am a wicked man, and I have not kept the statutes and the commandments of the Lord as I ought to have done. (Omni 1:1–2)

*1.4.15* The preservation of genealogy was a worthy goal, but that was not the nature of the original commandment given by Nephi to his brother Jacob. It is clear from the text of his own book, however, that Jarom thought that the genealogy of the family was one of the major purposes for his own inscription (see previous citation). It is interesting, however, that while Omni and Chemish make no mention of prophecies and revelations as being part of their duty to the records, Amaron and Abinadom, the son of Chemish, do

*1.4.16* We are not privy to the specific nature of Omni's wickedness but it would seem to be at least a neglect of the ordinances of the Law of Moses. Given his status as a warrior, continually in the field with the Nephite armies, his observance of the Law may have been seriously wanting in his opinion. Some scholars have suggested that the life of a warrior may not have been conducive to a spiritual life and that was the source of his guilt, that he may have felt himself as belonging to a disreputable class. This, however, is probably an overstatement of the facts. We have only to point to Captain Moroni, Lehi, Helaman, Teancum, and a host of others to demonstrate that a man in the defense of his people can still be a spiritual giant.

*1.4.17* The cultural insistence upon perpetuating the genealogies of the covenant family appears in a separate society from that of the Nephites. We recounted above the history between the people of Mosiah who fled from the land of Nephi to the land of Zarahemla about two hundred years before the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. The man Zarahemla who rejoiced at the coming of Mosiah and his people, was a descendant of king Zedekiah, he who had ruled the kingdom of Judah at the time that Nebuchadnezzar and his army destroyed the city of Jerusalem and the Temple of Solomon. Once Mosiah and Zarahemla were able to communicate with one another, the latter informed the former of his relationship to the House of Israel.

But it came to pass that Mosiah caused that they should be taught in his language. And it came to pass that after they were taught in the language of Mosiah, Zarahemla gave a genealogy of his fathers, according to his memory; and they are written, but not in these plates. (Omni 1:18)

*1.4.18* The genealogy of Zarahemla was eventually inserted upon the Large Plates of Nephi rather than upon the Small Plates from which we have just quoted. By the time Mosiah came in

contact with Zarahemla about 220 BC, Zarahemla's direct lineage back to Mulek would have probably involved no more than fifteen or twenty names. Zarahemla was a direct descendant of Mulek the only surviving son of king Zedekiah of Judah, as is recounted in the book of Mosiah. The gathering spoken of in the following citation is brought about by the first Mosiah's grandson, also called Mosiah, who was the son of king Benjamin.

And now king Mosiah caused that all the people should be gathered together. Now there were not so many of the children of Nephi, or so many of those who were descendants of Nephi, as there were of the people of Zarahemla, who was a descendant of Mulek, and those who came with him into the wilderness. And there were not so many of the people of Nephi and of the people of Zarahemla as there were of the Lamanites; yea, they were not half so numerous. And now all the people of Nephi were assembled together, and also all the people of Zarahemla, and they were gathered together in two bodies. (Mosiah 25:1-4)

*1.4.19* As Mosiah's father, King Benjamin, had gathered the inhabitants of the land of Zarahemla together in order to present them with an everlasting covenant in Jesus Christ, so also did Mosiah gather his people together. The conference was called that the people might be one in their history, that they might be fully informed regarding the various factions that had sprung from Zeniff's colony that had left Zarahemla some eighty years before. Alma and Limhi's people were before them; the priests of Noah and the Lamanites were yet in the wilderness.

*1.4.20* When king Mosiah 1 first discovered the Mulekites in the land of Zarahemla the people were in a state of abject ignorance regarding their religion and their language. The original settlers of Zarahemla were so grateful for having been restored to a sense of cultural identity that they joined with the Nephites in appointing Mosiah to be the first king of this united people. The importance of Mosiah 1 as king is enormous, given the fact that Mulek had been one of the sons of King Zedekiah, he who had been king of Judea when Lehi left Jerusalem nearly four hundred years before. It is interesting that this unified people, however, still continued to distinguish themselves according to which party they had descended from. The Nephites were in the minority.

*1.4.21* The demographic ratio between the Lamanites and the combined peoples of Zarahemla is easy to understand. What is difficult to derive is an actual number of inhabitants. Was the population of the land of Zarahemla in the thousands or in the tens of thousands? We do not know, but it would appear that the community was relatively small or they would not have been able to gather together to hear from their king with any degree of ease if they numbered in the hundreds of thousands or in the millions.

*1.4.22* As was noted above, it is interesting to observe that after nearly a hundred years of unity, when the inhabitants of the land came together they assembled themselves according to their lineage, whether Nephite or Mulekite. Perhaps we should be no more surprised at this genealogical division among the people any more than the familial organization that took place at the conference called by King Benjamin some four or five years earlier.

*1.4.23* Mormon himself took some pride in his own ancestry, even though he does not provide his readers with an extended account.

I am Mormon, and a pure descendant of Lehi. I have reason to bless my God and my Savior Jesus Christ, that he brought our fathers out of the land of Jerusalem, (and no one knew it save it were himself and those whom he brought out of that land) and that he hath given me and my people so much knowledge unto the salvation of our souls. Surely he hath blessed the house of Jacob, and hath been merciful unto the seed of Joseph. And insomuch as the children of Lehi have kept his commandments he hath blessed them and prospered them according to his word. (3 Nephi 5:20–22)

*1.4.24* Mormon was not ignorant of the fact that there would come a day in which the Nephite civilization would come to an end. He may have already known that it would come in his own day. Yet for all of the prospects of annihilation looming on the horizon, Mormon was conscious of the marvelous and magnificent events that had transpired among his people during their thousand year sojourn in the promised land. Millions of souls had been received into the paradise of God because of the labors of the servants of God who lived among them. In addition, the future held promise as well; the coming forth of the Nephite history to the world would be the means of bringing tens of millions more into the fold of Christ. Had Lehi and his family remained in the land of Jerusalem, no doubt that family line would have ended in the havoc perpetrated upon the Jews by the Babylonians. Even if they had survived, their lot would not have been much different than that which befell the rest of the House of Israel who remained in the land. Lehi's family had been set apart in an unknown land, preserved and protected by the hand of God, and given every opportunity, generation after generation, to accept the fullness of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Mormon had every reason to be grateful.

*1.4.25* It is difficult to determine exactly what Mormon has in mind here when he says that he was a pure descendant of Lehi. Of one thing we may be certain, he is not referring to his personal character as being "pure"; our prophet/historian was painfully aware of his own shortcomings and labored throughout his life to please God in all that he did. It seems unlikely that he would have been declaring that none of his ancestry had derived from Lamanite or Mulekite blood; he was also painfully aware of the great distress and bloodlettings that had come when his people had indulged in that sort of thinking. It is most likely that he was suggesting that his direct ancestors, one way or another, had always associated with those to whom the principles of truth and light were of greatest importance, that they all had been disciples of Jesus Christ, that they had all been Nephites in the sense that Jacob had defined them

*1.4.26* Other remnants of the House of Israel had been given equal opportunities for eternal life and salvation as they were led away from Palestine into the four quarters of the earth. Jesus had been quite explicit about them when he visited with the Nephites at the Temple in Bountiful. One day their written records will come forth unto the children of men, testifying of the goodness of God and the pure love of His Son. Joseph was the first-born son of Jacob and Rachel who was sold into slavery by his brethren. While in Egypt, he and his wife gave birth to two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. Lehi was a scion of the elder son Manasseh; Ishmael was a descendant of Ephraim. Thus, the colonists who came to the western hemisphere six centuries before the birth of Christ represented the entire tribe of Joseph.

1.4.27 The book of Ether, the account of the Jaredite nation that was preserved on the 24 gold plates discovered by the men of Limhi, is notable for its genealogical material. This is true even though this genealogical detail was first redacted by the prophet Ether and then many centuries later by Moroni. Moroni must have considered the information to be of utmost importance to his readers.

1.4.28 In the simplest of terms, we may look to Mormon's son, Moroni, who devotedly adhered to the guidance and instruction that he received from his father. Perhaps the most illuminating aspect of this is manifested in the name of the book itself. This was not a product of Mormon's vanity to have his religious history named after himself. The title was generated by his son who composed what we now have as the Title Page of the Book of Mormon.

1.4.29 It is fascinating to contemplate the readiness with which the Book of Mormon is received by the posterity of Lehi and his sons when they are presented with it. The proselyting of Latin America has been gloriously facilitated by the record of the ancient Americans as it has come forth in these latter days. The Title Page of the Book of Mormon testifies as to why this is so.

Which is to show unto the remnant of the House of Israel what great things the Lord hath done for their fathers; and that they may know the covenants of the Lord, that they are not cast off forever. (Title Page, Book of Mormon, paragraph two)

1.4.30 The abridgments of the various records demonstrate and articulate the blessings that have been promised the posterity of the ancient inhabitants of this hemisphere. The term remnant is certainly in reference to that portion of the House of Israel whose ancestors were brought to the American hemisphere by the hand of God. Other remnants may be tacitly included as well. Some of the ancient traditions of the indigenous inhabitants of the Americas reflect truths that have been transmitted through the ages, but the great body of reveal light and knowledge once delivered to their ancestors has been lost through apostasy and neglect. The Book of Mormon provides its readers with an understanding of the spiritual greatness which once permeated the western hemisphere, and promises that that same greatest may be restored to a lost and fallen people if they will but turn to that God who blessed their ancestors. The promises made to Lehi and Nephi were patriarchal; that is to say, their children were to be given an opportunity to receive all that they had in their day, notwithstanding the many intervening centuries of depravity and wickedness. The principles and ordinances of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ which have been taught unto the faithful since the earliest scenes that transpired in the Garden of Eden. In addition there are the specific blessings given to Lehi, Nephi, and other holy men regarding their posterity. Once a civilization has fallen into ruin, it is easy for the remnants of that once glorious people to continually think of themselves as an abased and unexaltable people. The Book of Mormon provides the promises of restoration, of gathering, of enlightenment, of salvation and exaltation.

## *1.5 The Contents of the Brass Plates: The Words of the Prophets.*

1.5.1 In addition to the family records preserved upon the Brass Plates, the children of Lehi would be blessed by the words of the prophets that had been recorded there as well. The plates constituted



a considerable library of the writings of the servants of God, some of them unknown to the modern world of scholarship until the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. Nephi was somewhat informed as to the extent of the material that was to be found on the Brass Plates. He tells his elder brothers, before their second attempt to persuade Laban to relinquish the plates into their father's care, that the record is invaluable.

And behold, it is wisdom in God that we should obtain these records, that we may preserve unto our children the language of our fathers; And also that we may preserve unto them the words which have been spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets, which have been delivered unto them by the Spirit and power of God, since the world began, even down unto this present time. (1 Nephi 3:19–20)

*1.5.2* The elder brothers of Nephi were short-sighted, they could not perceive the liabilities they were inflicting upon their children without first obtaining a stabilizing influence by which one generation might communicate its wisdom to another. We are the aggregate of those who went before us. Our wisdom and intelligence are built upon that which has been transmitted to us through the centuries by our ancestors. As one wisely said long ago, "Those who fail to learn the lessons of history, are doomed to repeat them". The Brass Plates not only would provide the content by which the posterity of Lehi could progress, they also provided the means by which they would be able to communicate their own wisdom many generations into the future. We need only look at the fate of the Mulekites to perceive the folly of not looking beyond one's own time.

*1.5.3* The record contained upon the Brass Plates was apparently comprehensive. The prophecies of the seers and revelators of the House of Israel had been preserved upon the Plates. The writings of Moses, Joseph, and scores of others back to the time of Noah would have been included as well. And what of the Antediluvians? Would not their Book of Remembrance, or goodly portions of that sacred record been inscribed as well? This was not only a treasure of the house of Joseph and his children; this was an unrivaled treasure pertaining to the righteous in every generation. We may yet look upon its pages in wonder.

*1.5.4* Once the plates were brought to Lehi in the wilderness, the patriarch revealed to his sons the enormous value of the record that they had just obtained.

And after they had given thanks unto the God of Israel, my father, Lehi, took the records which were engraven upon the plates of brass, and he did search them from the beginning. And he beheld that they did contain the five books of Moses, which gave an account of the creation of the world, and also of Adam and Eve, who were our first parents; And also a record of the Jews from the beginning, even down to the commencement of the reign of Zedekiah, king of Judah; And also the prophecies of the holy prophets, from the beginning, even down to the commencement of the reign of Zedekiah; and also many prophecies which have been spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah. And it came to pass that my father, Lehi, also found upon the plates of brass a genealogy of his fathers; wherefore he knew that he was a descendant of Joseph; yea, even that Joseph who was the son of Jacob, who was sold into Egypt, and who was preserved by the hand of the Lord, that he might preserve his father, Jacob, and all his household from perishing with famine. And they were also led out of captivity and out of the land of Egypt, by that same God who had preserved them. (1 Nephi 5:10–15)

*1.5.5* Undoubtedly Lehi knew of some of the contents of the Brass Plates because he uses that knowledge to help convince his sons that it was important for them to return to Jerusalem and approach Laban for the acquisition of them. Nephi also knew that the Plates contain the commandments of God and that they were vital to the future spiritual prosperity of his descendants. Whether he knew that as a result of his father's teachings or whether he was aware of that fact because of direct revelation, we do not know.

*1.5.6* There are long and tortuous arguments by the learned men of the world regarding the composition of the Pentateuch, the five books of the Lawgiver Moses. Most of them fall flat when one considers that Lehi is reviewing these writings over a hundred years before they were supposed by these scholars to have been compiled. All opinions to the contrary aside, there are numerous evidences that demonstrate that the first five books of the Bible were penned in their totality by the prophet Moses himself. That those original writings have been manipulated somewhat and grievously mistranslated in several instances is freely admitted. Errors in transmission and the residual machinations of wicked men ought not to distract us from the truth of the matter. It would be an interesting exercise to compare the writings of Moses as contained on the Brass Plates with the texts of the King James version and the inspired version which has come to light in our own day. We might easily believe that the saints of God would be most gratified by the comparison. Inasmuch as the Brass Plates contain the earliest known manuscript of the books of Moses, the details of the creation of the earth and of Adam and Eve are undoubtedly far more explicit and detailed than that with which the world is currently familiar.

*1.5.7* When did the record of the Jews begin? Would this include the writings of their great Patriarch, Judah the son of Jacob? Were there any of the posterity of Judah who compiled records of any kind from the time of Moses until the days of King David who was himself of that illustrious tribe? We might point to the story of Ruth which had been preserved, in which is recorded the experiences of David's ancestors in the lands of Moab and Bethlehem. Some of David's writings are preserved in the Psalms; the Proverbs are attributed to his most wise son Solomon. Could the writings of the prophets Nathan and Gad be found in the record of the Jews which was engraved upon the Plates of Brass? Did the record of the Jews begin after the separation of Solomon's realm into the Kingdom of Judah and the Kingdom of Israel? These are difficult questions to be sure, but we must consider the material with which Lehi and his family would have most familiar as they ponder the Plates in the wilderness.

*1.5.8* Perhaps we would find the writings of Ahijah, Shemaiah, Oded, Azariah, Hanani, Jehu, Elijah, Micaiah, Jahaziel, Eliezer, and Elisha inscribed with the record of the Jews. Certainly the writings of Obadiah, Joel, Hosea, Jonah, Amos, Isaiah, Micah, Nahum, Jeremiah, Zephaniah, and Habakkuk would have appeared upon the Plates. The writings of Daniel and Ezekiel were probably not available to the compilers of the Brass Plates inasmuch as these men were ensconced in the land of Babylon at the time. Nor could there be any mention of Esther for the same reason. Neither would any of the writings of Haggai, Zechariah, Nehemiah, Ezra, or Malachi be found there inasmuch as these great prophets, seers, and priests lived after the time of Lehi's exodus from Jerusalem. Little, if any, of the later Greek influence would be found in the record of the Jews preserved upon the Brass Plates.

*1.5.9* The Brass Plates contained the five books of Moses, the record of the Jews, the writings of the prophets who lived before the time of Lehi's departure from Jerusalem, and his personal genealogy. One wonders as to whom the Plates really pertained, notwithstanding the fact that Laban had them in his possession.

*1.5.10* Joseph was the firstborn son of Jacob and his second wife Rachel. Because of grievous transgression on the part of Reuben, the firstborn son of Jacob and his first wife Leah, Joseph was given the patriarchal birthright of the House of Israel. This deference to a younger sibling deeply disturbed ten of his brethren and, as a result of their jealousy, he was sold into slavery. Joseph eventually found prominence in the household of Potiphar, and then in the Egyptian prison, and finally in the Kingdom of Pharaoh. He was instrumental in preserving the lives of his family because of his singular authority among the Egyptians. Joseph testified to his brethren, after the death of Jacob, that they ought not to expect any reprisals from him, notwithstanding the great injustices that they had done him. He viewed the whole matter as part of the economy of God by which he was to be instrumental in preserving the lives of his family and in fulfilling the prophecies of both himself and his father. We may look upon that episode in Joseph's life with the same assurance of God's intervention as we do when we witness the exodus from Egypt by the hand of Moses. The miracles may not seem as obvious, but they are there.

*1.5.11* Given the degree to which the ancient prophets are cited in the text of the Book of Mormon, it seems clear that the scriptural record contained on the Brass Plates was quite extensive. During the interview with the angel sent by God to explain the essence of his father's dream, Nephi saw that the latter day Gentiles would carry a book with them as they journeyed to meet with his posterity.

And I, Nephi, beheld that the Gentiles that had gone out of captivity were delivered by the power of God out of the hands of all other nations. And it came to pass that I, Nephi, beheld that they did prosper in the land; and I beheld a book, and it was carried forth among them. And the angel said unto me: Knowest thou the meaning of the book? And I said unto him: I know not. And he said: Behold it proceedeth out of the mouth of a Jew. And I, Nephi, beheld it; and he said unto me: The book that thou beholdest is a record of the Jews, which contains the covenants of the Lord, which he hath made unto the house of Israel; and it also containeth many of the prophecies of the holy prophets; and it is a record like unto the engravings which are upon the plates of brass, save there are not so many; nevertheless, they contain the covenants of the Lord, which he hath made unto the house of Israel; wherefore, they are of great worth unto the Gentiles. And the angel of the Lord said unto me: Thou hast beheld that the book proceeded forth from the mouth of a Jew; and when it proceeded forth from the mouth of a Jew it contained the fulness of the gospel of the Lord, of whom the twelve apostles bear record; and they bear record according to the truth which is in the Lamb of God. Wherefore, these things go forth from the Jews in purity unto the Gentiles, according to the truth which is in God. And after they go forth by the hand of the twelve apostles of the Lamb, from the Jews unto the Gentiles, thou seest the formation of that great and abominable church, which is most abominable above all other churches; for behold, they have taken away from the gospel of the Lamb many parts which are plain and most precious; and also many covenants of the Lord have they taken away. And all this have they done that they might pervert the right ways of the Lord, that they might blind the eyes and harden the hearts of

the children of men. Wherefore, thou seest that after the book hath gone forth through the hands of the great and abominable church, that there are many plain and precious things taken away from the book, which is the book of the Lamb of God. And after these plain and precious things were taken away it goeth forth unto all the nations of the Gentiles; and after it goeth forth unto all the nations of the Gentiles, yea, even across the many waters which thou hast seen with the Gentiles which have gone forth out of captivity, thou seest—because of the many plain and precious things which have been taken out of the book, which were plain unto the understanding of the children of men, according to the plainness which is in the Lamb of God—because of these things which are taken away out of the gospel of the Lamb, an exceedingly great many do stumble, yea, insomuch that Satan hath great power over them. (1 Nephi 13:19–29)

*1.5.12* Against all odds, every American nation who lifted up the banner of independence and freedom was successful in fending off the nations from which they had ethnically originated. We may blithely point to political machinations, military miracles, and brilliant statesmanship as the instruments by which the American colonies gained their liberty, but it was the hand of God the eternal Father who made all of these marvelous events possible.

*1.5.13* The central question being addressed by this part of Nephi’s Vision is how could a people who had completely rejected the Gospel of salvation and the God of this land who is Jesus Christ, every be brought back to a point where they might become subjects of redemption. The records which had been kept which would have immediately revealed to the descendants of Laman and Lemuel of their religious heritage had been hidden up by Mormon and Moroni that they might be preserve. Had the Lamanites discovered the cache of historical records they would have destroyed them. The promise had been given to many of the righteous posterity of Lehi that the records would be preserved so that at a later date, the Lamanites would have the fullness of the Gospel presented to them anew. The introduction of the Bible to the indigenous inhabitants of the American continent was but one step in a series of events that would lead them to believe the truth of Heaven and their own divine destiny.

*1.5.14* Nephi might have correctly surmised the nature of the book he saw among the gentiles. He himself had been instrumental in obtaining a book for the benefit of his posterity and the posterity of his brethren when he acquired the Brass Plates from Laban. However, he does not let his speculations get in the way of revelation.

*1.5.15* Many have understandably concluded that “the Jew” spoken of was Ezra, a scribe and priest who lived during the middle of the fifth century BC. He is credited by historians and Jewish tradition as being the instrument by which the Jewish canon was established after the Babylonian Captivity. He is definitely the writer of Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah. Some scholars attribute to Ezra the editorship of Esther, Ezekiel, Daniel, and the Twelve Prophets. Ezra was, in many aspects, a man like unto Moses the Lawgiver. The Bible is the published remnant of the record and history of the Jews. The Brass Plates had many portions in common with the Old Testament, even though it was a record initiated and maintained by descendants of Joseph, he who had been sold into Egypt by his brethren. As it will be seen, the materials contained in Old Testament account were inferior to that contained on the Brass Plates. One may wonder why that would be the case until one realizes that the Brass Plates had been unaffected by the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem and the trials

and tribulations connected with the Captivity. The record on the Brass Plates was far more complete. Also, there was some deliberate degradation of the Old Testament record perpetrated by ignorant and uninspired men from the time of Ezra to the time when the book appeared among the gentiles who swarmed into the Americas from western Europe.

*1.5.16* If our assumption regarding Ezra the priest be correct, that he is the “Jew” spoken of from whose mouth the book came, then we might conclude that he was one of the greatest of the Lord’s prophets. Since the book, in the beginning, contained the fullness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, Ezra could have been as devout as any disciple who has ever lived. Undoubtedly he was a man like unto Jacob, the brother of Nephi, whose views of the life of Christ were so vivid that he was counted by his father, Lehi, as one whose testimony of the Savior was like unto that of the Twelve Apostles. Jacob lived more than five hundred years before the birth of Christ, Ezra nearly the same, yet they were cut from the same bolt of cloth theologically. Why Ezra’s Christianity is not more clearly stated in his writing is the subject of the next part of Nephi’s vision. The testimony of the Twelve Apostles was, in large measure, a confirmation of that which Ezra had written of the Savior and that the principles of salvation were true.

*1.5.17* When, precisely, did the material contained in the record of the Jews become available to the gentiles? We may point to Paul and the other Apostles of his day as the ones who disseminated the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the Greeks and Romans. Most scholars have concluded that those were the first instances of the Gospel having been taken from the House of Israel into the nations of the earth. However, within a century after Ezra great scriptural compilation had taken place, all that had been preserved by the priest was translated into Greek, the remnant of which we call today the Septuagint. Would that have constituted an early instance of the record of the Jews being made available to the Gentiles?

*1.5.18* Whatever may have happened between the time of Ezra and the ministry of the Twelve Apostles, the disciples of Jesus clearly revealed the essence of the Gospel of Christ to all peoples who would hearken to their voice, regardless of their ethnicity. The implication of this verse is that the record of the Jews was still replete with much of that which constitutes the fullness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. By using this record in their ministries, the Apostles were able to convert many thousands of the covenant people to the Church of Christ. The formation of the great and abominable church takes place after the Apostles introduce the record of the Jews in its purity to the gentiles of their day. It is that church which destroyed the Gospel clarity of the text by removing many portions of what we would call the source of Old Testament record.

*1.5.19* The deletion of Christianity from the ancient records produced by Ezra and his associates was a deliberate act and not simply a matter of ignorance or mislaid materials through time. The antipathy between the Church of Christ and Judaism as religions led to the latter’s attempt to distance themselves from the disciples of Jesus, even to the point of discarding material from their sacred record that was far too explicit regarding the Messiah and his ministry among the covenant people. The Councils held at Jamnia in AD 90 and then at Tiberias in AD 130 were undoubtedly proactive attempts to make the distinction between Jew and Christian stark enough that even a Gentile could perceive it. By this act, the leadership of the Jews enrolled themselves in the ranks of the great and abominable church of the devil. As apostasy engulfed the Primitive Church of Christ

during second century AD, vying sectarian Christians disavowed many legitimate accounts of the life and teachings of Jesus Christ and the Apostles and edited others which seemed spurious in their own benighted eyes. Again, all of these attempts were designed to promote or maintain power, wealth, prestige, and self-gratification.

*1.5.20* We may easily point to the New Testament and declare that this is indeed the book of the Lamb of God. Yet, in the vision which Nephi experienced, it is the record of a Jew that is specifically called by the angel the book of the Lamb of God. In other words, there was a time when the Old Testament narrative was as clear about the coming Messiah as the New Testament is about his mortal ministry. Certainly the contents of the Book of Mormon prior to the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ would be indicative of the kind of clarity involved in that earlier unexpurgated text.

*1.5.21* The Gentiles as a whole are handicapped by their understanding of the Gospel of Christ and of the teachings of the prophets because of an absence of material. Those purposeful elisions were intended to produce ambiguity, introducing confusion where there had once been clarity, apparent contradiction where there had once been textual harmony. Thus, one may peruse the sixty-six books of the Bible and produce a variety of theologies which for all intents and purposes seem to agree with the narration which remains between the covers of the sacred scriptures. One need only look at the sectarian diversity within Judaism and Christianity to realize how effective Lucifer's ploy has been.

*1.5.22* In his own soliloquy regarding his efforts to establish the doctrine of Christ, Nephi testifies of the witness given by the ancient prophets whose writings were to be found upon the Brass Plates.

And I, Nephi, have written these things unto my people, that perhaps I might persuade them that they would remember the Lord their Redeemer. Wherefore, I speak unto all the house of Israel, if it so be that they should obtain these things. For behold, I have workings in the spirit, which doth weary me even that all my joints are weak, for those who are at Jerusalem; for had not the Lord been merciful, to show unto me concerning them, even as he had prophets of old, I should have perished also. And he surely did show unto the prophets of old all things concerning them; and also he did show unto many concerning us; wherefore, it must needs be that we know concerning them for they are written upon the plates of brass. (1 Nephi 19:18–21)

*1.5.23* Nephi had seen the ultimate destruction of his people, but knew that a portion of his posterity would survive. His counsel to remember the Lord Jesus Christ pertained to all those who would follow him. Their happiness in time and in eternity hinged upon their ability to fully keep the covenants made through the ordinances of the Gospel of Christ, to take upon themselves the name of Christ, to observe his commandments in their daily lives, and to remember him always.

*1.5.24* The Book of Mormon was written as "Another Testament of Christ" for the primary benefit of the descendants of Lehi. The promises received by the ancient prophets of the Americas were dependent upon their records surviving and being made available to their posterity. Nephi had been told that the preserved records of his people would also be made available to the Gentiles. It is also clear that Nephi suspected that his writings would also be made available to the entire House of Israel one day and for that reason addressed himself to all of the House of Israel.

1.5.25 Lehi and Nephi were perfectly aware that the city of Jerusalem would soon be destroyed by the Babylonians. They knew just as assuredly as Jeremiah and the other prophets had known what was about to transpire. Lehi would relate to his family the open vision which he had of the destruction of their homeland. Nephi does not describe in detail any visions that he may have had regarding the fall of the Kingdom of Judah and of the ravishing of the city, but his spiritual knowledge regarding their fate and of the horrors which were about to descend upon them distressed him deeply. His sentiments were similar to those of any man who is aware of having just escaped a violent and painful death.

1.5.26 Nephi saw his developing circumstances clearly as a fulfillment of prophecies which he found written upon the Plates of Brass. It is a wonderful but startling experience to suddenly come face to face with the foreknowledge of God and that of His chosen servants. King Benjamin also commended the reading of the teachings to be found on the Brass Plates to his sons shortly before his own death.

And it came to pass that he had three sons; and he called their names Mosiah, and Helorum, and Helaman. And he caused that they should be taught in all the language of his fathers, that thereby they might become men of understanding; and that they might know concerning the prophecies which had been spoken by the mouths of their fathers, which were delivered them by the hand of the Lord. And he also taught them concerning the records which were engraven on the plates of brass, saying: My sons, I would that ye should remember that were it not for these plates, which contain these records and these commandments, we must have suffered in ignorance, even at this present time, not knowing the mysteries of God. For it were not possible that our father, Lehi, could have remembered all these things, to have taught them to his children, except it were for the help of these plates; for he having been taught in the language of the Egyptians therefore he could read these engravings, and teach them to his children, that thereby they could teach them to their children, and so fulfilling the commandments of God, even down to this present time. 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. (Mosiah 1:2–7)

1.5.27 Plainly put, Benjamin had seen to it that his sons were training in reading and writing Reformed Egyptian, a gift that allowed them to peruse the history of their people and the writings of the prophets of God who had guided the Nephites spiritually. There is no more effective way for a man to become a man of understanding, save he have the Heavens opened to him in vision.

*1.5.28* The Plates of Brass had not only served as the authoritative source by which the Law of Moses was observed in its fullness among the Nephites, it also served as the primer by which the written language of the people was preserved. For a thousand years the language remained constant because of the faithful adherence the Nephites gave to that holy book. Not only would the people have suffered ignorance in the absence of the Brass Plates, they also would have fallen quickly into apostasy, a state of unbelief in the which they would have perished.

*1.5.29* Nephi and Enos specifically refer to the great blessings that came into their lives because their respective fathers had taught them how to read and write Reformed Egyptian. As other Nephite prophets have testified, this was no easy task. As to the spoken language of the Nephites we know but little, although originally it was a dialect of Hebrew. Moroni clearly states that both the spoken and written languages changed over time, the latter have been adapted because of alterations in the former. It is a matter of record that since the days of Adam and Eve, the faithful have felt the divine responsibility to teach their children to read and write in the languages in which their sacred records were preserved.

*1.5.30* The injunction to read and study the writings of the prophets, seers, and revelators is not simply a commandment to be academically sound. The knowledge and power that comes when we draw upon the experiences of the past, serves as a spiritual bastion for even those who may have had the Heavens opened unto them. No one is exempt from becoming familiar with those things which the Lord in His wisdom has had His servants preserve. Not only could Benjamin's three sons see the effects of illiteracy in the lives and circumstances of their brethren the Lamanites, but they were not so far removed from their grandfather's time that they would not have been quite familiar with the degenerate circumstances that their fellow countrymen in the land of Zarahemla were in when Mosiah 1 first came in among them. The Mulekites had not only lost the facility to maintain a constancy of their written and spoken language, they had lost their faith. They knew they were descendants of Jewish kings, but they could recall little if any of their religion. The blessing of having their language and their rituals restored to them had such an extraordinary impact on their society that they made Mosiah 1 their king in the place of Zarahemla himself. It is doubtful that Zarahemla ever regretted his abdication.

*1.5.31* Benjamin assures his sons that as surely as the various collections of plates are before their eyes, just so certainly are the words written upon them a sure reflection of that which had really taken place. These were not fabrications, but an accurate history of the relationship between the House of Israel and their God, and between their immediate Nephite ancestors and the God of Heaven. Benjamin can bear his testimony as to the truthfulness of those things upon the plates because he had read them himself and had received a fervent witness borne by the power of the Holy Ghost to his soul of their veracity.

*1.5.32* Benjamin had encouraged his sons all of their lives to read the records that were before them, both secular and religious. Benjamin knew, however, that the time remaining to him in mortality was short and that he would no longer be around to prompt them. "Remember" to study; "remember" to take regular spiritual substance into their lives. For the Nephites, there would never be true prosperity without obedience to the principles and ordinances of the Gospel of Christ, without living by every word that proceeds forth from the mouth of God.



### 1.5.33 The Writings of Joseph

*1.5.33.1* We have assumed, undoubtedly correctly, that the format and language of the Brass Plates were established by Joseph the son of Jacob. We have also suggested that the Brass Plates in the possession of Lehi's kinsman, Laban, may very well have been originally fabricated by the vice-regent of Egypt. In any event, the prophecies of Joseph were to be found on the Brass Plates. Nephi cites Lehi's final counsel to Joseph, the youngest of his sons. Clearly Lehi had the writings and prophecies before him on the Brass Plates.

AND now I speak unto you, Joseph, my last-born. Thou wast born in the wilderness of mine afflictions; yea, in the days of my greatest sorrow did thy mother bear thee. And may the Lord consecrate also unto thee this land, which is a most precious land, for thine inheritance and the inheritance of thy seed with thy brethren, for thy security forever, if it so be that ye shall keep the commandments of the Holy One of Israel. And now, Joseph, my last-born, whom I have brought out of the wilderness of mine afflictions, may the Lord bless thee forever, for thy seed shall not utterly be destroyed. For behold, thou art the fruit of my loins; and I am a descendant of Joseph who was carried captive into Egypt. And great were the covenants of the Lord which he made unto Joseph. Wherefore, Joseph truly saw our day. And he obtained a promise of the Lord, that out of the fruit of his loins the Lord God would raise up a righteous branch unto the house of Israel; not the Messiah, but a branch which was to be broken off, nevertheless, to be remembered in the covenants of the Lord that the Messiah should be made manifest unto them in the latter days, in the spirit of power, unto the bringing of them out of darkness unto light—yea, out of hidden darkness and out of captivity unto freedom. (2 Nephi 3:1–5)

*1.5.33.2* If Jacob had been born during some of the most difficult times of Lehi's journeyings in the Arabian peninsula, the birth of Joseph took place under the most adverse of circumstances, perhaps in the midst of the Empty Quarter as they traveled eastward from Nahum. In conjunction with the physical sufferings of the family in the wilderness was the continual carping of those who should have known better. Laman and Lemuel should have been pillars of faithfulness, but were not. They brought deep sorrow into the lives of those around them.

*1.5.33.3* There could have been no greater temporal blessing given to a remnant of the House of Israel than that which Lehi and his family had received as an inheritance. The blessings of this land have always been conditional. Keeping the commandments of God is the only way to find security in this life. Keeping those same commandments will ensure the perpetuation of the blessings through every generation.

*1.5.33.4* The promise given to Joseph concerning his posterity is an interesting one. Nephi knew that there would come a time when his righteous posterity would be completely destroyed while the posterity of his wicked brothers would continue. The blessings given to Sam and Zoram were tied directly to those given to Nephi. Nothing is said of Jacob's posterity, though we know that they were eventually numerous. Joseph is given the promise that his posterity would be preserved in any and all circumstances. In this sense, his blessings were like unto the promises given to Laman and Lemuel regarding their children.

*1.5.33.5* Lehi's blessings from his ancestor Joseph were through Joseph's eldest son, Manasseh. Modern authors, authorities of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, have declared that Ishmael and his family were linked to Joseph through Ephraim. Thus, the land of inheritance was given to the remnant of Joseph as the families of Lehi and Ishmael intermarried. The covenants entered into by Joseph encompassed the blessings of the Patriarchal Order, the spiritual blessings due to the firstborn of every family who has sought for the blessings of Heaven. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were, in their turn, the benefactors of this Priesthood as they sought to bless the nations to which they had been sent by the Lord. In Jacob's family, this particular blessing should have fallen to Reuben, the firstborn son of Jacob's first wife, Leah. He, however, disqualified himself from being an administrator of the priesthood through immoral conduct, and the keys of the Patriarchal Priesthood were passed on to the firstborn son of Jacob's second wife, Rachel, the eleventh child born into the House of Israel, Joseph.

*1.5.33.6* As part of the marvelous covenants the Lord God of Israel made with Joseph the son of Jacob, involved the long term success of his posterity, that like the posterity of Abraham, they would be the means by which the entire earth would be blessed. With the combining together of remnants from the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, the descendants of Joseph became a viable branch that was carried from Jerusalem to the Americas. Thus, for a time, Lehi, Ishmael, and their families became that righteous branch transplanted into the most fertile portion of the Lord's vineyard, as Zenos would say. Lehi, Nephi, Jacob, and others were familiar with the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ many hundreds of years before his birth through the gift and power of personal revelation. In this sense, the true Messiah was manifested to them. That righteous branch continued, primarily among the Nephites, by means of the prophets who preserved the religious history of the inhabitants of the Americas. They, too, knew the Lord and rejoiced in his coming, testifying to the people that they must repent and accept the principles and ordinances of salvation that they might receive him at his coming, whether in the flesh or in the world of spirits.. The implication of Joseph's prophecy was that these righteous would have to be brought forth out of darkness, apostasy and rebellion which seems to effect almost every generation to one degree or another. And thus the history of the Nephites and the Lamanites reads as we have it in the Book of Mormon. With the destruction of the Nephites in the latter part of the fourth century AD, the inhabitants of the Americas, the descendants of Joseph, fell once again into a grievous darkness of ignorance and sin. With the coming forth of the records of the ancient inhabitants of the Americas, once again the descendants of Joseph began to have the light of Celestial day shine upon them. The Father and the Son manifested themselves to Joseph Smith and others, and the work of reclaiming the House of Israel began in earnest. Great effort has been made in this dispensation to carry the principles of salvation to the descendants of Joseph who was sold into Egypt, as the Gospel has been preached in every nation in the Americas, bringing them out of darkness into light, out of captivity unto freedom. Nephi makes a brief commentary on the writings of Joseph in the succeeding chapter to the one cited above.

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. (1 Nephi 4:1-2)

*1.5.33.7* In an earlier part of his narrative, Nephi comments at great length upon his father's vision of the Tree of Life, thereby providing his posterity with added insights into the nature of revelation and the richness of the prophetic gift. Here Nephi is as taken with the writings of Joseph as his father had been and chooses to elaborate on his father's observations to his family regarding Joseph's clear understanding of the future of his posterity throughout the world.

*1.5.33.7* Joseph's posterity ultimately will be found in every corner of the earth, scattered there by various means, guided and protected by the hand of God because of the promises made to Jacob's son. Joseph's writings are as expansive as Isaiah's and like the observations of that latter prophet, applicable to the remnants of his posterity throughout time. For that reason, Nephi and others filled with the spirit of God could see themselves depicted in the words of their progenitor. Once again we see the inestimable value of the Brass Plates in the hands of the family of Lehi.

*1.5.33.8* Captain Moroni, the leader of the Nephite armies in the land of Zarahemla in the first century before the birth of Christ, makes reference to blessings that had been promised to Joseph by his father. No doubt these were easily cited because of their inclusion upon the Brass Plates. Joseph himself was instrumental in having his father's words preserved because he knew that they were true.

Moroni said unto them: Behold, we are a remnant of the seed of Jacob; yea, we are a remnant of the seed of Joseph, whose coat was rent by his brethren into many pieces; yea, and now behold, let us remember to keep the commandments of God, or our garments shall be rent by our brethren, and we be cast into prison, or be sold, or be slain. Yea, let us preserve our liberty as a remnant of Joseph; yea, let us remember the words of Jacob, before his death, for behold, he saw that a part of the remnant of the coat of Joseph was preserved and had not decayed. And he said— Even as this remnant of garment of my son hath been preserved, so shall a remnant of the seed of my son be preserved by the hand of God, and be taken unto himself, while the remainder of the seed of Joseph shall perish, even as the remnant of his garment. Now behold, this giveth my soul sorrow; nevertheless, my soul hath joy in my son, because of that part of his seed which shall be taken unto God. Now behold, this was the language of Jacob. And now who knoweth but what the remnant of the seed of Joseph, which shall perish as his garment, are those who have dissented from us? Yea, and even it shall be ourselves if we do not stand fast in the faith of Christ. (Alma 46:23–27)

*1.5.33.9* We must assume that Moroni understood from the beginning that his token would evoke a deep and abiding historical tradition, that he was well aware of Joseph's coat when he rent his own. Lehi's family represented a tiny fragment of the posterity of Manasseh and Ishmael's family a tiny fragment of Ephraim's posterity. Even combined as they were in marriage, they constituted an extremely small portion of the whole of the house of Joseph.

*1.5.33.10* Jacob's observations regarding Joseph's coat and the interpretation given are not to be found in the records prepared by the hand of Moses, at least in their present form. Clearly, Moroni is drawing upon ancient records available to him, no doubt from those preserved upon the Brass Plates. Certainly the posterity of Lehi and Ishmael qualify as a preserved remnant which fulfills, in part, the prophecy made by Jacob. Remnants of the tribe of Ephraim have been found scattered throughout the world outside of the western hemisphere in far greater numbers than the tribe of Manasseh, which seems to be confined primarily to the indigenous inhabitants of the Americas. If

Joseph had children by Aseneth, other than Ephraim and Manasseh, or if he had posterity by another wife, their names and history have not been preserved. If by “perish” Jacob means that there would be portions of Joseph’s posterity that would be completely disassociated from the covenant people without any understanding of their origins, then we may state with confidence that his prophecy has been fulfilled in large measure.

*1.5.33.11* A goodly number of Joseph’s posterity would remain faithful, identified with the covenants of Abraham, Isaac, and Joseph, for many generations, particularly during the thousand years of Nephite civilization. Hundreds of thousands of saints who pertained to the house of Joseph, perhaps even millions, passed through this life successfully, by adhering to the principles of salvation and exaltation. This has become spectacularly true in these latter days.

*1.5.33.12* The scattering of Israel is generally thought of as one of the effects of the wars fought in the land of Palestine. Many members of the northern tribes of Israel, those who were conquered by the Assyrians about the year 721 BC, were subsequently scattered throughout Europe, as the main body of the Kingdom of Israel travelled toward the “north countries”. Among those who mingled with the original inhabitants of those lands were many of the tribe of Ephraim and were ultimately lost to themselves, forgetting or perhaps forsaking the covenants and traditions of their fathers. Moroni speculates here that there may be similar sorts of disintegration of the “coat” of Joseph when dissenters like the Zoramites, the Amlicites, and others have resorted to the Lamanites. Certainly Amalickiah and his cohorts fell into that category. By association we might extrapolate the eventual destruction of the Nephites at the Hill Cumorah as another aspect of that disintegration suggested by Moroni.

#### 1.5.34 The Writings of Isaiah

*1.5.34.1* The most oft quoted prophet in the text of the Book of Mormon is Isaiah, particularly in association with the teachings of Nephi and Jacob. After quoting chapters 48 and 49 of Isaiah, Nephi attempts to answer the questions regarding the teachings of that prophet that have come into the minds and hearts of his elder brethren.

AND now it came to pass that after I, Nephi, had read these things which were engraven upon the plates of brass, my brethren came unto me and said unto me: What meaneth these things which ye have read? Behold, are they to be understood according to things which are spiritual, which shall come to pass according to the spirit and not the flesh? And I, Nephi, said unto them: Behold they were manifest unto the prophet by the voice of the Spirit; for by the Spirit are all things made known unto the prophets, which shall come upon the children of men according to the flesh. Wherefore, the things of which I have read are things pertaining to things both temporal and spiritual; for it appears that the house of Israel, sooner or later, will be scattered upon all the face of the earth, and also among all nations. (1 Nephi 22:1–3)

*1.5.34.2* As it will be remembered, the main reason that Nephi had cited these particular chapters from Isaiah was to persuade Laman and Lemuel and other members of the family that there would be a Messiah, one who would be sent by God the Father to redeem His children. From the outset, Nephi’s older brothers had grave doubts about the prophecies that had been made by

Jeremiah and their father, that the city of Jerusalem would be destroyed and the Jews carried off to Babylon in the same fashion that the northern Kingdom of Israel had been ravaged by the Assyrians. It would seem that the questions being raised were attempts to undermine Nephi's argument that these chapters should be interpreted literally. No doubt the brothers perceived them only as spiritual issues, to be interpreted metaphorically, rather than outward events of human history. Nephi's brothers were unwilling to accept the notion of a literal gathering of scattered Israel; so, therefore, they questioned the application of Isaiah chapter 49 to their special circumstances, now that they were half a world away from their homeland, a journey that had taken them a decade to complete.

*1.5.34.3* The fact of the matter was that the writings of Isaiah could not be understood at all without the influence and direction of the Holy Ghost. In that sense, the prophecies were, indeed, spiritual in every way. But the words of the prophets are not one thing or the other, either of the spirit or of the flesh, they are spiritual insights into the temporal world in which we live. God and His servants are neither Platonists nor Aristotelians. Mortal experience only has meaning or value when the eternal implications of temporal life are understood clearly. That comprehension can only take place through the power of the spirit.

*1.5.34.4* Nephi testified that all that had been seen in the immediate past with the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah were mere harbingers to that which would eventually befall them. The scattering would be as complete as disintegration of a death body, the elements of a corpse having been reduced to dust and blown into every quarter of the earth. Their having been guided to the land of their inheritance in the Americas was but one of a countless number of separations between Palestine and the covenant people.

*1.5.34.5* Shortly after the death of Lehi, Nephi found himself at odds with his elder brethren once again and in order to help them comprehend the significance of their spiritual and temporal experiences in the promised land, he thought to refer again to the teachings of the prophet Isaiah.

And it came to pass after my father, Lehi, had spoken unto all his household, according to the feelings of his heart and the Spirit of the Lord which was in him, he waxed old. And it came to pass that he died, and was buried. 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. 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. (2 Nephi 4:12–16)

*1.5.34.6* Lehi knew that his term of mortality was drawing to a close and that he would no longer have direct contact with his children. He perceived the great trials and tribulations which awaited all of his posterity and in some respects was powerless to do anything about what they would choose to do. What he could do, he did. By the power of the Patriarchal Order by which he himself had once been blessed, he comforted his children and his grandchildren. He blessed them in spite of

all that they had performed against him. There was sorrow in Lehi's heart, but there was no bitterness, only a great love for whom the Lord God had provided for him, by whom his own eternal blessings would be realized.

1.5.34.7 Laman and Lemuel, of course, did not consider the admonitions as being from the Lord, but rather from their younger brother whom they loathed. The sons of Ishmael were of the same mind as Laman and Lemuel for they undoubtedly felt that they had been marginalized in the family. It was quite likely that after the death of Lehi the sons of Ishmael were the oldest members of the company.

1.5.34.8 We are not told in what way the older brothers had offended the Lord, but clearly something was amiss in their conduct. Given the older brothers penchant for merry-making, perhaps they were cutting short the time allotted for mourning the death of their patriarch. The children of Israel mourned the loss of Moses for thirty days. Nephi frequently refers to the Large Plates of Nephi which were far more detailed in their account of the daily activities of the family.

1.5.34.9 At the instruction of the Lord, Nephi had fabricated this second set of plates on which would be recorded extractions from the Large Plates which reflected the spiritual life of the community. For that reason, the teachings of Lehi and Jacob are included in Nephi's narrative throughout. Additionally, Nephi felt impressed to include the writings of many of the prophets whose records had been preserved upon the Plates of Brass. Hence, the lengthy citations from the writings of Joseph and Isaiah. A strong motivation stirred Nephi. With the death of his father, Nephi more than ever, understood the temporary nature of mortality. We are here for a short time, and then we pass on to another experience isolated from the world of men. How can one counsel his posterity in *absentia*? By revelation, Nephi knew that sooner or later, his descendants would not only suffer the effects of apostasy, but also the possibility of extinction. Could that not be postponed or ameliorated somehow? Nephi hoped that by preserving his thoughts and feelings that he might have a lasting effect upon those whom he loved with all of his heart.

1.5.34.10 Nephi's mind is not only drawn to the scriptures which lay before him in the Brass Plates, but also to the many revelations which he had received throughout his life. He had committed these to writing as well and could review them from time to time. Nephi commends that practice to his children. Nephi's younger brother, Jacob, also resorts to the teachings of Isaiah to help his friends and family comprehend that their circumstances in the mountains of the land of Nephi had been foreseen and that eventually all of the scattered remnants of the House of Israel would be gathered in from the lands to which they had been dispersed.

Behold, my beloved brethren, I, Jacob, having been called of God, and ordained after the manner of his holy order, and having been consecrated by my brother Nephi, unto whom ye look as a king or a protector, and on whom ye depend for safety, behold ye know that I have spoken unto you exceedingly many things. Nevertheless, I speak unto you again; for I am desirous for the welfare of your souls. Yea, mine anxiety is great for you; and ye yourselves know that it ever has been. For I have exhorted you with all diligence; and I have taught you the words of my father; and I have spoken unto you concerning all things which are written, from the creation of the world. And now, behold, I would speak unto you concerning things which are, and which are to come; 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. And I speak unto you for your sakes, that ye may learn and glorify the name of your God. 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. And there are many things which have been spoken by Isaiah which may be likened unto you, because ye are of the house of Israel. (2 Nephi 6:2–5)

*1.5.34.11* Jacob had been called by revelation and by the laying on of hands by Nephi, who was at that time the one who bore the keys of the Kingdom in that part of the world. As has been mentioned before, the only priesthood possible for the Nephites to have possessed was the Melchizedek Priesthood, inasmuch as they pertained to the family of Joseph rather than that of Levi. But since bearers of that greater priesthood could function in any role of the Aaronic or Levitical Priesthood, they were able to abide by the requirements of the Law of Moses which was in effect among them. Thus, both Jacob and Joseph were priests and teachers unto the people.

*1.5.34.12* Although we may not know the particulars of Jacob's curriculum among his people, but it would seem clear that there were two primary sources. First, there had been the teachings of the prophet, seer, and revelator who had been responsible for bringing the family out of the impending destruction of Jerusalem into the safety of the promised land. Second, there was the body of doctrine that could be found inscribed upon the Brass Plates. Lehi and Nephi had both taught from that volume and Jacob was just as diligent in his labors to do the same. Much of the history of the world had already been shared with the Nephites beginning with the creation and the fall and continuing with the record of the covenants peoples from Adam and Eve to the latest developments among the members of the House of Israel.

*1.5.34.13* Jacob is making commentary in the words of a prophet who had lived some two hundred years before his day. The clarity of the writings of Isaiah is so vivid to the Nephites, that it is a fairly easy task to illustrate the prophetic power of the spirit which rested down upon him as he wrote. The Nephites could see their circumstances recorded; as time passed they would perceive the fulfillment of more of his prophecies in their own lives and in the lives of those around them. Before embarking upon the rather length citation from the writings of the prophet Isaiah, Nephi provides, in part, his rationale for including so much from the Brass Plates upon his own Small Plates.

And now I, Nephi, write more of the words of Isaiah, for my soul delighteth in his words. For I will liken his words unto my people, and I will send them forth unto all my children, for he verily saw my Redeemer, even as I have seen him. And my brother, Jacob, also has seen him as I have seen him; wherefore, I will send their words forth unto my children to prove unto them that my words are true. Wherefore, by the words of three, God hath said, I will establish my word. Nevertheless, God sendeth more witnesses, and he proveth all his words. Behold, my soul delighteth in proving unto my people the truth of the coming of Christ; for, for this end hath the law of Moses been given; and all things which have been given of God from the beginning of the world, unto man, are the typifying of him. And also my soul delighteth in the covenants of the Lord which he hath made to our fathers; yea, my soul delighteth in his grace, and in his justice, and power, and mercy in the great and eternal plan of deliverance from death. And my soul delighteth in proving unto my people that save Christ should come all men must perish. For if there be no Christ there be no God; and if there be no God we are not, for there could have been no creation.

But there is a God, and he is Christ, and he cometh in the fulness of his own time. 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 11:2–8)

*1.5.34.14* Although it is not always wise to do so, sometimes circumstances dictate pointing out the follies of men as they attempt to foist their uninspired conclusions upon an unsuspecting world. For many years biblical scholars have proposed the division of the book of Isaiah into parts based on content, style, and historicity. Euphemistically referred to as the “Isaiah problem”, these divisions create portions commonly known as “Second Isaiah”, “Third Isaiah”, and so forth. All of these segments are assigned to different authors and times, some as late as the fourth century before the birth of Christ. The foolishness of these purportedly wise men is revealed in the fact that those various portions of the prophet’s writings which have been disputed were all included on the Brass Plates of Laban, a work compiled before 600 BC. Isaiah chapters 2 through 14 are included in the same work as Isaiah 48 through 52, thus dispelling any possibility of diverse authorship in different dispensations. In a phrase, there never was an “Isaiah problem”. The issues raised by the “evidence” arrayed in support of the false propositions must be dealt with in another fashion. Actually a little common sense, coupled with a modest understanding of the prophet’s craft, will suffice.

*1.5.34.15* Nephi has been forthcoming in his account of the revelations that he had received regarding the coming forth of the mortal Messiah and of the events leading up to the Second Coming and the Millennial reign. Nephi here testifies that he can perceive in the writings and teachings of Isaiah and his brother Jacob that they, too, have been graced with similar, if not precisely the same revelations. For this reason he is motivated to include their writings and teachings with his own that Nephi’s posterity might know and understand that their ancestor was not alone in his views of eternity. As will be seen, Nephi brings together these three witnesses to help his children accept the notion that it is possible for men to know the future with exacting detail. Ironically, it is this lack of faith in the principles of continuous revelation that has brought scholars to the cusp of their acceptance of the “Isaiah problem” mentioned above. Their lack of faith includes their belief that God Himself cannot know what any one individual will do at any given time. This, of course, demonstrates an even far greater lack of faith in the atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ which, though it transpired in the Meridian of Time, satisfied the demands of justice for personal sin from the days of Adam and Eve until the Final Judgment at the end of the temporal existence of the earth.

*1.5.34.16* Once one obtains a true witness regarding the life and ministry of the Son of God, the types and shadows that have been given of him are brought into sharp focus. One can easily see in the ordinances of the Law of Moses the anticipated sacrifice of the Firstborn for the sins of mankind. One can also perceive in the writings of all of the holy prophets from the beginning of time, this same witness, that the Son of God will come into the world to redeem mankind from death and hell. A prophet, by definition, is one who testifies of the atoning sacrifice of Christ and of his ultimate victory over debilitating effects mortality and the consequences that accompany the sins of mankind. The prophet’s testimony, like the atonement, transcends both time and place.



*1.5.34.17* The covenants constitute the invitation that the Father has made to His children through His Son that they may ultimately return to His presence through obedience to the principles and ordinances of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the promise of eternal life and exaltation.

*1.5.34.18* Nephi's ministry to his people focuses on the atoning sacrifice of the Messiah, that they might rejoice in the midst of their difficulties. There is justice, mercy, compassion, and the power to bring salvation into the lives of as many as will chose to live. Those divine characteristics instill hope and confidence in the hearts and minds of the children of men, that they might look up from their fallen and depraved condition to a redemption from all ills, physical and spiritual. Without the hope of redemption through Christ, all men will, whether in the flesh or in the spirit, eventually sink into the slough of despond.

*1.5.34.19* There are double-hinged principles articulated here. God, Nephi testifies, is the quintessential Savior. If there is no salvation, there is no God. The creation is the quintessential manifestation of God's power and the object of His powers of salvation. Why create something that is not salvageable? That would imply a flaw in the character of God which, by definition, cannot be. Therefore, because we are self-aware, and aware of that which surrounds us, those things which are worthy of redemption, we may know of the existence of God and of the eventual salvation of all who choose to be saved.

*1.5.34.20* Nephi's motivation for citing as much of the writings of Isaiah as he does, is to prove to his posterity the reality of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ into the world in order to provide redemption of all men. Nephi is certain that in the writings of Isaiah, his posterity may perceive their entire history as he has. On perceiving within the prophet's writings their own history, the Nephites might then anticipate that the blessings which devolve upon them as a remnant of the House of Israel will come unto the entire House of Israel in the process of time. That being the case, those same promises would also be extended to the Gentiles as well. Thus, all of the blessings which God had prepared for the benefit of His children will be made available to every man, woman, and child who has ever or who will ever come into mortality. The natural product of having faith in Christ is to have hope for one's own salvation; having an assurance that our hope is justified through an awareness of the Father's pleasure in our righteous conduct, produces a deep and abiding desire to have those around us receive those same blessings. That noble desire is called charity, the perfect love that motivated the Savior in his quest to bring salvation and exaltation into the lives of the children of God.

*1.5.34.21* After quoting more than twelve chapters from the writings of the prophet Isaiah, Nephi begins to address some of the problems with understanding Isaiah. It is interesting to note, however, that those who are blessed with a testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ have little difficulty understanding the words of Isaiah.

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. 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. 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. 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. 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. 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. 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. 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. (2 Nephi 25:1–8)

*1.5.34.22* Prophecy, in and of itself, is not a difficult proposition. Prophecy is the fervent witness of the divinity of Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ, the Son of the living God, the Redeemer of all mankind, even as many as will. Prophecy, because it is a witness, is patently clear, a straightforward rendition of the heart and mind of the prophet as moved upon by the Holy Ghost. There are some peoples, some nations, kindreds, and tongues, who because of the covenants of God, are privileged to have living prophets among them. The House of Israel is one of the most notable among the covenant peoples. Because of the promises of God to men like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, whenever the Lord determines to initiate a new era of open revelation He will begin with those who are the posterity of righteous men as these three were. As is frequently the case, the descendants of righteous men are not naturally righteous, but are self-willed and disobedient, straying far from the principles and ordinances which their exemplary patriarchs accepted and lived. How does one bestow eternal blessings upon a recalcitrant and stiff-necked people? With regard to the children of Israel who lived in Isaiah's day and thereafter, the policy of the Lord was to give those who rebelled against truth and light precisely what they wanted. The prophet Jacob, Nephi's younger brother, clearly articulated one of the reasons why the prophecies of Isaiah pose difficulties for modern readers.

But behold, the Jews were a stiffnecked people; and they despised the words of plainness, and killed the prophets, and sought for things that they could not understand. Wherefore, because of their blindness, which blindness came by looking beyond the mark, they must needs fall; for God hath taken away his plainness from them, and delivered unto them many things which they can-

not understand, because they desired it. And because they desired it God hath done it, that they may stumble (Jacob 4:14)

*1.5.34.23* Nephi chose not to instruct his people the means by which they could comprehend the writings of Isaiah out of a deep and abiding concern that by so doing he would introduce them to the corruptions which defined the society that the Lord had destroyed by the hand of the Babylonians.

*1.5.34.24* Rather than to explain the process by which Isaiah devised his writings, Nephi chose to summarize particular principles underlying the prophecies. In this case, he simply testified that the words of Isaiah will eventually apply to all people in every time and place, both to the House of Israel and to the nations of the Gentiles. The resurrected Christ would teach essentially the same thing about Isaiah's writings when he appeared to the gathered Nephites at the Temple in the land of Bountiful.

*1.5.34.25* Nephi's practice of likening the scriptures unto his people was not a clever teaching technique, but rather an application of the fundamental purpose behind Isaiah's compositions. They were originally written to be "likened" by all those to whom those writings came. This, of course, implies that Isaiah knew exactly what he was doing. Our inability to comprehend how the prophet accomplished this glorious effect should not dissuade us from pursuing our own likening process. Nephi's procedure essentially follows this same track. His people may not understand the manner of prophesying among the Jews, but they did understand how Nephi prophesied. The son of Lehi then continued by presenting how he understood Isaiah in light of his own experiences, in conjunction with the open visions that he had received since the time that his family had departed into the wilderness from the city of Jerusalem. Nephi's commentary should not be taken as a definitive exposition of Isaiah's writings; it simply represents one facet of all that might be observed, given the number of peoples and eras Isaiah wrote for.

*1.5.34.26* The nature of Isaiah's prophecies being such that they can be understood in a variety of settings, according to the circumstances of the people unto whom they came, it is no wonder that the Jews were able to understand the writings of the prophets and then selectively choose those things which they desired to believe. Those writings which the Jews perceived as condemning them could be shunted off by them as applying to another time, place, and people.

*1.5.34.27* Again, without inculcating his children in the techniques by which Isaiah devised his prophecies, Nephi explained in some detail the consequences reaped by the Jews for their rebellions against the Lord God of Israel. Nephi's practice was rather like a man who instructs his family from a book written in another tongue without teaching them the language itself. Because Nephi had lived in the land of Judea, he understood all of the allusions and innuendos employed by Isaiah as he presented his prophecy.

*1.5.34.28* There comes a time in the life of any faithful student of the scriptures that he begins to perceive himself in the writings of the ancients. This may happen as one comprehends the universality of a principle of the Gospel of Christ. It may happen as events unfold in his world which are undeniable fulfillments of predictions made by the prophets. Nephi knows that his own perception and interpretation of Isaiah is in large measure governed by his particular circumstances, both spiritual and temporal. He does assure his readers, however, that as time passes, every man will compre-

hend that Isaiah's gift of prophecy transcends time and location, and that at some point he will see himself, his time and place, reflected in the teachings of the ancient prophets, and particularly in those of Isaiah.

*1.5.34.29* One of Nephi's chief concerns has been that his posterity would have some trouble in believing in the principle of revelation in general and in the applicability of Isaiah to themselves in specific. He therefore confines himself to demonstrating how Isaiah may be likened unto them, rather than take on the larger task of showing how Isaiah may serve as a revelator to a vast panoply of peoples, places, and times. By clearly explaining Isaiah in Nephite and Lamanite terms, Nephi hoped to instill faith in the hearts and minds of his posterity throughout the next thousand years and then in the latter days as they would be able to observe the writings of Isaiah fulfilled before their very eyes.

*1.5.34.30* No doubt the most compelling recommendation to read the writings of the prophet Isaiah came from the Lord Jesus Christ during the time that he taught the Nephites gathered to the temple in the city of Bountiful shortly after his resurrection from the dead.

And now, behold, I say unto you, that ye ought to search these things. Yea, a commandment I give unto you that ye search these things diligently; for great are the words of Isaiah. For surely he spake as touching all things concerning my people which are of the house of Israel; therefore it must needs be that he must speak also to the Gentiles. And all things that he spake have been and shall be, even according to the words which he spake. (3 Nephi 23:1-3)

*1.5.34.31* The Savior had spent much of the second day of his visit among the Nephites instructing them in principles to be found in the writings of the prophet Isaiah, particularly in chapters 52 and 54 of that book. It should be observed that Jesus deemed it unnecessary to refer to the 53rd chapter Isaiah, that which contained as clear a description of the atoning sacrifice and of Christ's final moments on the cross as can be found in prophetic literature.

*1.5.34.32* The western mind has some difficulty comprehending the prophecies of Isaiah, in part because our records of the history of the House of Israel are much too fragmentary. Large segments of the children of Israel were carried off as the result of war; other remnants were led into other parts of the world by the hand of the Lord. We do have some notion of that which transpired among the Jews, during and after the Babylonian captivity. We also have a substantive account of the posterity of Lehi for the thousand years they preserved their records here in the Americas. Of the many other fragments of the House of Israel we know little or nothing. The prophet Isaiah, however, was a gifted seer who comprehended the work of the Lord God among His people wherever they might be found, and incorporated his visions of them into his writings. There will come a day, in the which we will be more informed, when we will perceive perfectly why Isaiah wrote his prophecies precisely as he did. We will be far more appreciative in those days. The Savior's command to the Nephites was not a passing suggestion. It was important to the disciples of Christ to know that their circumstances had literally been foreseen and recorded long before they transpired. Having confidence in the ability of a man to know that which lies in the future constitutes the heart and soul of a testimony of the atonement, the resurrection, and the salvation of mankind.

*1.5.34.33* Both the history and the destiny of the House of Israel are woven into the writings of the prophet Isaiah. Inasmuch as remnants of the House of Israel had been scattered all over the face of the earth, Isaiah could not possibly have referred to the posterity of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob without treating some aspect of the nation into which the Israelites were led.

### 1.5.35 The Writings of Jeremiah

*1.5.35.1* We have proposed elsewhere that the prophet Jeremiah was born in the city of Anathoth about 3222 years after Adam and Eve departed from the Garden of Eden, or about the year 661 BC. We have also suggested that his ministry may have begun some thirty years later, at the time he would have been able to begin functioning as a priest in the Aaronic priesthood, a service that would be rendered throughout his life because of his birthright in the tribe of Levi. This probably would have been in the Adamic year 3252, or about the year 631 BC. As he testifies in his own record:

The words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiyah, of the priests that were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin: To whom the word of the LORD came in the days of Josiah the son of Amon king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign. (Jeremiah 1:1–2)

*1.5.35.2* The teachings and revelations of the prophet cover a period of no less than forty years and the text of his prophecies have been assembled together in not quite chronological order. This portion, however, begins when he was about thirty years old, about 3252 after Adam and Eve left the Garden of Eden, or about the year 631 BC.

*1.5.35.3* Josiah was one of the great kings of Judah, a scion of David, and an ancestor of the Lord Jesus Christ. He began to rule the kingdom after the assassination of his father in the Adamic year 3239, or about 644 BC. Under Josiah's lead, a great reformation took place among the children of Israel. In this task he was aided by the prophet Jeremiah. The sites that had been dedicated to the gods of the Gentiles and heathens were destroyed, not only within the boundaries of the tribal inheritance of Judah, but throughout the land of Palestine. During his reign the city of Jerusalem became the focus of religious life, particularly the Temple which he had restored to its former glory. The Passover celebration was once more brought to the forefront of the minds and hearts of the covenant people. Josiah died in the valley of Esdraelon while opposing the invading forces of Pharaoh. He was deeply mourned by his people. The thirteenth year of Josiah's reign corresponds to the dates given for the beginning of Jeremiah's ministry given in the paragraph immediately above.

*1.5.35.4* In the 25th chapter of Jeremiah the prophet provides another significant temporal marker for his ministry.

The word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the people of Judah in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, that was the first year of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon; The which Jeremiah the prophet spake unto all the people of Judah, and to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, From the thirteenth year of Josiah the son of Amon king of Judah, even unto this day, that is the three and twentieth year, the word of the LORD hath come unto me, and I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking; but ye have not hearkened. And the LORD

hath sent unto you all his servants the prophets, rising early and sending them; but ye have not hearkened, nor inclined your ear to hear. (Jeremiah 25:1–4)

*1.5.35.5* The fourth year of the reign of Jehoiakim or Eliakim began 3274 years after our first parents were driven from the Garden of Eden, or about the year 609 BC. We also learn here that the first year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign began at the same time.

*1.5.35.6* The thirteenth year of the reign of Josiah began 3252 years after our first parents were driven from the Garden of Eden, or about the year 631 BC. As we have indicated earlier, this was the beginning of the prophet's ministry. Twenty-three years later would take us to the Adamic year 3275, or about the year 608 BC. From our previous calculations, we have established 3274 (609 BC) as the date of the prophecy. We have noted these little discrepancies before having to do with the month during a particular year when a king began his reign and how the years thereafter were calculated. For our purposes we have settled on the earlier date of 3274 (609 BC) as marking Jeremiah's 23rd year as a prophet.

*1.5.35.7* Jeremiah was not the only prophet to serve during this particular time frame. We know that Obadiah possibly served during this time and father Lehi most certainly was called while Jeremiah cried repentance to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. There were many others who have not as yet been named.

*1.5.35.8* In the 36th chapter of Jeremiah, the prophet relates another event that takes place in the fourth year of the reign of Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah.

And it came to pass in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, that this word came unto Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, Take thee a roll of a book, and write therein all the words that I have spoken unto thee against Israel, and against Judah, and against all the nations, from the day I spake unto thee, from the days of Josiah, even unto this day. It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the evil which I purpose to do unto them; that they may return every man from his evil way; that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin. Then Jeremiah called Baruch the son of Neriah: and Baruch wrote from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of the LORD, which he had spoken unto him, upon a roll of a book. (Jeremiah 36:1–4)

*1.5.35.9* The reign of Jehoiakim began 3270 years after our first parents were driven from the Garden of Eden, or about the year 613 BC. The fourth year would have been in the Adamic year 3274, or about the year 609 BC. It is clear that this chapter was composed about the same as the previous one cited immediately above. Both are out of chronological order with the many of the chapters that surround them.

*1.5.35.10* This particular roll would be sent up to the king and his household and would eventually be cut up and burned. We may assume that Jeremiah had his own personal copies of all of the revelations that he had received during his ministry and that he used his personal records to compile the book that is spoken of here. After the first was destroyed, Jeremiah would have a second copy made that would serve as a witness against Jehoiakim and his family. For their failure to hearken to the voice of the Lord and that of His servants, the royal court would lose what status that it had enjoyed and the dynasty would fail. We may only vainly speculate how much of the current version of Jeremiah's writings were included on these two rolls. Chapters 1 through 26 have been recom-

mended, as well as chapters 46 through 51. As we have noted before, Jeremiah's writings are not in precise chronological order.

1.5.35.11 The act of composing the scroll and presenting it to the king was another attempt to cry repentance to a fallen people who were on the cusp of being utterly destroyed by their enemies. Jeremiah undoubtedly dictated all of the revelations that he had received from the Lord by reading aloud those that he had written down previously in his own records. Baruch copied the whole down in his own hand. It is likely that much of this material was inserted into the Brass Plates. This would have taken place about eight years before Lehi and his family departed from the city of Jerusalem. One wonders if Lehi himself had any part in the preservation of Jeremiah's writings or in having them incised upon the Brass Plates that had been entrusted to Laban.

1.5.35.12 In Jeremiah 52 another aspect of the prophet's timeframe is revealed.

Zedekiah was one and twenty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Hamutal the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah. And he did that which was evil in the eyes of the LORD, according to all that Jehoiakim had done. For through the anger of the LORD it came to pass in Jerusalem and Judah, till he had cast them out from his presence, that Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon. And it came to pass in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, in the tenth day of the month, that Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon came, he and all his army, against Jerusalem, and pitched against it, and built forts against it round about. So the city was besieged unto the eleventh year of king Zedekiah. And in the fourth month, in the ninth day of the month, the famine was sore in the city, so that there was no bread for the people of the land. Then the city was broken up, and all the men of war fled, and went forth out of the city by night by the way of the gate between the two walls, which was by the king's garden; (now the Chaldeans were by the city round about:) and they went by the way of the plain. But the army of the Chaldeans pursued after the king, and overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho; and all his army was scattered from him. Then they took the king, and carried him up unto the king of Babylon to Riblah in the land of Hamath; where he gave judgment upon him. And the king of Babylon slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes: he slew also all the princes of Judah in Riblah. Then he put out the eyes of Zedekiah; and the king of Babylon bound him in chains, and carried him to Babylon, and put him in prison till the day of his death. (Jeremiah 52:1-11)

1.5.35.13 Zedekiah was born 3260 years after Adam and Eve departed from the Garden of Eden. He ascended to the throne of his nephew in the year of Adam 3281. His reign came to an end with the destruction of Jerusalem in 3292. *Zedekiah* was the last king of Judah before the Babylonian captivity. He was named Mattaniah by his parents, Josiah and Hamutal, but was renamed Zedekiah by Nebuchadnezzar at the age of twenty-one. When Zedekiah proved unsatisfactory during the eleventh year of his reign, most of the sons of the king were put to death as he stood with them, then the king of Babylon had Zedekiah's eyes thrust out. One of his sons had escaped the vengeance of Nebuchadnezzar, however, and with a group of supporters eventually crossed the ocean to settle in the land of Zarahemla. These Jewish colonists have been traditionally called the Mulekites. It was among the people of Mulek that the sole survivor of the Jaredite civilization, Corinatumr, lived out his last days. More than three hundred years later, the Nephites fleeing from the Lamanites would

come in contact with the Mulekites in Zarahemla and the two peoples would become a single nation.

*1.5.35.14* Eliakim, or as Necho the king of Egypt would have called him, Jehoiakim, had some rather notable righteous ancestors, including his own father Josiah. Before him, only Hezekiah and Azariah improved the spiritual atmosphere of the kingdom of Judah. The rest of the kings were either of dubious moral value to the inhabitants of the kingdom of Judah or were outright apostates. Jehoiakim, however, did not follow the righteous example of the great kings, but succumbed to the same temptations as his wicked predecessors. So also Zedekiah.

*1.5.35.15* In the eighth year of his rule of the kingdom of Judah, Zedekiah forsook the oath that he had made with the king of Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar then returned to besiege the city of Jerusalem and within in three years had reduced it to rubble. The first act of the Babylonian captivity had come to a close. It would be seventy years before the posterity of the inhabitants of the Jerusalem would be allowed to return to their homeland.

*1.5.35.16* According to the writings of Daniel the prophet, Nebuchadnezzar took a large part of the vessels of the Temple at Jerusalem when he subdued Jehoiakim (or Eliakim) in the year of Adam 3273. The second looting of the Temple took place during the short reign of Jehoiachin in 3281. There would be a third when Jerusalem fell in the eleventh year of the reign of king Zedekiah. The ninth year of Zedekiah's rule would have been about 3290 since Adam and Eve were exiled from the Garden of Eden, or about the year 593 BC.

*1.5.35.17* The eleventh year of the reign of king Zedekiah would have been, according to our chronological calculations, about the 3292nd year after our first parents departed from the Garden of Eden. In modern calendars this would have been about the year 591 BC. Most modern scholars have settled upon 587 or 589 BC; we have no need to argue the point.

*1.5.35.18* The siege was completed and after the two years hardly anything was left of the stores within the city. Other ancient documents in concert with the writings of Jeremiah, suggest that during the two years that Pharaoh attempted to break the siege against the city but for his pains was utterly defeated by the Babylonians.

*1.5.35.19* Once a breach had been made in the walls, the defenders sought to escape by any means possible. The king fled eastward as he was able, into the valley of the Jordan River. He ultimately was unsuccessful, being soon thereafter captured by Nebuchadnezzar's troops. It would appear that the soldiers who accompanied the king no longer found it expedient to defend their sovereign. While the siege of Jerusalem progressed, Nebuchadnezzar apparently was elsewhere to the north. Zedekiah and the majority of his family were transported to the king of Babylon at Riblah in the land of Hamath.

*1.5.35.20* At least one of the sons of Zedekiah escaped into the wilderness with a cadre of his servants. Mulek must have been a child or an infant in arms when his entourage made their way westward through Egypt to the west coast of Africa. From thence they apparently crossed the wide expanse of the Atlantic ocean, arriving on the eastern shores of the western hemisphere shortly after Lehi and his family arrived on the southwest coast of the promised land. Mulek and his people settled in a land that came to be known as Zarahemla, a fertile area just south of the narrow neck of land that divided the land northward from the land southward. While dwelling in this place, the



Mulekites came in contact with the last of the Jaredites, Coriantumr, who dwelt with them nine months before he died. Neither colony knew of the other until the Nephites, under the direction of their leader Mosiah, fled northward from their enemies, through the wilderness, about 220 years before the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Mulekites were duly impressed by the knowledge and quality of character of the Nephites and in short order made Mosiah their king. These two groups eventually became one people. Hence the ancient inhabitants of America were partly of the tribes of Joseph and Judah.

*1.5.35.21* In chapters 40 through 43 of Jeremiah, the prophet relates some of the aftermath of the decisive war between the kingdom of Judah and the Babylonians. After the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple of Solomon, the king of Babylon established a man by the name of Gedaliah to be governor over the land of Judah. Jeremiah chose to live with Gedaliah in the city of Mizpah. Within a few short months, however, a royalist movement in the land led by Ishmael, slaughtered Gedaliah and those assembled with him and the land once again succumbed to chaos. Jeremiah counseled the leader of another faction of the army to remain faithful and true to the king of Babylon and he and the people would be spared. Johanan, however, fled to Egypt taking as many of the people that he could gather up, including Jeremiah and Baruch the prophet's servant, friend, and scribe. This appears to have transpired in the same year as the destruction of Jerusalem, or about 591 BC. Tradition holds that Jeremiah died in Egypt.

*1.5.35.22* In the midst of this political and military conflict between Zedekiah and Nebuchadnezzar, the prophet Lehi of the tribe of Manasseh, is called by the Lord to flee from the city into the wilderness to the south of Jerusalem. So far as we can tell, father Lehi first sensed the concern for the safety and survival of the city of Jerusalem and of the Temple of Solomon about the year 602 BC.

*1.5.35.23* The Lord commanded Lehi that his four sons were to return to Jerusalem in order to obtain the plates of Brass that had been entrusted to Laban for safe keeping. This task they eventually achieved, returning to their father with the record and Laban's servant who had decided to join their party.

And after they had given thanks unto the God of Israel, my father, Lehi, took the records which were engraven upon the plates of brass, and he did search them from the beginning. And he beheld that they did contain the five books of Moses, which gave an account of the creation of the world, and also of Adam and Eve, who were our first parents; And also a record of the Jews from the beginning, even down to the commencement of the reign of Zedekiah, king of Judah; And also the prophecies of the holy prophets, from the beginning, even down to the commencement of the reign of Zedekiah; and also many prophecies which have been spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah. (1 Nephi 5:10–13)

*1.5.35.24* Undoubtedly Lehi knew of some of the contents of the Brass Plates because he uses that knowledge to help convince his sons that it was important for them to return to Jerusalem and approach Laban for the acquisition of them. Nephi also knew that the Plates contain the commandments of God and that they were vital to the future spiritual prosperity of his descendants. Whether he knew that as a result of his father's teachings or whether he was aware of that fact because of direct revelation, we do not know.

*1.5.35.25* There are long and tortuous arguments by the learned men of the world regarding the composition of the Pentateuch, the five books of the Lawgiver Moses. Most of them fall flat when one considers that Lehi is reviewing these writings over a hundred years before they were supposed by these scholars to have been compiled. All opinions to the contrary aside, there are numerous evidences that demonstrate that the first five books of the Bible were penned in their totality by the prophet Moses himself. That those original writings have been manipulated somewhat and grievously mistranslated in several instances is freely admitted. Errors in transmission and the residual machinations of wicked men ought not to distract us from the truth of the matter. It would be an interesting exercise to compare the writings of Moses as contained on the Brass Plates with the texts of the King James version and the inspired version which has come to light in our own day. We might easily believe that the saints of God would be most gratified by the comparison

*1.5.35.26* When did the record of the Jews begin? Would this include the writings of their great Patriarch, Judah the son of Jacob? Were there any of the posterity of Judah who compiled records of any kind from the time of Moses until the days of King David who was himself of that illustrious tribe? We might point to the story of Ruth which had been preserved, in which is recorded the experiences of David's ancestors in the lands of Moab and Bethlehem. Some of David's writings are preserved in the Psalms; the Proverbs are attributed to his most wise son Solomon. Could the writings of the prophets Nathan and Gad be found in the record of the Jews which was engraved upon the Plates of Brass? Did the record of the Jews begin after the separation of Solomon's realm into the Kingdom of Judah and the Kingdom of Israel? These are difficult questions to be sure, but we must consider the material with which Lehi and his family would have most familiar as they ponder the Plates in the wilderness. Lehi's first experiences with the God of Heaven took place during the first year of the reign of King Zedekiah. We discover later that it was a little over six hundred years before the birth of Christ that Lehi's family departed from Jerusalem. The destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians therefore took place in the eleventh year of the reign of Zedekiah, or about the year 591 BC.

*1.5.35.27* Perhaps we would find the writings of Ahijah, Shemaiah, Oded, Azariah, Hanani, Jehu, Elijah, Micaiah, Jahaziel, Eliezer, and Elisha inscribed with the record of the Jews. Certainly the writings of Obadiah, Joel, Hosea, Jonah, Amos, Isaiah, Micah, Nahum, Jeremiah, Zephaniah, and Habakkuk would have appeared upon the Plates. The writings of Daniel and Ezekiel were probably not available to the compilers of the Brass Plates inasmuch as these men were ensconced in the land of Babylon at the time. Nor could there be any mention of Esther for the same reason. Neither would any of the writings of Haggai, Zechariah, Nehemiah, Ezra, or Malachi be found there inasmuch as these great prophets, seers, and priests lived after the time of Lehi's exodus from Jerusalem. Little, if any, of the later Greek influence would be found in the record of the Jews preserved upon the Brass Plates. Certainly not all of the prophecies of Jeremiah would be found on the Plates of Brass, inasmuch as Lehi and his family departed from Jerusalem before Jeremiah had finished his labors.

*1.5.35.28* Nephi the son of Helaman cites the prophecies of Jeremiah when his own prophecies are doubted by the people of Zarahemla. Obviously, the writings of the prophet were available to

him because they had been incised upon the Brass Plates prior to Lehi's departure from the city of Jerusalem.

And now I would that ye should know, that even since the days of Abraham there have been many prophets that have testified these things; yea, behold, the prophet Zenos did testify boldly; for the which he was slain. And behold, also Zenock, and also Ezias, and also Isaiah, and Jeremiah, (Jeremiah being that same prophet who testified of the destruction of Jerusalem) and now we know that Jerusalem was destroyed according to the words of Jeremiah. O then why not the Son of God come, according to his prophecy? And now will you dispute that Jerusalem was destroyed? Will ye say that the sons of Zedekiah were not slain, all except it were Mulek? Yea, and do ye not behold that the seed of Zedekiah are with us, and they were driven out of the land of Jerusalem? But behold, this is not all— Our father Lehi was driven out of Jerusalem because he testified of these things. Nephi also testified of these things, and also almost all of our fathers, even down to this time; yea, they have testified of the coming of Christ, and have looked forward, and have rejoiced in his day which is to come. (Helaman 8:19–22)

*1.5.35.29* We should probably assume that the prophets whom Nephi mentions by name are those who lived after the times of both Abraham and Moses. The greatest witness given by this bevy of prophets to the people of Zarahemla was that of Jeremiah, inasmuch as there was no question in anyone's mind that Jerusalem had been destroyed by the Babylonians after Lehi's departure, the existence of the Mulekites having sealed that witness. Since the prophet clearly saw the future on that occasion, what was to keep him from seeing the ministry of the Son of God before it took place?

*1.5.35.30* Jeremiah had testified to the people of Judah that their stance with the Egyptians would bring about the destruction of the city of Jerusalem and the Temple. It was this impending destruction and captivity of the Jews that motivated Lehi's exodus into the wilderness of the Arabian peninsula. Laman, Lemuel, and others of Lehi's company did not believe that the nation could be destroyed under the circumstances and much of the continual bickering during the journey to the promised land was founded in their incredulity. Both Lehi and Nephi received revelations regarding the destruction of the city and the Babylonian captivity, but these visions were not externally confirmed until the peoples of Zarahemla and Nephi came together three hundred years later.

*1.5.35.31* Lehi had testified of the sins of the people of Jerusalem, for the which he was vilified and mocked. When he bore witness of the coming Messiah, however, they were enraged and sought to take his life. The entire corpus of Nephi's record constitutes a memoir of the prophet's convictions regarding the coming of the Son of God into the world to bring about the redemption and salvation of men. The testimonies of those who wrote upon the Small Plates of Nephi are no less replete with their witness of the Christ. Mormon's redaction of the records of the Nephites demonstrates repeatedly that the Nephites were, for the most part, a Christian nation that looked forward to the life and ministry of Jesus with unquenchable faith. The times when the Nephites faltered in their progress transpired when they were engaged in practices that diminished their sensitivity to the whisperings of the spirit of God, when they were blinded and deafened by their own wickedness.

*1.5.35.32* Just as an aside, in reference to the scriptural accounts of Jeremiah's life, we should probably refer to an event in the prophet's experiences that appears in the early pages of the Book of Mormon that is frequently misinterpreted. The sons of Lehi made a second trip from the wilderness

to Jerusalem, the purpose of which was to retrieve the family of Ishmael. On their return to Lehi, the older brothers of Nephi rebelled against the instructions that they had received and plotted against his life. The young prophet was stalwart and conformed his siblings by reminding them of the blessings that they had already received for having been obedient.

Yea, and how is it that ye have forgotten what great things the Lord hath done for us, in delivering us out of the hands of Laban, and also that we should obtain the record? Yea, and how is it that ye have forgotten that the Lord is able to do all things according to his will, for the children of men, if it so be that they exercise faith in him? Wherefore, let us be faithful to him. And if it so be that we are faithful to him, we shall obtain the land of promise; and ye shall know at some future period that the word of the Lord shall be fulfilled concerning the destruction of Jerusalem; for all things which the Lord hath spoken concerning the destruction of Jerusalem must be fulfilled. For behold, the Spirit of the Lord ceaseth soon to strive with them; for behold, they have rejected the prophets, and Jeremiah have they cast into prison. And they have sought to take away the life of my father, insomuch that they have driven him out of the land. Now behold, I say unto you that if ye will return unto Jerusalem ye shall also perish with them. And now, if ye have choice, go up to the land, and remember the words which I speak unto you, that if ye go ye will also perish; for thus the Spirit of the Lord constraineth me that I should speak. (1 Nephi 7:11–15)

*1.5.35.33* May we suggest that neither Laman nor Lemuel had mentioned anything of the visit which they had received from the angel of God? Perhaps the fact that they were beating their younger brothers to death at the time may have had something to do with their reticence. Had they shared their viciousness with the sons and daughters of Ishmael? Unlikely. It was nothing to be proud of. The fact that Nephi was bringing this sordid episode to their attention must have deeply disturbed them, particularly when they were attempting to impress at least two of the daughters of Ishmael. Had the elder brothers been forthcoming in describing the success that they had experienced with regard to the obtaining of the Brass Plates from Laban? Again, highly unlikely, inasmuch as they had not been particularly illustrious in their conduct at the time. They had lingered outside the walls of Jerusalem waiting for Nephi to accomplish the errand upon which all of them had been sent. Additionally, they had not yet gained a witness that the adventure had been worth the effort involved, save that which their “foolish” father had expressed when he finally held them in his hands.

*1.5.35.34* Nephi had testified to his older brothers before in this vein, after they had failed in their first attempts to obtain the plates. They had numerous scriptural witnesses that what Nephi said was true. They had personal experiences which should have convinced them that both Lehi and Nephi were inspired men. Laman and Lemuel were consciously choosing to ignore all that the Lord had done for them and was able to do for them, primarily because they chaffed at their younger brother’s words, resenting his seemingly unquenchable enthusiasm for doing those things which had been commanded of them.

*1.5.35.35* Nephi bears his testimony to his brethren regarding the land of promise and that they would, as a consequence of their faith, obtain that land as an inheritance for their posterity. There would come a time when they would know for a certainty that the city of Jerusalem and environs had indeed been destroyed. Lehi would have a vision to that effect, one which he would unhesitatingly share with his children. This revelation came once Lehi and his family had arrived at

the promised land and after they had begun to appreciate the wondrous blessings which had come into their lives. They may have been more receptive to Lehi's prophecies by that point, at least while he lived. The perfect proof of the destruction of Jerusalem would come many generations later when the Nephites finally came in contact with the remnants of a people who had fled the city at the very hour of destruction; a people who would also make their way to the promised land by divine intervention.

*1.5.35.36* The inhabitants of Jerusalem and environs had ripened in iniquity, filled with all manner of abominations. Their rejection of the prophets, seers, and revelators of God was a reflection of their rejection of the Lord God Himself. Nephi's candor with his brethren and members of Ishmael's family is remarkable. His clarity is unequivocal. They cannot rejoin a fallen society without suffering the effects of its imminent destruction. To return to Jerusalem at that hour would be tantamount to returning to Sodom or Gomorrah after judgment had been levied against those two wicked cities. Consider Lot's wife who did no more than to turn herself about to look upon that which had once been her home. Laman and the others were free, if they really believed their own press, to return to Jerusalem, but Nephi testifies to them that they will directly suffer the consequences for having done so. One might observe that if the rebels were free to return, why not just allow them to do so? Why make all of this fuss with those who would be recalcitrant during their entire lifetimes and would pass that truculence on to their posterity? Clearly the survival of the colony depended upon all of the members of both families making the journey. It was just as vital as were the possession of the Brass Plates and the opportunity for Lehi's sons to have spouses. Therefore, the Spirit of the Lord moved Nephi to be rather forceful in his arguments, just as he had been persuaded that the death of Laban was in the best interests of everyone concerned (see 4.10–18).

*1.5.35.37* In the midst of this rather sobering reproof, Nephi makes mention of the prophet Jeremiah, that he had been imprisoned by the Jews a short time before. According to our understanding of the chronology of both the Book of Mormon and the history of the kingdom of Judah, this would have been during the first year of the reign of king Zedekiah. We have pinpointed this year to have been about 602 BC. Most scholars of the Book of Mormon have reference the imprisonment of the prophet that is recorded in Jeremiah 37 in conjunction with Nephi's aside in 1 Nephi 7. This clearly cannot be the case as the text of Jeremiah reveals.

And king Zedekiah the son of Josiah reigned instead of Coniah the son of Jehoiakim, whom Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon made king in the land of Judah. But neither he, nor his servants, nor the people of the land, did hearken unto the words of the LORD, which he spake by the prophet Jeremiah. And Zedekiah the king sent Jehucal the son of Shelemiah and Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah the priest to the prophet Jeremiah, saying, Pray now unto the LORD our God for us. Now Jeremiah came in and went out among the people: for they had not put him into prison. Then Pharaoh's army was come forth out of Egypt: and when the Chaldeans that besieged Jerusalem heard tidings of them, they departed from Jerusalem. (Jeremiah 37:1–5)

*1.5.35.38* Zedekiah ascended the throne of the kingdom of Judah 3281 years after Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden of Eden, or about the year 602 BC. Zedekiah and his court were a bad lot. The events of this chapter transpired toward the end of Zedekiah's reign. By the time that Zedekiah became king of Judah, Jeremiah had been an active prophet for nearly thirty years. Few

had ever taken the servant of the Lord God of Israel seriously, except as an annoyance. We may only speculate about Zedekiah's motivation for asking anything of the God of Jeremiah. It seems likely, however, that Zedekiah wished to mortify Jeremiah because the Pharaoh of Egypt was come north to confront Nebuchadnezzar in order to break the siege of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. Jeremiah would be cast into prison for treason against Zedekiah because he testified that the Chaldeans would overwhelm the Egyptians and eventually destroy the city of Jerusalem. This whole scene between the Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar took place a year or two before the fall of the city of Jerusalem, about the Adamic year 3290, or about 593 BC.

*1.5.35.39* Nephi's confrontation with his brethren took place about nine years before Jeremiah was put into prison by Zedekiah. We must conclude, then, that Jeremiah had been cast into prison before, an event that was not formally recorded in the records of the kingdom of Judah as we presently have them, but it was noted by Nephi.

### 1.5.36 The Writings of Zenos

*1.5.36.1* In our discussion regarding the writings of Jeremiah in the Book of Mormon, we cited a passage from Helaman that not only testified of the inclusion of the writings of Isaiah and Jeremiah on the Brass Plates, but also those of other prophets whose names are presently unique in the scriptures, confined as they are to the text of the Book of Mormon; Nephi the son of Helaman cites from the testimonies of Zenos, Zenock, and Ezias to prove his points to the people of Zarahemla. Surely their works must have been incised upon the plates retrieved by Nephi and his brethren from the hands of Laban. Nephi the son of Lehi bears his personal witness of the coming of the Messiah by quoting some of the same sources.

And behold he cometh, according to the words of the angel, in six hundred years from the time my father left Jerusalem. And the world, because of their iniquity, shall judge him to be a thing of naught; wherefore they scourge him, and he suffereth it; and they smite him, and he suffereth it. Yea, they spit upon him, and he suffereth it, because of his loving kindness and his long-suffering towards the children of men. And the God of our fathers, who were led out of Egypt, out of bondage, and also were preserved in the wilderness by him, yea, the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, yieldeth himself, according to the words of the angel, as a man, into the hands of wicked men, to be lifted up, according to the words of Zenock, and to be crucified, according to the words of Neum, and to be buried in a sepulchre, according to the words of Zenos, which he spake concerning the three days of darkness, which should be a sign given of his death unto those who should inhabit the isles of the sea, more especially given unto those who are of the house of Israel. For thus spake the prophet: The Lord God surely shall visit all the house of Israel at that day, some with his voice, because of their righteousness, unto their great joy and salvation, and others with the thunderings and the lightnings of his power, by tempest, by fire, and by smoke, and vapor of darkness, and by the opening of the earth, and by mountains which shall be carried up. And all these things must surely come, saith the prophet Zenos. And the rocks of the earth must rend; and because of the groanings of the earth, many of the kings of the isles of the sea shall be wrought upon by the Spirit of God, to exclaim: The God of nature suffers. And as for those who are at Jerusalem, saith the prophet, they shall be scourged by all people,

because they crucify the God of Israel, and turn their hearts aside, rejecting signs and wonders, and the power and glory of the God of Israel. And because they turn their hearts aside, saith the prophet, and have despised the Holy One of Israel, they shall wander in the flesh, and perish, and become a hiss and a byword, and be hated among all nations. Nevertheless, when that day cometh, saith the prophet, that they no more turn aside their hearts against the Holy One of Israel, then will he remember the covenants which he made to their fathers. Yea, then will he remember the isles of the sea; yea, and all the people who are of the house of Israel, will I gather in, saith the Lord, according to the words of the prophet Zenos, from the four quarters of the earth. Yea, and all the earth shall see the salvation of the Lord, saith the prophet; every nation, kindred, tongue and people shall be blessed. (1 Nephi 19:8–17)

*1.5.36.2* Some scholars have gone so far as to suggest that Lehi left Jerusalem for the last time on the date upon which Jesus would be born exactly six hundred years later. That, perhaps, is an unnecessary conceit. The first mention of this timetable takes place in conjunction with Lehi's teaching of his family after he had completed his account of the Vision of the Tree of Life. Although Lehi had been taught by an angelic being in his vision, there is nothing in the narrative suggesting that the six hundred year revelation had come to Lehi in the same fashion. Nephi makes a clear distinction between those things which his father experienced in the Vision of the Tree of Life and those things which he had learned through the power and influence of the spirit of God. In Nephi's account of his interview with the angel and the Vision, he testifies of the birth of Christ, but nothing is mentioned of a precise timeframe in which those things would transpire. The question remains then, what was the setting in which an angel revealed to Lehi or Nephi that item of information. One might also wonder whether that exact period of time had been revealed to one of the prophets whose record was inscribed upon the Plates of Brass. In that case, Nephi might be referring to an angelic revelation which would have been included in that sacred record.

*1.5.36.3* The temporal sufferings of Jesus Christ during his mortal ministry were, in part, simply a matter of having lived upon a fallen world, associating with men and women who had partaken of the spirit of a telestial world. It is not of this common lot of mankind that Nephi is speaking. It is the peculiar viciousness directed at the Savior because he was recognized as the Son of God. The abuses of the last few hours of his life reflected the loathing of that fallen angel, Lucifer of old, whose rebellion against the authority of God separated him forever from the bastions of light and truth. Every vile and unseemly thing which Satan could inspire men to do was perpetrated upon Jesus in an attempt to distract him from the office which he was performing for the souls of the children of God on the earth. Jesus, however, was not to be intimidated or deterred from that which he had been sent to earth to accomplish. The "loving kindness" and "long-suffering" of the Christ manifested itself in his suffering for sin. No personal considerations were entertained during those hours as he paid the price for the individual sins of mankind. The irony of this entire scene is the fact that as Jesus was suffering for the iniquity of men, Satan was taking advantage of the weaknesses caused by those very sins to whip the wicked into a frenzy yearning for fratricide.

*1.5.36.4* To know the truth from God is a wonderful thing. It nourishes the soul, delights the mind and heart of those who peruse it implications. To have before us the testimonies of ancient Apostles and prophets constitutes a treasure immeasurable. The Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and

Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price only adds to our enjoyment. The promise that there are yet many other servants of God whose records have been preserved and will one day be directly available should thrill the heart of every righteous man who has ever felt the power of the spirit of the Lord. The expectation that we will one day take the hand of these great messengers of the Kingdom in fellowship is an expectation almost inexpressible.

*1.5.36.5* The prophet Zenos was particularly gifted in articulating that which he had seen in vision. The joys and sufferings of the Nephites at the time of the death of Jesus Christ are clearly prophesied here. They enjoyed the company of the Savior, heard his voice and beheld his face, but they also passed through a series of terrifying destructions before his appearance among them.

*1.5.36.6* Zenos not only saw the temporal trials and tribulations which would come upon the children of Israel at the time of the death of Christ, he also noted that most of them would be suffering a degree of apostasy, their kings referring to the “god of nature” rather than the “god of heaven” This view is completely consistent with the Allegory of Zenos wherein the attempts of the master of the vineyard to have his scattered trees bring forth good fruit generally failed. Apostasy is the natural resting state of humanity.

*1.5.36.7* At this point in his prophecy, Zenos turns to the fate of the Jews in Jerusalem at the time of the Savior’s death. Within a hundred years after the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, the city of Jerusalem would be utterly destroyed and the nation or kingdom of the Jews will have ceased to exist. They had eyes to see, but chose not to perceive the power of God that was manifested among them by the mortal Messiah. They had ears to hear, but chose to ignore those teachings which would have brought them happiness and peace. They had hearts that were capable of receiving the truth, but they chose to harden themselves until they were past feeling.

*1.5.36.8* The entire generation that rejected Jesus as the Christ was reduced to penury almost in an instant. We do not have a complete accounting of the scattering of the Jews during the first century after Christ’s birth, but if the truth were known, we would discover that no matter where they went, no matter how far and undiscovered a country they may have resorted to try to find solace, their nefarious deeds followed them and drove them into the dust with sorrow and great remorse. The sufferings of their posterity during the last two thousand years are but faint echoes of the tribulations of their fathers.

*1.5.36.9* The Jews of Jesus’ day have long since found themselves in the world of spirits where they have continued to anguish over their lot in time and in eternity. But there is respite, testifies Zenos, a time when the principles and ordinances of the Gospel of Jesus Christ will once again be offered to them and they will prove to be somewhat more receptive. Their salvation in that day will depend in large measure upon their willingness and ability to put away their anger and despair. Any hope that the Jews might have for redemption will come as their posterity receives the truths that they once rejected. The promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will be fulfilled among the Jews and they will be blessed with the rest of the House of Israel.

*1.5.36.10* The Diaspora has not been an effect felt only among the Jews, but one which has scattered the entire house of Israel. The children of Jacob are to be found among every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. For that reason, the gathering of Israel will be carried out in every corner of the earth. The faithful will be taught the principles of eternity and they will receive all of the



saving ordinances of the Gospel of Jesus Christ at the hands of the servants of God who have been authorized to exercise the power of the priesthood in their behalf. Zenos' Allegory speaks of the grafting that will take place in the latter days and Jacob himself explains the importance of having a sincere heart and a contrite spirit in that day.

*1.5.36.11* All the nations of the earth will be blessed because of the children of Israel which will be among them. Abraham was promised that all the nations of the earth would be blessed because of his own posterity, and the gathering in the latter days will, in large measure, be a manifestation of the fulfillment of that promise. The prophet Jeremiah declared that the gathering of the last days would be of such a grand nature that the children of Israel would consider it more wonderful than the exodus from Egypt.

*1.5.36.12* Both Zenos and Zenock received specific revelations regarding those who would be ensconced upon the western hemisphere because, in part, of their direct relationship to the family of Lehi. Mormon points out this very fact as he relates the coming of the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ to the Nephites in the city of Bountiful.

Behold, I say unto you, Yea, many have testified of these things at the coming of Christ, and were slain because they testified of these things. Yea, the prophet Zenos did testify of these things, and also Zenock spake concerning these things, because they testified particularly concerning us, who are the remnant of their seed. Behold, our father Jacob also testified concerning a remnant of the seed of Joseph. And behold, are not we a remnant of the seed of Joseph? And these things which testify of us, are they not written upon the plates of brass which our father Lehi brought out of Jerusalem? (3 Nephi 10:15–17)

*1.5.36.13* No doubt Mormon had access to all of the records of the Nephites, including the Plates of Brass, and had perused them all. Thus, he could speak as an eminent authority of that which the ancient prophets of Israel had said regarding the signs surrounding the death of the Lord Jesus Christ and the significance of them.

*1.5.36.14* The prophets that had been raised up among the posterity of father Lehi were no less explicit in their teachings. Men like Samuel the Lamanite could not have been more exacting in their testimonies regarding the fate of the wicked and the blessings that would befall those who were more righteous. In terms of the timeframe in which Nephi the son of Nephi lived, there were many prophecies made to the which Mormon referred but did not articulate. Mormon had expressed his desire to write more of Nephi's ministry but was constrained by the amount of material available to him and the lack of space which he had upon his own plates (see 7.17).

*1.5.36.15* One of the primary reasons that the writings of Zenos and Zenock were preserved upon the Brass Plates was because they were members of Joseph's family, and the great ancestors of father Lehi and probably of Ishmael as well. Zenos was slain for his testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ. Zenock undoubtedly suffered martyrdom because of his faith and testimony of Jesus Christ, but nothing of his demise is recorded in the scriptures currently in our possession.

*1.5.36.16* Those who familiarize themselves with the text of the Book of Mormon have become immediately aware of the great allegory of Zenos quoted in full by Jacob, the brother of Nephi. It is

certain that this prophetic literary piece could be found on the Brass Plates. Lehi himself was apparently taken with the allegory.

And it came to pass after my father had spoken these words he spake unto my brethren concerning the gospel which should be preached among the Jews, and also concerning the dwindling of the Jews in unbelief. And after they had slain the Messiah, who should come, and after he had been slain he should rise from the dead, and should make himself manifest, by the Holy Ghost, unto the Gentiles. Yea, even my father spake much concerning the Gentiles, and also concerning the house of Israel, that they should be compared like unto an olive-tree, whose branches should be broken off and should be scattered upon all the face of the earth. Wherefore, he said it must needs be that we should be led with one accord into the land of promise, unto the fulfilling of the word of the Lord, that we should be scattered upon all the face of the earth. And after the house of Israel should be scattered they should be gathered together again; or, in fine, after the Gentiles had received the fulness of the Gospel, the natural branches of the olive-tree, or the remnants of the house of Israel, should be grafted in, or come to the knowledge of the true Messiah, their Lord and their Redeemer. And after this manner of language did my father prophesy and speak unto my brethren, and also many more things which I do not write in this book; for I have written as many of them as were expedient for me in mine other book. (1 Nephi 10:11–15)

1.5.36.17 To what extent did Lehi teach his family regarding the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ? Was it merely a travelogue indicating how that sublime set of divine principles would be disseminated throughout the world? No such generalization would have had any bearing whatsoever upon the lives of those who were to inherit the western hemisphere. Lehi taught his children of the principles of faith in Christ and of repentance from personal sin. He taught them regarding the atoning sacrifice of the Lord and how salvation from death and hell would be brought about among all of the children of men. He told his posterity about the ordinances of baptism and the laying on of hands for the Gift of the Holy Ghost, and all other performances which have been and will be required in order for men and women to be exalted in the Celestial Kingdom of God. As a warning to his own children, he testified that the Jews, though a portion of the covenant family of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, would fall away from the truth because of their rejection of Jesus Christ, that what little light and truth which still remained among them would fade away, leaving them an isolated and despised people. In their wickedness they would plot against the life of their Messiah, and for their lack of spiritual sensitivity they would rejoice in his death, further cutting themselves off from the blessings of eternity. Lehi also bore witness that Jesus would rise from the dead and through the auspices of the Holy Ghost all the nations of the earth would come to a knowledge of the God of Israel. Lehi was not an itinerate escaping from the marauding hordes of the Babylonians; he was a living prophet of God, a seer *non pareil*, a revelator of eternal truths which never had been conceived by the mind of man without divine assistance.

1.5.36.18 It is clear from this passage that Lehi had become quite conversant with the Allegory of Zenos which had been preserved upon the Brass Plates of Laban. The tame olive tree was likened unto the House of Israel, and in the time of Lehi and his family, the Kingdom of Judah in particular. The Gentiles too were compared to an Olive tree, but one that was wild with a lack of cultivation. Zenos prophesied regarding the wasting away of the covenant people and the manner which the God

of Heaven proposed to save the better part of those children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and the promises made unto their fathers. The Diaspora or scattering of Israel was designed to give the promises an opportunity to take root in a place outside of Palestine. The grafting in of the branches of the wild tree testified of the Lord's intention to preserve the fundamental principles of salvation in the hearts and minds of the Gentiles once the Israelites in the promised land had rejected the truth and light that had been placed before them in the person of His Son.

*1.5.36.19* Part of the fulfillment of the prophecies which had been uttered by the servants of God had to do with the transporting of Lehi and his family to the Americas. That land had been dedicated to those who would be led by the hand of the Lord to inherit it. As they would soon discover for themselves, they could only be led to the promised land when they were in harmony with each other. Whenever they rebelled against their father, Nephi, or the Lord, the posterity of Lehi were left unto themselves and were at risk of annihilation. Therefore they must needs be, at all times, in "one accord" that they might make progress. Their continual lack of internal harmony led to the family spending eight years in the wilderness of Arabia attempting to conclude a journey that should have only taken them a few months. For that irrational disharmony, the posterity of Lehi nearly drowned in the depths of the great sea. Had it not been for the faithfulness of Nephi, his determined commitment to perform all that the Lord God had given him to do, the family might have perished completely in any number of places along their route.

*1.5.36.20* In the scattering of Israel is prefigured the death and decomposition of the mortal body. In the gathering of Israel may be seen the promise of immortality through the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the Allegory of Zenos, the branches of the wild tree, the Gentiles, prosper for a time, drawing strength from the covenants given to the ancient patriarchs. Eventually, however, there would come a time when the scattered branches would be gathered back to the mother tree, and the Gentile branches would be grafted into the various scions of the original tree hidden throughout the world. The premortal promise of a Messiah, a Redeemer, would come to the knowledge of the entire population of the earth, regardless of their ancestry. The prophesied gathering of scattered Israel is now currently under way. What a rich storehouse of teaching the Large Plates of Nephi must contain, if the snippets which Nephi includes here in the Small Plates are any indication.

*1.5.36.21* After Nephi's interviews with the angel of the Lord, he returned to his brethren who were disputing among themselves regarding the things that their father had taught them.

And now I, Nephi, was grieved because of the hardness of their hearts, and also, because of the things which I had seen, and knew they must unavoidably come to pass because of the great wickedness of the children of men. And it came to pass that I was overcome because of my afflictions, for I considered that mine afflictions were great above all, because of the destruction of my people, for I had beheld their fall. And it came to pass that after I had received strength I spake unto my brethren, desiring to know of them the cause of their disputations. And they said: Behold, we cannot understand the words which our father hath spoken concerning the natural branches of the olive-tree, and also concerning the Gentiles. And I said unto them: Have ye inquired of the Lord? And they said unto me: We have not; for the Lord maketh no such thing known unto us. Behold, I said unto them: How is it that ye do not keep the commandments of the Lord? How is it that ye will perish, because of the hardness of your hearts? Do ye not remem-

ber the things which the Lord hath said?—If ye will not harden your hearts, and ask me in faith, believing that ye shall receive, with diligence in keeping my commandments, surely these things shall be made known unto you. Behold, I say unto you, that the house of Israel was compared unto an olive-tree, by the Spirit of the Lord which was in our father; and behold are we not broken off from the house of Israel, and are we not a branch of the house of Israel? (1 Nephi 15:4–12)

1.5.36.22 Nephi had witnessed the entire destruction of his posterity at the hands of the posterity of his brethren. He had watched the spirit of inspiration wane in the lives of the righteous until only wickedness and mayhem remained. The seeds of the fall of the children of Lehi were visible in the lives of his two older brothers. There was little he could do for them. Nephi was understandably depressed by the open vision that he had experienced of the future of his family. He was undoubtedly physically drained by the tremendous spiritual experience as well. For a period of time he was not in a position to be a benefit to his family. This disputation, however, probably continued in Lehi's tent, the brothers attempting to interpret their father's word by the light of their own understanding. A bootless exercise.

1.5.36.23 The word “disputations” is somewhat charged, being more negative in its semantic value than “reasoning” or “discussing”. The primary meaning of “*puto*” in Latin has to do with “throwing, casting, driving, and casting”. One wonders why Laman and Lemuel chose not to ask their father directly what he meant. One wonders why they were willing to accept Nephi's offer to help them comprehend the Allegory. Lehi had taught his family earlier regarding the Allegory of the Olive Tree, about which Nephi gives but a truncated account. Whether the disputations arose because of this initial instruction or from subsequent teachings we do not know because of the terseness of Nephi narration. Lehi and Nephi had already received open visions of the future history of their posterity. They knew that their journey would take them half a world away from where they were presently encamped. They knew, without question, the significance of the various “natural branches” which were taken into the various parts of the vineyard. These were remnants of the House of Israel, as Lehi and his family constituted a remnant of the covenant people, who were being separated from the “mother tree” planted in the land of Canaan. The despised Gentiles were to be the means by which those scattered portions would be gathered again. Laman and Lemuel's cultural biases were hindering their ability to grasp the Allegory in all of its aspects.

1.5.36.24 The response of the brothers to the question as to whether or not they had prayed for understanding can be properly read with just a bit of sarcasm in their tone. An embarrassing question, this. The simplest of all solutions is the one not thought of, or rather, the one not attempted because of its “anti-intellectual” flavor. For men whose minds are grounded in the material things of this fallen world, prayer seems a bit silly. Therefore, what is required is humility, like that of a little child. Undoubtedly Nephi had expressed himself before in this matter. The softening of his own heart had come as the result of fervent prayer regarding the value of his father's visions and dreams. Laman and Lemuel had been frequently rebuked by a series of beings, both temporal and divine, because of the hardness of their hearts and their unwillingness to humble themselves that they might be guided and directed by the Spirit of God. Unwilling to accept their chastisement with good grace, they simply became cynical. “God will not tell us, unworthy creatures, anything; you and father are the only ones who are so blessed!”

*1.5.36.25* The specific commandments had to do with personal prayer, although there were no doubt other problems in the lives of Laman and Lemuel that were hindering their spiritual progress. Disobedience to the law of God is followed by an unwillingness to approach His throne in prayer. There is an uneasiness in the hearts of the wicked that fears light and truth. The hardness of one's heart is not directly caused by sin, but rather by a willful avoidance of the consequences of sin. We have a tendency to inure ourselves against the suffering of our souls which disobedience invariably brings. The inuring is best described as a hardening of the heart.

*1.5.36.26* We are not privy to exactly when the Lord uttered these words to the family cited in the passage above, but the fact that Nephi is reminding his brothers of that previous counsel would suggest that it had happened openly. It may have very well been part of a revelation to one of the ancient prophets whose writings were preserved upon the Brass Plates. Lehi had taken time to share much of what had been recorded there with his children. Nephi may simply be reminding them of the time when that commandment had been discussed.

*1.5.36.27* In the Allegory of the Olive Tree, the dying portions of the Tree were to be pruned away and burned. The brothers may have been concerned that the escape from Jerusalem, their having been cut off from the tame olive tree, was merely a preamble to be burned in the wilderness. Nephi pointed out that there were other branches aside from the ones that were going to be destroyed in the fire. These were the "young and tender" branches which were to be placed in the nethermost parts of the vineyard to be nourished and cared for. The complaint of the older brothers had been that all that was good and profitable was being left behind in Jerusalem and that they were going to perish in the wilderness (see 2.11). Nephi assures them that this would not be the case.

*1.5.36.28* Jacob, the brother of Nephi quotes the entire Allegory of Zenos in his writings in order to explain how a people who once having rejected the Son of God could ever be established again as a covenant people.

Behold, my brethren, he that prophesieth, let him prophesy to the understanding of men; for the Spirit speaketh the truth and lieth not. Wherefore, it speaketh of things as they really are, and of things as they really will be; wherefore, these things are manifested unto us plainly, for the salvation of our souls. But behold, we are not witnesses alone in these things; for God also spake them unto prophets of old. But behold, the Jews were a stiffnecked people; and they despised the words of plainness, and killed the prophets, and sought for things that they could not understand. Wherefore, because of their blindness, which blindness came by looking beyond the mark, they must needs fall; for God hath taken away his plainness from them, and delivered unto them many things which they cannot understand, because they desired it. And because they desired it God hath done it, that they may stumble. And now I, Jacob, am led on by the Spirit unto prophesying; for I perceive by the workings of the Spirit which is in me, that by the stumbling of the Jews they will reject the stone upon which they might build and have safe foundation. But behold, according to the scriptures, this stone shall become the great, and the last, and the only sure foundation, upon which the Jews can build. And now, my beloved, how is it possible that these, after having rejected the sure foundation, can ever build upon it, that it may become the head of their corner? Behold, my beloved brethren, I will unfold this mystery unto you; if I do not, by any means, get shaken from my firmness in the Spirit, and stumble because of my over anxiety for you. (Jacob 4:13–18)

*1.5.36.29* The Jews did not mind having prophets among them so long as those holy men spoke in veiled language, cloaking the truth of God in deeply complex metaphorical terms. Nephi had not taught his people the manner of the prophesying of the Jews because he preferred clarity and plainness over obfuscation. In this verse Jacob also gives a clear definition as to what constitutes truth. It is that which reflects absolute reality, whether past, present, or future. There are those today who, like Korihor of old, attempt to persuade the minds of men that truth is relative, that what may be certain for one man may be a base falsehood to another. This, of course, is merely the posturing of an anti-Christ. Those who partake of this spirit will ultimately find themselves upon the wide expanse of eternity with neither rudder nor sail.

*1.5.36.30* One wonders if Jacob's caution to his people had come about because some among them desired to have the truth be a little more rhetorically flexible. Jacob clearly declares the fate of those who entertain this notion in a serious way. The Gospel of Jesus Christ should not be viewed as some sort of intellectual endeavor. One modern prophet, seer, and revelator spoke of this sort of meandering as being in the thick of thin things. The principles of salvation are simple, easy to be understood, filled with hope and charity. Of course, with clarity comes the command to live up to that which one understands. If comprehension can be put off for a while because of the obtuseness of the prophet, so much the better for those presently unwilling to conform their personal conduct to some standard higher than the groveling lusts of a fallen world. When a man sent from God begins the cry of repentance to an unwilling people, almost immediately and almost invariably they seek to take his life. The Jews present the archetypal study in such truculence.

*1.5.36.31* Jacob's citation of the Allegory of Zenos is ostensibly an attempt to demonstrate how the Jews, as a covenant people, could ever hope to obtain salvation having once rejected the Lord God of Israel in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. The Allegory answers the question as to how enduring the promises of God are when once made to his servants. If a generation, fully aware of what it is doing, were to abandon the faith of their fathers, would there ever be an opportunity for the children of those apostates to have the Gospel of Christ extended to them? Our minds and hearts tell us that in the eternal scheme of things there must be such an opportunity. The intriguing thing about the Allegory is that it answers a far more important question for Jacob and his family. The prophets, seers, and revelators of the Nephites had seen in vision that there would come a time when the Nephite civilization would cease to exist, destroyed by the terrible hatred embodied in the ranks of the Lamanites. The blood line of the Nephites, however, would continue among the Lamanites and thus Jacob and Nephi had a vested interest as to what would happen to their seed. Were the transgressions of Laman and Lemuel and the perennial hatred of their posterity so great that no one of their descendants would ever be brought to a knowledge of the plan of salvation? This question is answered directly by the Allegory and, by analogy, the initial question regarding the Jews is also resolved.

*1.5.36.32* The name, person, and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ is the only means in time and in eternity whereby the inhabitants of this earth may find redemption from death and hell, the only means by which they can find peace and comfort, the only means by which they can be reconciled to God the Eternal Father. Scholars frequently point to Psalm 118:22 ("The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner") and Isaiah 28:16 ("Therefore thus saith the

Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste”) as the probable citations to which Jacob was referring, but as we have seen many times before, the Brass Plates contained the writings of many prophets whose names are not included in the text of the Old Testament.

1.5.36.33 Again, the central question has to do with the redemption of a covenant people who had, *en masse*, rejected the light and truth of Heaven and made their apostasy a matter of cultural tradition. How can the promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob be fulfilled if multiple generations of their posterity rejected the Spirit of the Lord? The same is true of those promises made to Lehi, Nephi, and Jacob.

1.5.36.34 The role of a prophet and revelator is a cooperative one with those for whom he has charge. Both the teacher and the student must be filled with the Spirit of God if any lasting effect is to transpire in the lives of the people. Jacob has already been deeply shaken by the pride and lasciviousness of the Nephites, but here hopes that the repentance process is far enough along that they will all be comforted by his words and those of the prophet Zenos. He then relates at length the allegory. Jacob adds his own testimony regarding Zenos in the next chapter.

And now, behold, my brethren, as I said unto you that I would prophesy, behold, this is my prophecy—that the things which this prophet Zenos spake, concerning the house of Israel, in the which he likened them unto a tame olive-tree, must surely come to pass. And the day that he shall set his hand again the second time to recover his people, is the day, yea, even the last time, that the servants of the Lord shall go forth in his power, to nourish and prune his vineyard; and after that the end soon cometh. And how blessed are they who have labored diligently in his vineyard; and how cursed are they who shall be cast out into their own place! And the world shall be burned with fire. And how merciful is our God unto us, for he remembereth the house of Israel, both roots and branches; and he stretches forth his hands unto them all the day long; and they are a stiffnecked and a gainsaying people; but as many as will not harden their hearts shall be saved in the kingdom of God. (Jacob 6:1–4)

1.5.36.35 Jacob has prepared himself to bear fervent testimony regarding the Allegory of Zenos. He knows that it is true because of the revelations of Christ with which he has been blessed. Jacob, like Nephi and Lehi before him, have seen in vision the entire history of the Nephite and Lamanite peoples. They knew that the prophecies of Isaiah dealt directly with their posterity and now Jacob testifies that the prophecies of Zenos did the same.

1.5.36.36 The first general gathering of the House of Israel took place under the direction of Moses and Aaron as the children of Israel were led out of Egypt after generations of slavery. The second gathering of Israel is to transpire near the Second Advent of the Lord Jesus Christ, at the time of his coming in glory to rule as the Messiah for a thousand years. Jacob instructs his readers that the second gathering is treated in the latter verses of the Allegory of Zenos in which the master of the vineyard pruned his vineyard for the last time with the aid of his servants.

1.5.36.37 The world, that is to say those who have partaken of the spirit and substance of this fallen world to the point where they no longer hearken to the voice of God, will be separated from among the righteous. This has been illustrated in the Allegory of Zenos when the “most bitter”

branches, the “bad” are pruned from the olive trees and are burned. This is the fate of the wicked; they will have no place among the righteous but will spend an enormous amount of time elsewhere.

*1.5.36.38* Notwithstanding the bitter fruit produced by the various trees representing Israel and its scattered remnants, the Lord of the vineyard was faithful to those original covenants and did all within His power to provide an opportunity for the trees to be viable and productive. If the trees produced evil fruit, it was the choice of the various generations of the House of Israel, those who chose to be stiff-necked and gainsaying.

*1.5.36.39* Others of the prophets of God among the Nephites also quote Zenos in order to inspire the people to greater obedience to the principles and ordinances of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Alma the younger cites Zenos in order to demonstrate to the Zoramites that they did not need a synagogue in order to worship God

And Alma said unto them: Behold, ye have said that ye could not worship your God because ye are cast out of your synagogues. But behold, I say unto you, if ye suppose that ye cannot worship God, ye do greatly err, and ye ought to search the scriptures; if ye suppose that they have taught you this, ye do not understand them. Do ye remember to have read what Zenos, the prophet of old, has said concerning prayer or worship? For he said: Thou art merciful, O God, for thou hast heard my prayer, even when I was in the wilderness; yea, thou wast merciful when I prayed concerning those who were mine enemies, and thou didst turn them to me. Yea, O God, and thou wast merciful unto me when I did cry unto thee in my field; when I did cry unto thee in my prayer, and thou didst hear me. And again, O God, when I did turn to my house thou didst hear me in my prayer. And when I did turn unto my closet, O Lord, and prayed unto thee, thou didst hear me. Yea, thou art merciful unto thy children when they cry unto thee, to be heard of thee and not of men, and thou wilt hear them. Yea, O God, thou hast been merciful unto me, and heard my cries in the midst of thy congregations. Yea, and thou hast also heard me when I have been cast out and have been despised by mine enemies; yea, thou didst hear my cries, and wast angry with mine enemies, and thou didst visit them in thine anger with speedy destruction. And thou didst hear me because of mine afflictions and my sincerity; and it is because of thy Son that thou hast been thus merciful unto me, therefore I will cry unto thee in all mine afflictions, for in thee is my joy; for thou hast turned thy judgments away from me, because of thy Son. (Alma 33:2–11)

*1.5.36.40* We cannot be certain of the degree to which the Zoramites entertained the reading of the records to be found on the Brass Plates. It is certain that they did not accept the writings of all of the holy prophets from the days of Lehi down to the time of Alma and his brethren. Zoram had apparently adopted certain passages from the writings of Moses and others in order to prop up his own separatist doctrines, but had rejected anything having to do with the promised Messiah. Alma will be quite pointed in his criticism of this studied negligence. Zenos was a prolific writer whose teachings would have been almost common knowledge among the Nephites.

*1.5.36.41* The simple conclusion to be drawn here is that Zenos testified that his fervent prayer was heard by God even though he had made his petition while in the midst of a wild and desolate place. No doubt Zenos found himself in the middle of a desolation because his enemies had driven him out from among them, a notion that could not be completely lost of the poor Zoramites who



had been driven out of the synagogues. Alma's point is that they, too, could pray effectively in the wilderness.

*1.5.36.42* We may not know the precise extremity Zenos was suffering when he prayed in his cultivated field, but it may have been a blessing that he sought for the fruitfulness thereof, perhaps in a time of famine, a common occurrence in his day and age.

*1.5.36.43* In his list of personal sanctuaries, Zenos testifies that he found solace while praying with his family. Other than the injunction to pray frequently in the home, Zenos may have experienced difficulties involving his wife and children that motivated his petitions to God. Each succeeding place of worship has been more confined and more "civilized", demonstrating that the nature of the place to pray is not nearly as important as the attitude with which one seeks out the Father.

*1.5.36.44* It is in the nature of the communion between God and man that prayer becomes effectual. If prayer is no more than a matter of pride in one's rhetoric, the loftiness and grandeur of one's vocabulary together with the sweetness of the rhythm and sound, the petitioner will only want to pray in public. His personal, private prayers will be wanting in scope and sincerity. Prayer is most effective when it springs from the innermost sanctuaries of the heart. God the Father must be worshipped in spirit and truth. Most likely these were not vocal utterances; Zenos would have been far too modest for emotional outbursts that a literal interpretation would imply.

*1.5.36.45* Of course, we have no historical record that describes the trials and tribulations through which the prophet Zenos passed, save for that which he had preserved in his own writings. We should probably assume, however, that it did not differ in type and intensity from the sufferings of the saints in every dispensation.

*1.5.36.46* The record of Zenos must have inspired hope in the hearts of the Zoramites, who otherwise felt themselves to be damned by the prejudice of their brethren. As they hearkened to the words of the prophet testifying of his experiences with prayer in the wilderness, in his field, in his home and closet, they must have begun to realize that they, too, could worship God outside of the synagogue. Just at this moment of burgeoning faith, the second doctrinal issue is introduced. If they have accepted Zenos' testimony regarding the nature of prayer, they would also have to accept his testimony regarding the coming of the Messiah, the Son of God.

*1.5.36.47* In his testimony against the Nephites in the city of Zarahemla, the prophet Samuel commends the conduct of the repenting Lamanites.

And behold, ye do know of yourselves, for ye have witnessed it, that as many of them as are brought to the knowledge of the truth, and to know of the wicked and abominable traditions of their fathers, and are led to believe the holy scriptures, yea, the prophecies of the holy prophets, which are written, which leadeth them to faith on the Lord, and unto repentance, which faith and repentance bringeth a change of heart unto them— Therefore, as many as have come to this, ye know of yourselves are firm and steadfast in the faith, and in the thing wherewith they have been made free. And ye know also that they have buried their weapons of war, and they fear to take them up lest by any means they should sin; yea, ye can see that they fear to sin—for behold they will suffer themselves that they be trodden down and slain by their enemies, and will not lift their swords against them, and this because of their faith in Christ. And now, because of their steadfastness when they do believe in that thing which they do believe, for because of their firmness

when they are once enlightened, behold, the Lord shall bless them and prolong their days, notwithstanding their iniquity— Yea, even if they should dwindle in unbelief the Lord shall prolong their days, until the time shall come which hath been spoken of by our fathers, and also by the prophet Zenos, and many other prophets, concerning the restoration of our brethren, the Lamanites, again to the knowledge of the truth— Yea, I say unto you, that in the latter times the promises of the Lord have been extended to our brethren, the Lamanites; and notwithstanding the many afflictions which they shall have, and notwithstanding they shall be driven to and fro upon the face of the earth, and be hunted, and shall be smitten and scattered abroad, having no place for refuge, the Lord shall be merciful unto them. And this is according to the prophecy, that they shall again be brought to the true knowledge, which is the knowledge of their Redeemer, and their great and true shepherd, and be numbered among his sheep. Therefore I say unto you, it shall be better for them than for you except ye repent. (Helaman 15:7–14)

*1.5.36.48* The posterity of the people of Ammon had lived among the Nephites in the land of Zarahemla for more than seventy years. Thousands of other Lamanite converts had dwelt among the Nephites after their conversion. The Nephites were not unfamiliar with the faithfulness of the Lamanites to the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

*1.5.36.49* Anyone who had lived in the land of Zarahemla would have been familiar with the long-standing commitment of the Ammonites to the principles of righteousness. The children and grand-children of those brought into the fold by the sons of Mosiah were stellar examples of the effect of righteous traditions in the lives of good men and women.

*1.5.36.50* The first covenant had been entered into by the people of King Lamoni and his father at the time their brethren came upon them to destroy the faithful. There were subsequent bodies of men who entered into the same oath of non-aggression. Although we may easily point to the 2,000 stripling warriors who volunteered to join the Nephites in their battle against the forces of Amalekiah and Ammoron, we should probably accept them as being exceptions to the rule. Most of the children of the people of Ammon entered into the covenant of their fathers. Thus, even fifty years after the great war against Amalekiah had ended, the people of Ammon were still noted for their oath.

*1.5.36.51* Mormon had said much the same thing of the people of Ammon when they were received into the land of Zarahemla as brethren of the Nephites. These faithful people had engendered at least two generations of faithful saints, and were well-known throughout the land of Zarahemla. For this capacity to completely repent from their sins, the Lamanites would continue to be preserved.

*1.5.36.52* The nod at Zenos by Samuel is probably in reference to the allegory of Zenos that is related in the writings of Jacob. It is doubtful that Samuel would have had access to the Small Plates of Nephi, but he certainly would have had access to the scriptures contained on the Brass Plates. Many of the Lamanites had received the fullness of the Gospel and in Samuel's day were faithfully observing to do all that the Lord God of Israel required of them. During the 200 years of prosperity and tranquility that would reign after the visit of the Savior to those who had survived the great destruction, all of the inhabitants of the land would live in accordance to the principles of happiness. Eventually, however, all of those who professed any kinship with the faithful would be destroyed,

leaving only those who considered themselves Lamanites to continue in the land. The posterity of those who survived the destruction at the hill Cumorah would be those who would be given the blessing of having the truth revealed to them in the latter days by the text of the Book of Mormon and the influence of the Holy Ghost.

*1.5.36.53* As to the period of time between the destruction of the Nephites and the arrival of the Gentiles we have little information as to how the Lamanites fared in the land. More than a thousand years would pass with little or no history committed to writing. From what we can discern from the indigenous peoples who remain, however, wars and destructions were frequent and severe. The history of the Lamanites since the arrival of the Gentile nations in this hemisphere has been tragic and brutal. Samuel's description of their condition during this time cannot be more accurate in general terms.

*1.5.36.54* Many millions of the posterity of father Lehi have been edified by the power of the priesthood, and they have received all of the blessings that have ever been available to the faithful saints in any dispensation. Many hundreds of millions more will yet receive those same blessings.

### 1.5.37 The Writings of Zenock

*1.5.37.1* In previous citations regarding Zenos, we discovered that Zenock was another of the prophets of the Lord God of Israel whose prophecies were engraved upon the Brass plates. He was undoubtedly of the loins of Joseph, either through Ephraim or Manasseh because Mormon testifies that he was one of the grand progenitors of their race. Zenock and Zenos are cited by Alma and Amulek in order to help the poverty-stricken Zoramites in the land of Antionum to believe in the coming of the Son of God to redeem mankind.

For it is not written that Zenos alone spake of these things, but Zenock also spake of these things— For behold, he said: Thou art angry, O Lord, with this people, because they will not understand thy mercies which thou hast bestowed upon them because of thy Son. And now, my brethren, ye see that a second prophet of old has testified of the Son of God, and because the people would not understand his words they stoned him to death. (Alma 33:15–17)

My brother has called upon the words of Zenos, that redemption cometh through the Son of God, and also upon the words of Zenock; and also he has appealed unto Moses, to prove that these things are true. (Alma 34:7)

*1.5.37.2* The records of both Israelite prophets had been preserved upon the Brass Plates brought by Lehi and his family from Jerusalem to the Americas. We do not know the precise circumstances which generated this fervent prayer on the part of this Israelite prophet, but the history of the covenant people is filled with countless opportunities for such a rebuke. Again, we are not privy to the situation within the community of Israelites which precipitated the martyrdom of the prophet Zenock. If he were stoned by the people in accordance with their perverted misunderstanding of the prophet's teachings, they may have condemned him for heresy. Stoning was established in the Law of Moses to deal with heresy, particularly heresy that involved pagan forms of worship.

*1.5.37.3* We may see in the history of the Nephites that certain apostates were aware of and desired to destroy the righteous through their misinterpretation of the Law. It is clear, for instance, that Sherem sought to wrest the leadership of the people of Nephi from Jacob by making his very accusation against the Lord's servant. We might surmise that something similar was arrayed against Zenock as he attempted to teach the principles of Christianity to a people who were unwilling to exercise faith or repent of their sins.

### 1.5.38 The Writings of Neum

*1.5.38.1* As far as can be seen, the reference in 1 Nephi 19:10 is the only citation attributed to the Israelite prophet Neum.

And the God of our fathers, who were led out of Egypt, out of bondage, and also were preserved in the wilderness by him, yea, the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, yieldeth himself, according to the words of the angel, as a man, into the hands of wicked men, to be lifted up, according to the words of Zenock, and to be crucified, according to the words of Neum, and to be buried in a sepulchre, according to the words of Zenos, which he spake concerning the three days of darkness, which should be a sign given of his death unto those who should inhabit the isles of the sea, more especially given unto those who are of the house of Israel. (1 Nephi 19:10)

*1.5.38.2* Some scholars have suggested that the can also be spelled as Nehum, Nechem, Nahum, or even Nehemiah in its full form. Although the temptation is great to do so, we may not say with certainty that Neum and the minor prophet Nahum are the same person. There is nothing in the current version that we have of Nahum's writings which would reflect the fact that the Messiah was to be crucified. This could, however, be the result of elisions made by the Jews in the purge of Christian themes from their scriptures, during the first century following the death of Jesus.

*1.5.38.3* To know the truth from God is a wonderful thing. It nourishes the soul, delights the mind and heart of those who peruse it implications. To have before us the testimonies of ancient Apostles and prophets constitutes a treasure immeasurable. The Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price only adds to our enjoyment. The promise that there are yet many other servants of God whose records have been preserved and will one day be directly available should thrill the heart of every righteous man who has ever felt the power of the spirit of the Lord. The expectation that we will one day take the hand of these great messengers of the Kingdom in fellowship is an expectation almost inexpressible.

### 1.5.39 The Writings of Ezias

*1.5.39.1* Ezias was another ancient prophet who is mentioned only once in the scriptures (see Helaman 8:20), but clearly he was a man of great faith who testified of the coming of the Son of God into the world.

And now I would that ye should know, that even since the days of Abraham there have been many prophets that have testified these things; yea, behold, the prophet Zenos did testify boldly; for the which he was slain. And behold, also Zenock, and also Ezias, and also Isaiah, and Jeremiah, (Jeremiah being that same prophet who testified of the destruction of Jerusalem) and now we know that Jerusalem was destroyed according to the words of Jeremiah. O then why not the Son of God come, according to his prophecy? (Helaman 8:19–20)

*1.5.39.2* Some scholars have suggested that Ezias might possibly be equated with Esaias, a contemporary of Abraham who was blessed by the latter. If our supposition be correct, that Nephi's list of prophets lived after the days of both Moses and Abraham, Ezias would be another prophet who pertained to the House of Israel rather than one who did not.

#### 1.5.40 The Law and the Writings of Moses

*1.5.40.1* At the time that Nephi and his brethren were attempting to retrieve the Brass Plates, the prophet was confronted with a disturbing dilemma. It had become increasingly clear that obtaining the record was going to be a difficult task. When Nephi was presented with an opportunity to gain access to the plates at the expense of Laban's life he felt a great hesitancy to take his enemy's life.

And it came to pass that I was constrained by the Spirit that I should kill Laban; but I said in my heart: Never at any time have I shed the blood of man. And I shrunk and would that I might not slay him. And the Spirit said unto me again: Behold the Lord hath delivered him into thy hands. Yea, and I also knew that he had sought to take away mine own life; yea, and he would not hearken unto the commandments of the Lord; and he also had taken away our property. And it came to pass that the Spirit said unto me again: Slay him, for the Lord hath delivered him into thy hands; Behold the Lord slayeth the wicked to bring forth his righteous purposes. It is better that one man should perish than that a nation should dwindle and perish in unbelief. And now, when I, Nephi, had heard these words, I remembered the words of the Lord which he spake unto me in the wilderness, saying that: Inasmuch as thy seed shall keep my commandments, they shall prosper in the land of promise. Yea, and I also thought that they could not keep the commandments of the Lord according to the law of Moses, save they should have the law. And I also knew that the law was engraven upon the plates of brass. And again, I knew that the Lord had delivered Laban into my hands for this cause—that I might obtain the records according to his commandments. Therefore I did obey the voice of the Spirit, and took Laban by the hair of the head, and I smote off his head with his own sword. (1 Nephi 4:10–18)

*1.5.40.2* The struggle that Nephi had at this moment in his life would set him apart from all those around him. In some respects he found himself in much the same situation morally as Abraham when the Patriarch was commanded by God to offer up his only son Isaac upon an altar at Mount Moriah. Abraham knew for himself the great tribulations associated with human sacrifice in general and the offering of one's own children in particular. His father Terah had attempted his life by way of the priest of Elkenah. Nephi had been taught that the taking of another's life was contrary to the will of God; the Law of Moses had been quite specific about that commandment. His immediate hesitancy is a reflection of the wonderful manner in which Nephi had been taught by his parents.

*1.5.40.3* The argument of the Spirit is one that does not change. The Lord God of Israel wanted Laban ushered into a place where he could do no more damage to himself or to anyone else. Nephi is to be an executioner rather than a murderer. There are those, however, in the simplicity of their understanding of the mind and will of God who do not hesitate to condemn both Nephi and God for what is about to happen. Nephi first hesitates to kill Laban because he has never done anything like that before. We ought to remember that Nephi is probably no older than sixteen years of age. Upon reflecting upon his experiences with Laban, Nephi remembers that without question Laban is an apostate, a thief, and a murderer.

*1.5.40.4* Notwithstanding the justifications that Nephi can provide for himself as to why Laban should be killed, the Spirit of the Lord refocuses Nephi's mind and heart upon the task at hand. It is not because that Laban is an apostate, thief, or murderer that his life is forfeit; it is because the drunken man has been weighed in the balance and found wanting. The Lord has decreed his death. Any other approach to the taking of Laban's life would be injurious to Nephi's soul.

*1.5.40.5* The Lord slays; Nephi does not slay. The Lord has righteous purposes which the mind of a young man could not fathom at this early time in his life. Nephi has "good" reasons for taking Laban's life, but they are not the Lord's reasons. The Spirit reminds Nephi that the future of his father's posterity hangs in the balance. Laban stands in the way of the Lord's righteous purposes with regard to His covenant people, with those who are willing to obey Him. Without the Brass Plates, the entire purpose for the which Lehi and his family have been chosen will be frustrated.

*1.5.40.6* Nephi is led along in his thinking by the Spirit of God so that his motivation for taking Laban's life is more in harmony with that of the Lord. Laban should die, not because he has been rude and abusive to Nephi and his brethren, but because he was not willing to do the Lord's will. Were the truth to be known, we most certainly would discover that Laban's recalcitrance to deliver up the Brass Plates had to do as much with his antipathy towards God as it did in his antipathy toward Lehi and his family. Lehi is desirous to keep the commandments of God as is Nephi. And, like every righteous man who has ever lived upon the earth, they desire that their endless posterity do the same. All of the blessings extended to Lehi and Nephi are based on obedience to the law of God. Obedience could not be accomplished in ignorance or forgetfulness. Hence, the inestimable value of the Brass Plates which Laban in his wickedness had withheld from the covenant people.

*1.5.40.7* Principles of general goodness might be adequately communicated from generation by good people. The commandments of the Lord in the days of Lehi and his family included all of the rituals and timely sacrifices associated with the Law of Moses. No one could possibly have transmitted the minutia associated with that set of carnal commandments through one generation, much less the dozens that might be required in the process of time.

*1.5.40.8* The Plates of Brass contained the genealogical records of Lehi family, as interesting and informative as that might be. It also contained the words of the prophets from the beginning, a reflection of the Lord God's dealings with His servants. But most importantly, the Plates contained the entire Law of Moses which would preserve the posterity of Lehi in righteousness for more than six hundred years.

*1.5.40.9* Nephi recognizes that Laban is not prostrate before him so that he might take revenge, or that he might make a preemptive strike against that which Laban might do in the future. Laban is there because of the Brass Plates, prostrate so that he might be dealt with in an appropriate fashion, so that record of the Jews might come to be in the possession of those whom God the Father willed should have it.

*1.5.40.10* Thus the deed was done with the rationale of the Lord God of Israel in the forefront. Had Nephi killed Laban with any other motive in his heart, he would have eventually withered from guilt and despair. He might have become like unto his own murderous brothers. He might have contemplated taking their lives, especially when they became as vicious and persecuting as Laban had been. The Lord through His Spirit guided Nephi in all that he did so that when difficult acts were required of the young man, he was not destroyed by mistaken notions or misconduct of any kind.

*1.5.40.11* When the sons of Lehi returned to their father in the wilderness, the family immediately perused the Brass Plates in some detail as to their contents.

And after they had given thanks unto the God of Israel, my father, Lehi, took the records which were engraven upon the plates of brass, and he did search them from the beginning. And he beheld that they did contain the five books of Moses, which gave an account of the creation of the world, and also of Adam and Eve, who were our first parents; (1 Nephi 5:10–11)

*1.5.40.12* Lehi and Nephi would continually cite from the record of Moses in their attempts to encourage the family to press forward in their travels in faith and unity. Nephi in particular found great solace in the writings of Isaiah and Moses.

For behold, I have workings in the spirit, which doth weary me even that all my joints are weak, for those who are at Jerusalem; for had not the Lord been merciful, to show unto me concerning them, even as he had prophets of old, I should have perished also. And he surely did show unto the prophets of old all things concerning them; and also he did show unto many concerning us; wherefore, it must needs be that we know concerning them for they are written upon the plates of brass. Now it came to pass that I, Nephi, did teach my brethren these things; and it came to pass that I did read many things to them, which were engraven upon the plates of brass, that they might know concerning the doings of the Lord in other lands, among people of old. And I did read many things unto them which were written in the books of Moses; but that I might more fully persuade them to believe in the Lord their Redeemer I did read unto them that which was written by the prophet Isaiah; for I did liken all scriptures unto us, that it might be for our profit and learning. (1 Nephi 19:20–23)

*1.5.40.13* Lehi and Nephi were perfectly aware that the city of Jerusalem would soon be destroyed by the Babylonians. They knew just as assuredly as Jeremiah and the other prophets had known what was about to transpire. Lehi would relate to his family the open vision which he had of the destruction of their homeland. Nephi does not describe in detail any visions that he may have had regarding the fall of the Kingdom of Judah and of the ravishing of the city, but his spiritual knowledge regarding their fate and of the horrors which were about to descend upon them distressed him deeply. His sentiments were similar to those of any man who is aware of having just escaped a violent and painful death.

*1.5.40.14* Nephi saw his developing circumstances clearly as a fulfillment of prophecies which he found written upon the Plates of Brass. It is a wonderful but startling experience to suddenly come face to face with the foreknowledge of God and that of His chosen servants.

*1.5.40.15* Perhaps at this point it would be well to review the original chapter divisions that appeared in the First Edition of the Book of Mormon in order to explain the division which appears here between verses 21 and 22 of the current format. In doing so, we ought not to disparage the efforts of any, neither the composers of the First Edition nor those who attempted with the current format to make the text more readily accessible to the students of the Book of Mormon. Chapter I related those events which brought about the escape from Jerusalem by Lehi and his family together with the retrieval of the Brass Plates from Laban. Chapter II recounted the invitation of the family of Ishmael to join Lehi on his journey to the promised land, together with his accounting of the Vision of the Tree of Life. Chapter III narrates Nephi's own experiences with the messengers of God and the Vision of the Tree of Life and other revelations. Chapter IV contains Nephi's explanation of the Vision to his older brothers. Chapter V contains a short history of the company's travels in the wilderness, their eventual arrival in the promised land, and Nephi's teachings to his brethren from the Brass Plates, particularly the archetypal aspects of Moses' experiences in the wilderness, together with the writings of men like Zenos who apparently had seen his posterity in some detail.

*1.5.40.16* After suffering at the hands of his elder brethren, Nephi and those associated with them sought to gain formal independence from their oppressions by escaping into the mountain east of the original settlement of the land of Lehi on the western shores of the Americas. There they established a flourishing community in the land that they called Nephi. In their journeying, they took with them all of the religious artifacts with which they had been blessed since departing from the city of Jerusalem, including the Brass Plates.

And it came to pass that the Lord did warn me, that I, Nephi, should depart from them and flee into the wilderness, and all those who would go with me. 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. (2 Nephi 5:5–10)

*1.5.40.17* Notwithstanding the daily attempts to subvert his leadership, many of which impinged upon his life, Nephi was willing to continue to do his best to guide and bless the company as a whole. Nephi's departure from the land of their first inheritance came as the result of a direct commandment from the Lord.

*1.5.40.18* Nephi, Sam, and Nephi had taken wives from among the daughters of Ishmael and had begun having children of their own. It would appear that the separation of the Nephites from



the Lamanites took place at a time when Jacob and Joseph were still quite young. The same should probably be concluded about the marital status of the daughters of Lehi and Sariah, that they were still quite young. The marriages that had taken place between the families of Lehi and Ishmael, had primarily been between the sons of Lehi and the daughters of Ishmael. This is the first mention of Nephi's sisters. We are not certain as to when they were born, but it seems likely that they came into the world under similar circumstances as had Jacob and Joseph and about the same period of time. We have no indication as to the nature or timing of the death of Sariah. Apparently there were other members of the company who accepted the leadership of Nephi and accepted his divine appointment to teach the truth. Were these individuals children of those who had rejected Nephi as the prophet, seer, and revelator? We do not know, but their departure certainly would have added to the hatred which Laman and his party felt toward Nephi. They could have only concluded, given their mental state, that those people must have been kidnapped; they surely would not have left on their own.

*1.5.40.19* The nature of the journey to the land of Nephi had to be difficult enough to persuade the Lamanites not to follow after their brethren. The flight would have been swift and dangerous; none of the company could have managed their sojourn had they not been strengthened by the power of the Lord God of Israel. In a literal fashion Nephi's humble prayer as answered as his path was cleared before him and the way of his enemies was hedged up. The Lord through Nephi put as much distance and wilderness as was possible between the righteous and the wicked. On the one hand was the strength of the Nephites to travel with little children and women a great distance through difficult territory; on the other was the determination of the warriors of the Lamanites to follow after those who had, in their opinion, "robbed" them of a portion of their means and dominion. This journey into the wilderness might have been affected by merely leaving their first encampment in the land. Everything in the Americas at that time was certainly desolate and inhabited with nothing but wild animals. It is most likely that part of the wilderness involved mountainous terrain.

*1.5.40.20* Nephi would have no more referred to the place where they settled as the land of Nephi any more than Mormon would have called his collection of plates by his own name. In the latter case, the name of the Book of Mormon was given by Mormon's son, Moroni. The tenderness of the feelings that his people had for Nephi were just as poignant as the son had for his father.

*1.5.40.21* Even though Nephi was guided and directed in all that he did by the hand of God, his family and friends perceived him to be their deliverer from sorrow and oppression and thus honored him in numerous ways as a result. One may only imagine, and that faintly, the great humility which came into the heart and mind of Nephi, knowing that he was honored by his people because he had honored God the Father.

*1.5.40.22* Although Nephi chooses not to give a detailed account of their observance of the Law of Moses, it must certainly was the case that they followed the Law in all of their dealings with one another. This strict conformity to the Law of Moses would continue among the righteous until the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ would declare to the faithful that it had been fulfilled in him. We may rightly assume that the Nephites conscientiously obeyed the letter of the Law of Moses in all of their dealings one with another. It would have constituted their civil law as well as their theological law. By the observance of the statutes we may understand that the Nephites observed the times and seasons that had been established by Moses. They would have observed to offer up sacrifices and

celebrate the timely feasts appointed to them. The commandments is certainly in reference to the totality of the Law of Moses, but more specifically to the ongoing principle of revelation that was among them. Continuous revelation would be their salvation, and inasmuch as they hearkened to the counsel given to them from God through Nephi, they would prosper.

*1.5.40.23* Having been firmly settled in the land of Nephi, the righteous men and women of Lehi's posterity continued to observe all that pertained to the Law of Moses, including the building of Temple unto the Most High God. This could only have been accomplished by referring to the record of Moses and subsequent prophets whose writings could be found on the Brass Plates.

And I did teach my people to build buildings, and to work in all manner of wood, and of iron, and of copper, and of brass, and of steel, and of gold, and of silver, and of precious ores, which were in great abundance. And I, Nephi, did build a temple; and I did construct it after the manner of the temple of Solomon save it were not built of so many precious things; for they were not to be found upon the land, wherefore, it could not be built like unto Solomon's temple. But the manner of the construction was like unto the temple of Solomon; and the workmanship thereof was exceedingly fine. (2 Nephi 5:15–16)

*1.5.40.24* Nephi does not directly tell us if the materials by which he raised the first buildings in the land of Nephi included stone. Many scholars have assumed so because of the great number of stone building to be found in ancient America. Most of the visible monolithic structures, however, do not date back to Nephi's time. If the Nephite buildings were made of timber, which seems likely under the circumstances, little would remain two and one-half millennia later. Nephi had become expert in the shaping of wood as part of his experience in constructing the ship. When Lehi's company first arrived in the promised land, they found gold, silver, and copper in great abundance, together with other unnamed ores. Apparently in the land of Nephi, iron was found in abundance, together with other minerals, which made the forging of iron and copper alloys possible. Again, Nephi's understanding of metals served him in good stead as the little community attempt to provide for itself. All of the necessary tools and implements required for such a frontier settlement were available through Nephi's knowledge and wisdom in these matters.

*1.5.40.25* Nephi's Temple may have differed in major ways, depending on the kinds of material which were available to him. Given the smaller population of the Nephite nation at the time, it may have been that cut stone was not the primary building material. Furthermore, the books of Moses are quite explicit regarding the manner in which the Tabernacle in the wilderness was constructed. In some respects, the permanent Temple in Jerusalem was merely a stone rendition, twice the dimensions of the original Tabernacle made from wood and skins. The Temple of Solomon was one designated for uses pertaining to the Law of Moses and the ordinances of the Aaronic Priesthood. There are indications, however, that that edifice also had some provisions for the ordinances of the Melchizedek Priesthood, although they would have been limited in scope. The Nephites performed the sacrifices and other ordinances of the Levitical law under the auspices of the Melchizedek Priesthood, and no doubt enjoyed the blessings of the higher priesthood as well. Their temple would have reflected those greater blessings. One wonders, with the abundance of gold, silver, copper, and iron what precious materials were lacking in the building of the temple in the

land of Nephi. The first item that comes to mind is the cedar wood which was used to line the interior of Solomon's Temple. Certain kinds of woven cloth and animal pelts may not have had their counterparts in the promised land at the time Nephi constructed the House of the Lord.

*1.5.40.26* Nephi and his followers knew precisely what the intent of the Law had been when it was given to the House of Israel in the days of Moses. They knew also that the whole of Jacob's posterity was to observe the Law until the times and seasons were changed at the time of the mortal ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ.

For we labor diligently to write, to persuade our children, and also our brethren, to believe in Christ, and to be reconciled to God; for we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do. And, notwithstanding we believe in Christ, we keep the law of Moses, and look forward with steadfastness unto Christ, until the law shall be fulfilled. For, for this end was the law given; wherefore the law hath become dead unto us, and we are made alive in Christ because of our faith; yet we keep the law because of the commandments. And we talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ, and we write according to our prophecies, that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins. Wherefore, we speak concerning the law that our children may know the deadness of the law; and they, by knowing the deadness of the law, may look forward unto that life which is in Christ, and know for what end the law was given. And after the law is fulfilled in Christ, that they need not harden their hearts against him when the law ought to be done away. (2 Nephi 25:23–27)

*1.5.40.27* In their efforts to teach the people in their own communities, recording detailed accounts of their ministries, the Nephite prophets preserved their witness of the Savior, a witness that eventually would bear testimony in all the world. The testimony of the Nephites was that there is no other name under heaven by which men can be saved than that of Jesus Christ. It seems almost impossible that any honest man could find anything other than that testimony within the pages of the Book of Mormon. The atonement of Jesus Christ makes reconciliation possible, as we take upon ourselves the covenants of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, repentance from all sin, and acceptance of all of the saving ordinances that have been established by the will and word of God the Eternal Father. No true disciple of Jesus Christ can believe that there is any aggregate of activities or performances that can bring us to God without the intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace does come, however, after all we can do to invoke that grace. They are simple acts, indeed, well within our abilities as mortal beings, thus once again manifesting the mercy of our God.

*1.5.40.28* We are not given graphic details as to how the Nephites observed the Law of Moses, but we must assume that one of the principle reasons for the sons of Lehi's return to Jerusalem to acquire the Brass Plates from Laban was so they could have a perfect description as to how they should keep the Law of Moses. The sacrifices that were offered in the wilderness and then later at the Temple in the lands of Nephi and Zarahemla were done under the auspices of the Melchizedek Priesthood, the Aaronic priesthood not pertaining to either of the tribes to which Lehi and Ishmael belonged. There would be several attempts by apostates among the Nephites to reject the ordinances pertaining to the Law of Moses. The righteous Nephites, however, meticulously observed the Law until after the visit of the resurrected Christ. Fulfillment of the Law did not transpire among the faithful until the Savior's atoning sacrifice was complete.

*1.5.40.29* The Law of Moses was a lesser law pointing toward a greater law; that is, the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. As Paul the Apostle would write later to the Hebrews, the Law of Moses, together with the lesser priesthood by which it was administered, was given to the Israelites because of transgression. The children of Israel had rejected the fullness of the Gospel of Christ at the foot of Mount Sinai. The Nephites observed the Law of Moses because that was the commandment of the Father to them. The effect for which that Law was designed was meaningless to the Nephites inasmuch as they already enjoyed the fullness of truth promised to those who would keep the preparatory Gospel.

*1.5.40.30* Nephi himself knows of his own redemption from sin and death, has absolute confidence in the atonement of Jesus Christ. Yet, for him that is not sufficient. His eternal happiness cannot be complete without those same blessings coming to those whom he loves. It is intriguing that there were some among the Nephites who balked a bit when the Law was no longer to be observed by them. Jesus himself had to command them directly.

*1.5.40.31* Jacob, the brother of Nephi, observes that the keeping of the Law of Moses had beneficial effects on the hearts and minds of the people of Nephi.

Now in this thing we do rejoice; and we labor diligently to engraven these words upon plates, hoping that our beloved brethren and our children will receive them with thankful hearts, and look upon them that they may learn with joy and not with sorrow, neither with contempt, concerning their first parents. For, for this intent have we written these things, that they may know that we knew of Christ, and we had a hope of his glory many hundred years before his coming; and not only we ourselves had a hope of his glory, but also all the holy prophets which were before us. Behold, they believed in Christ and worshiped the Father in his name, and also we worship the Father in his name. And for this intent we keep the law of Moses, it pointing our souls to him; and for this cause it is sanctified unto us for righteousness, even as it was accounted unto Abraham in the wilderness to be obedient unto the commands of God in offering up his son Isaac, which is a similitude of God and his Only Begotten Son. Wherefore, we search the prophets, and we have many revelations and the spirit of prophecy; and having all these witnesses we obtain a hope, and our faith becometh unshaken, insomuch that we truly can command in the name of Jesus and the very trees obey us, or the mountains, or the waves of the sea. (Jacob 4:3–6)

*1.5.40.32* Jacob and the other Nephite prophets wrote so that truth would ultimately triumph over tradition. Both the Lamanites and the Nephites suffered under the weight of the mistakes and prejudices of their ancestors. One of the major purposes of their writings was to present the teachings of Christ in such a way so as to stir up faith in the hearts of their posterity. When the time came for the Gospel of Christ to be revealed to them, the children of the Lamanites should not look upon their direct ancestors with disdain. Nor should the descendants of the Nephites look with disdain upon the failure of their ancestors to maintain their righteousness. All of the children of Lehi should find contentment in the fact that the Lord looked down upon them in mercy and compassion, foreseeing their needs and fulfilling their eventual desires many centuries in anticipation.

*1.5.40.33* One of the great tragedies among the Nephites was the difficulty they had in believing that any man could know of future events with exacting detail. Thus, belief in a coming Messiah, in many instances, was strenuously resisted. We find similar disbelief in the minds and hearts of the

peoples of the earth, particularly among those who consider themselves learned and sophisticated. The disbelief of the Lamanites and of the Nephites did not hinder in any way the appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ to them after his resurrection from the dead. No amount of incredulity will hinder the coming of the Son of Man in glory to redeem and to perfect this earth as a Celestial habitation for the just.

*1.5.40.34* Jacob's appeal to the ancient prophets of Israel is justifiable. While the primary task of most of those holy men was to call a recalcitrant people to repentance, they invariably bore solemn testimony of the future redemption of mankind through the offices of the Messiah. A man cannot be a true prophet of God without a personal witness of the living Christ. Thus, in the writings of Abraham, Moses, David, Isaiah, Zechariah and a host of others may be found fervent expressions of hope and anticipation, looking forward to the day when the power of God would be wielded against the powers of hell and death. There are many within the pale of traditional Christianity who have grave doubts as to whether Gospel of Jesus Christ was known among the covenant peoples who lived before the birth of the Savior. However, there is a bright cloud of witnesses assuring us that the Father of all has been active in revealing to His children the promise of salvation through His Son. Jacob's imagery is similar to that of the Apostle Paul who refers to the Law of Moses as the schoolmaster, or the students' guide, to the teacher sent from God. Amaleki, in rebuking the wicked priests of Noah, will attribute to the Law the power to bring salvation into the lives of the faithful because it testified of the coming of a fullness through the revelations of Jesus Christ. The sacrifice of Isaac by his father Abraham is one of the most sublime stories told in all of sacred writ, and yet few acknowledge the profound theological impact that the experience had on Abraham's family. Were Abraham, Sarah, and Isaac all knowledgeable and conscious Christians? In every sense and sentiment of the word, and more so than most of those today who profess discipleship to Jesus of Nazareth.

*1.5.40.35* The Nephites partook of scripture study, personal prayer, obedience to the truth as inspired by the Spirit of God. As a result, their personal experiences with the Lord God of Israel assured them of their acceptability before Him and aided them as they pressed forward along the path of salvation towards the fulfillment of the promises that have been divinely extended to them. These were not weak-minded or intimidated people; they had become saints of God in full fellowship with the angels of Heaven. The writings of the prophets appeared on the Brass Plates and those preserved on the Plates of Nephi, both Small and Large. The Nephites were the beneficiaries of continual revelation for nearly a thousand years. We are somewhat familiar with the power of faithful priesthood bearers in conjunction with the waves of the sea. Lehi's family preserved their account of their travails upon the great waters. One wonders, however, what set of circumstances required the obedience of trees or that of mountains. Perhaps some of these things transpired as the Nephites were required to flee into the land of Nephi in order to be preserved against the fury of their brethren, the Lamanites.

*1.5.40.36* Jacob's grandson, Jarom, testifies of the direct temporal blessings that came into the lives of the isolated Nephites as they conformed to the requirements of the Law of Moses.

Wherefore, the prophets, and the priests, and the teachers, did labor diligently, exhorting with all long-suffering the people to diligence; teaching the law of Moses, and the intent for which it was given; persuading them to look forward unto the Messiah, and believe in him to come as

though he already was. And after this manner did they teach them. And it came to pass that by so doing they kept them from being destroyed upon the face of the land; for they did prick their hearts with the word, continually stirring them up unto repentance. (Jarom 1:11–12)

*1.5.40.37* The purpose in believing in the Messiah as if he had already come was to aid the Nephites in their belief in the remission of their sins. Those living before the birth of Jesus experienced some difficulty in believing that they could be forgiven of their sins prior to the atonement having taken place. Those of us who have lived after the Lord's mortal ministry have a similar problem, in that we have to accept the notion that Jesus could suffer for sins that had not yet been committed. If we accept into our minds and hearts the truth that the God of Heaven is not hindered in His knowledge by what appears to be the limitations of time, our faith in the sacrifice of His Son easily blossoms. All time, past, present, and future, is continually before His eyes and thus He has long since anticipated all that would be required to bring His children back into His presence, purified, sanctified, and glorified. The repentance of the Nephites was probably not due to infractions against the Law of Moses so much as it was a negligence of their duty as disciples of Christ, a far more difficult body of commandments to live.

*1.5.40.38* King Benjamin, the second of the great prophet rulers of the people of the land of Nephi, called his people together one last time in order to announce his succor, Mosiah, and to give unto them a covenant that would give meaning to and transcend the symbolism of the Law of Moses.

And it came to pass that after Mosiah had done as his father had commanded him, and had made a proclamation throughout all the land, that the people gathered themselves together throughout all the land, that they might go up to the temple to hear the words which king Benjamin should speak unto them. And there were a great number, even so many that they did not number them; for they had multiplied exceedingly and waxed great in the land. And they also took of the firstlings of their flocks, that they might offer sacrifice and burnt offerings according to the law of Moses; And also that they might give thanks to the Lord their God, who had brought them out of the land of Jerusalem, and who had delivered them out of the hands of their enemies, and had appointed just men to be their teachers, and also a just man to be their king, who had established peace in the land of Zarahemla, and who had taught them to keep the commandments of God, that they might rejoice and be filled with love towards God and all men. (Mosiah 2:1–4)

*1.5.40.39* We do not know how great the size of the population of the land of Zarahemla was in the year 124 BC. The people of Mosiah 1 were relatively small when compared to the entire population of the land of inheritance. They were the righteous who were willing to flee out of the land of Nephi at the behest of the Lord. According to their own account, the Mulekites had been devastated by civil war. From the time of Mosiah's arrival with the Nephites, the two peoples had been confronted with various wars with the Lamanites who had followed the Nephites into the wilderness, particularly during the early years of King Benjamin's reign. That the proclamation could be made in one day and the gathering take place the next seems more than likely. Notwithstanding the limitations that we may articulate regarding the numbers that could be gathered to the temple in Zarahemla, the fact remains that for the time and place an extraordinary response to King Benjamin's request took place.

*1.5.40.40* Under the Law of Moses there were three kinds of animal sacrifices that could have been offered at the time. The first would have been sacrifice for sin, or trespass offering; this offering was based on the assumption that a reconciliation was required between men or between men and their God. The second would have been a peace offering; the assumption in this offering was that all concerned were expressing a deep and abiding gratitude for the blessings with which they had been blessed. The third was the burnt offering, the eternal symbol of complete consecration of the worshipper to the God of Heaven of all that he is or every will be. Clearly there were many who were willing to enter into a covenant of total commitment to God the Eternal Father and His Son the Lord Jesus Christ.

*1.5.40.41* If we assume that what Mormon means by “sacrifice” and “burnt offerings” mentioned in verse 3 have reference to the first and third kinds of possible offerings that might have been made under the Law of Moses, then we may assume with some certainty that the offerings mentioned here have to do with the second sort; that is to say, having to do with the “peace” offerings. Therefore, there were those who came to the temple repentant of all their wickedness, wishing to be reconciled with all those they had offended, in preparation for the blessings which King Benjamin had promised them. We may rest assured that there were also those who were further along in their eternal progress, filled with eternal gratitude and willing to do all that the Lord their God might require of them.

*1.5.40.42* King Benjamin becomes quite candid about the significance and merits of the Law of Moses in his teaching of the people of Zarahemla.

And the Lord God hath sent his holy prophets among all the children of men, to declare these things to every kindred, nation, and tongue, that thereby whosoever should believe that Christ should come, the same might receive remission of their sins, and rejoice with exceedingly great joy, even as though he had already come among them. Yet the Lord God saw that his people were a stiffnecked people, and he appointed unto them a law, even the law of Moses. And many signs, and wonders, and types, and shadows showed he unto them, concerning his coming; and also holy prophets spake unto them concerning his coming; and yet they hardened their hearts, and understood not that the law of Moses availeth nothing except it were through the atonement of his blood. (Mosiah 3:13–15)

*1.5.40.43* Ultimately the ignorant will also be left without excuse, inasmuch as everyone, whether living or dead, will have the opportunity to accept the principles and ordinances of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. We possess the records of the Jews by which we may perceive the labors of the living prophets of their day. Needless to say, this represents but one tribe of all of the tribes of Israel. Did not the others have emissaries sent unto them as well? What may we say of the children of men who dwelt upon the earth before the time of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? Were they not subject to edification and eventual exaltation? Yes they were and we have some of the accounts that relate the effective ministries of the prophets of God among them. What of those who lived afar off, who for whatever reason, were not acquainted with the God of Heaven? Perhaps prophets were sent unto them as well, even though we do not at present have anything that would speak of their successes among them. Since the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ every nation, kindred, tongue, and people in the world of spirits began to have the spirits of the just among them, testifying of the Christ

and of the path of righteousness. We do not doubt that multitudes have responded to their labors. Hence, the importance of correlating that which we know upon the earth with the realities which prevail in the spirit world, that the saving ordinances might be performed for and in their behalf.

*1.5.40.44* Notwithstanding the faithfulness of men like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob the covenant family frequently fell on hard spiritual times. Moses, with a high hand, led the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt accompanied by miracles of every kind. In the wilderness as they suffered from the elements, the power of the priesthood of God was manifested before their eyes, providing for their various needs, preserving them from death and destruction. Yet, as they camped at the foot of the holy mountain, while the servant of God was receiving the fullness of the plan of salvation and happiness for them, the posterity of Jacob reverted to the unwholesome practices of the heathen and debauched themselves in the sight of their God and prophet. Rather than destroy them as they richly deserved, the Lord God gave a lesser Law, a preparatory Gospel by which they might be carefully led along in a degree of righteousness until the dispensation of the Meridian of Time wherein the Son of God would make his appearance.

*1.5.40.45* Of all people who lived upon the earth, the posterity of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob should have understood the prophetic means by which they had been instructed. They deliberately chose to be ignorant, closing their ears and eyes that they might not hear or see, and by rejecting the spirit of the Lord through the practice of wickedness and abominations of every hue. Signs are outward manifestations of the power of God, usually in conjunction with the ordinances of the priesthood. Thus, we may consider baptism to be the “sign” of faith and repentance in the life of the disciple. The dove may serve as the outward “sign” of the presence of the Holy Ghost, as in the case of the baptism of the Lord Jesus Christ. The miracles performed among the children of Israel, all pointed to the ministry of the Messiah. Consider the ten plagues visited upon the Egyptians, and particularly the last, the death of the firstborn in every household that would not accept the sign of the Passover on the beams of their doorways. The miraculous provision of living water and bread from heaven which the Lord gave Israel in the wilderness constitute substantive symbols of the atonement of Christ. The sacrifices offered up in accordance with the Law of Moses were archetypal of the sacrifice of the Only Begotten Son of God, as was the sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham. The details included in the instructions for the sacrifice should not be ignored inasmuch as they reveal much of the life and ministry of the Savior. A shadow is merely an indication of a reality which is not yet visible. Thus, as the intensity of the light increases, even the humblest may discern the imminent arrival of something otherwise hidden from sight. In this sense shadows and types are sometimes equated. Many prophets testified of the coming of Christ to the children of Israel. We are in possession of a number of their histories and works, but not all. No doubt these are laid up in store for a day in which they may come unto the righteous. Even today there are many of the covenant people who do not comprehend the significance of the sacrifices of Israel. Adam, the first man upon the earth, was specifically taught the significance of animal sacrifice and its direct correlation to the sacrifice of the Son of God.

*1.5.40.46* The sons of Mosiah achieved extraordinary success in their endeavors to teach their brethren of the Lamanites in the land of Nephi. These converts were alive in Christ, and yet their



benefactors taught them that notwithstanding their testimony of the Son of God, they would be required to observe the Law of Moses as well for the time being.

And it came to pass that when the Lamanites saw that they could not overpower the Nephites they returned again to their own land; and many of them came over to dwell in the land of Ishmael and the land of Nephi, and did join themselves to the people of God, who were the people of Anti-Nephi-Lehi. And they did also bury their weapons of war, according as their brethren had, and they began to be a righteous people; and they did walk in the ways of the Lord, and did observe to keep his commandments and his statutes. Yea, and they did keep the law of Moses; for it was expedient that they should keep the law of Moses as yet, for it was not all fulfilled. But notwithstanding the law of Moses, they did look forward to the coming of Christ, considering that the law of Moses was a type of his coming, and believing that they must keep those outward performances until the time that he should be revealed unto them. Now they did not suppose that salvation came by the law of Moses; but the law of Moses did serve to strengthen their faith in Christ; and thus they did retain a hope through faith, unto eternal salvation, relying upon the spirit of prophecy, which spake of those things to come. (Alma 25:13–16)

*1.5.40.48* The Lamanite army that attacked and destroyed the city of Ammonihah also carried off Nephites from the land of Noah and environs into the wilderness with them. Alma directed Zoram, the chief captain of the Nephite army, to intercept the Lamanites at the river Sidon in the land of Manti. Zoram did so. The captive Nephites were liberated and the Lamanite army defeated and scattered. These scattered Lamanites are those who are here returning to their lands south of the narrow strip of wilderness. Like the Lamanites who had been isolated in the eastern wilderness, many of these returning warriors sought forgiveness and peace at the hands of their former enemies, the Anti-Nephi-Lehies. They are taught the Gospel of Jesus Christ which they then obey with all of their hearts.

*1.5.40.49* The Lamanites who had destroyed the city of Ammonihah were sick of war, particularly the kind of warfare instigated by the Amulonites and Amalekites. Through their afflictions they had come to realize that the dissident Nephites among them were a liability to their happiness. They saw in the lives of the disciples of Christ a way of life that was more to their liking. They accepted the teachings of the sons of Mosiah and their missionary companions with open hearts and minds.

*1.5.40.50* If King Lamoni and his people are any indication, it seems that the Lamanites had not been familiar with the ordinances of the Law of Moses for a considerable period of time. We do not know the extent to which the Amulonites or the Amalekites resorted to the law of carnal commandments, but it seems certain that they were not proactive in bringing the Lamanites to a knowledge of what truths they were willing to practice among themselves. Thus, the law of sacrifice was reintroduced to the posterity of Laman and Lemuel by the sons of Mosiah. This must have been somewhat of a challenge for Ammon and his brethren at first, but once the Anti-Nephi-Lehies perceived in those ordinances the life and atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, their willingness to adopt the Law was immediately forthcoming. The Law of Moses, that law prescribed by the Lord God of Israel, was observed by all of the saints of God, wherever they might be found, until the Savior rose from the death, fulfilling the lesser Law in all of its points.

*1.5.40.51* The spirit of prophecy was redolent in the ordinances of the Law of Moses for those who had eyes to see, ears to hear, and hearts to understand. Every aspect of the Law served as a type of some aspect of the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. The sacrifice of animals did nothing to redeem the faithful from their sins, except as they pointed the minds and hearts of the believers forward to the Sacrifice of the Savior that they might exercise faith unto salvation, through sincere repentance and by entering into the saving ordinances of the Gospel of Christ.

*1.5.40.52* After the appearance of the signs attending the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ had appeared, there were those who thought and taught that the Law of Moses had thus been fulfilled. They were swiftly disabused of their notion and the sacrifices according to the Law continued until the Lord himself announced the fulfillment of the Law.

And it came to pass that Nephi went forth among the people, and also many others, baptizing unto repentance, in the which there was a great remission of sins. And thus the people began again to have peace in the land. And there were no contentions, save it were a few that began to preach, endeavoring to prove by the scriptures that it was no more expedient to observe the law of Moses. Now in this thing they did err, having not understood the scriptures. But it came to pass that they soon became converted, and were convinced of the error which they were in, for it was made known unto them that the law was not yet fulfilled, and that it must be fulfilled in every whit; yea, the word came unto them that it must be fulfilled; yea, that one jot or tittle should not pass away till it should all be fulfilled; therefore in this same year were they brought to a knowledge of their error and did confess their faults. (3 Nephi 1:23-25)

*1.5.40.53* We do not know what percentage of the inhabitants of the land of Zarahemla were already members of the Church, but after the signs, more than half of the unbelievers were converted, exercising faith, repenting of their sins, and seeking out those who could administer the ordinances of the Gospel unto them. With the vast majority of the population living under the covenant of Christ, including, as we may suppose, the chief judge Lachoneus, all open hostilities came to an end.

*1.5.40.54* The central question in the argument regarding the Law of Moses had to do with when the Law would be fulfilled. Some apparently contended that the Savior's birth was a sufficient justification for leaving that ancient Law behind. The correct interpretation prevailed, however, that the Law would be in effect until after the Lord's atoning sacrifice and resurrection from the dead were complete. One can readily understand how some of the saints were led astray. A great number of traditions and commandments were coming to a head all at the same time. Those who were living in the midst of those tumultuous years had some difficulty perceiving the broader picture.

*1.5.40.55* There must have been some outward appeal to foregoing the rituals of the Law of Moses. One would hope that it was something more than just a covetousness on the part of some to preserve their flocks and herds from the altars of sacrifice.

*1.5.40.56* After the terrible natural disruptions that had taken place at the time of the Savior's death, the people waited in darkness until the voice of the Lord came to them.

I came unto my own, and my own received me not. And the scriptures concerning my coming are fulfilled. And as many as have received me, to them have I given to become the sons of God; and even so will I to as many as shall believe on my name, for behold, by me redemption cometh, and in me is the law of Moses fulfilled. I am the light and the life of the world. I am Alpha and

Omega, the beginning and the end. And ye shall offer up unto me no more the shedding of blood; yea, your sacrifices and your burnt offerings shall be done away, for I will accept none of your sacrifices and your burnt offerings. And ye shall offer for a sacrifice unto me a broken heart and a contrite spirit. And whoso cometh unto me with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, him will I baptize with fire and with the Holy Ghost, even as the Lamanites, because of their faith in me at the time of their conversion, were baptized with fire and with the Holy Ghost, and they knew it not. Behold, I have come unto the world to bring redemption unto the world, to save the world from sin. Therefore, whoso repenteth and cometh unto me as a little child, him will I receive, for of such is the kingdom of God. Behold, for such I have laid down my life, and have taken it up again; therefore repent, and come unto me ye ends of the earth, and be saved. (3 Nephi 9:16–22)

*1.5.40.57* From the time of Adam and Eve, the Lord caused that the principles of eternal life be taught to His children upon the earth. Those who hearkened to those teachings entered into eternal covenants with Heaven. Adam, Enoch, Noah, and Abraham were only a few of the many millions who have taken upon themselves the name of Christ, have promised to remember him always, and to keep his commandments. The Patriarchal triad of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob established a long-standing, multi-generational covenant people commonly known as the House of Israel. Without rehearsing the entire history of Israel, suffice it to say that when Jesus was born in Bethlehem, the remnants of that covenant people in Palestine were primarily confined to the descendants of one of the sons of Jacob. Mary was a Jew, a scion of the house of David who was himself a Jew. The Twelve Apostles and most of the early disciples of Jesus Christ were Jews. The Pharisees, Sadducees, and other religious and political bodies in the land of Palestine were also Jews, and many of these sought the life of Christ, culminating in his crucifixion outside the walls of Jerusalem. Many of the events of his mortal life had been prophesied, including the manner of his death, so that by the time Jesus appeared to the Nephites in the city of Bountiful, he could say with certainty that all that had been spoken of his mortal ministry had been accomplished by himself.

*1.5.40.58* When a man or woman accepts the fullness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, together with all of the saving and exalting ordinances, he or she becomes a child of Christ. The sons and daughters of Christ are the heirs of God just as Jesus is the Heir of God; their inheritance comes because they have become joint-heirs with Christ. The need for the Law of Moses, a covenant given to the House of Israel during their sojourn in the wilderness of Sinai, was obviated when the atoning sacrifice made the principles and ordinances of the Gospel eternally effectual in the lives of the children of men.

*1.5.40.59* Men would have no inherent knowledge of God, the existence of truth, an awareness of right and wrong were it not for the light of Christ that is given to every man that is born into the world. The very existence of the earth has come to pass through the power of the creation vested in the Lord Jesus Christ.

*1.5.40.60* Jehovah had introduced animal sacrifice to Adam and Eve, a practice that continued among the covenant people until it was incorporated into the Law of Moses in a rather complex way. The sacrifice of animals had served as types, foreshadowing the consummate sacrifice to be made by the Son of God. Once that ultimate sacrifice had been accomplished in the Meridian of Time, the nature of the sacrifice and the symbols thereof changed. Broken hearts and contrite spirits were

expected and the symbols confined to the emblems of the Sacrament. Animal sacrifice conforming to the Law of Moses had been practiced among the Nephites since the days of father Lehi in the Arabian wilderness. Those many rituals had been performed under the auspices of the Melchizedek priesthood which embraces all of the power and authority of the Aaronic priesthood.

*1.5.40.61* Metaphorically speaking, the man of the earth is hardly more than a being of clay, filled with the impurities and weaknesses of the world. Vessels of honor are those which are made of refined materials. It may very well be that the “clay” holds the potential gold or silver metal, but rather drastic measures must be taken in order obtain it. The metaphor suggests that mortal life by itself is not conducive to the refinement of the soul toward eternal life, but requires an outside power to strip away the dross and preserve the gold. This is the purpose of the Holy Ghost, to aid the children of God to put away the natural man and to prepare them to receive the riches of eternity. Emotionally speaking, a broken heart is one that suffers great sorrow. Godly sorrow brings a man to repentance. Hardened hearts must be broken up in order that they might be softened, pliable and receptive. A contrite spirit is one that dwells in the depths of humility and gratitude. There is no pride or vanity, but a indwelling of charity, the pure love of Christ, for one’s fellow men.

*1.5.40.62* The Nephites who sat in darkness certainly had need for the blessings that the Lord had to offer them. The voice of Christ was heard throughout all the land. Not everyone who heard the voice would be present at the Temple in the city of Bountiful, but the call to repentance was universal. Those who received the Lord Jesus Christ at Bountiful would be sent into the land northward and the land southward to bring the message of salvation and exaltation with accompanying ordinances, so that the very ends of the earth as the Nephites knew and understood them would have the opportunity to do that which the Christ had asked of them.

*1.5.40.63* During the time that the Lord visited with the Nephites, the whole notion of the Law and the Gospel came to the forefront. The disciples wished to know exactly what their attitude should be regarding the Law. For some time they had both sets of principles and ordinances in operation.

And it came to pass that when Jesus had said these words he perceived that there were some among them who marveled, and wondered what he would concerning the law of Moses; for they understood not the saying that old things had passed away, and that all things had become new. And he said unto them: Marvel not that I said unto you that old things had passed away, and that all things had become new. Behold, I say unto you that the law is fulfilled that was given unto Moses. Behold, I am he that gave the law, and I am he who covenanted with my people Israel; therefore, the law in me is fulfilled, for I have come to fulfil the law; therefore it hath an end. Behold, I do not destroy the prophets, for as many as have not been fulfilled in me, verily I say unto you, shall all be fulfilled. And because I said unto you that old things have passed away, I do not destroy that which hath been spoken concerning things which are to come. For behold, the covenant which I have made with my people is not all fulfilled; but the law which was given unto Moses hath an end in me. Behold, I am the law, and the light. Look unto me, and endure to the end, and ye shall live; for unto him that endureth to the end will I give eternal life. Behold, I have given unto you the commandments; therefore keep my commandments. And this is the law and the prophets, for they truly testified of me. (3 Nephi 15:2–10)

*1.5.40.64* When Jesus had spoken to the inhabitants of the land in the midst of the three days of darkness, he had declared that the Law of Moses was fulfilled in him and that the practice of animal sacrifice was officially terminated. The question in the minds of the Nephites had to do with all of the other rituals and practices associated with the Law of Moses. The whole of the Law had been an integral part of the Nephite civilization. The destruction of the infrastructure would have made the observance of the Law of Moses extremely difficult in any event. At the heart of the question is the nature of their efforts to restore their cities and way of life. Jesus testifies that everything will become new. The old cities were destroyed; the Law was fulfilled. The object lesson was before their eyes and would be for many years. To give them credit, the people wished to understand exactly what the Lord Jesus Christ would have them do in all things; they did not wish to risk any offense against the God of Heaven.

*1.5.40.65* There may have been some in the audience who remembered the rather distressing conflict that occurred at the time of the Savior's birth. Many of the saints in those days concluded that since the Lord had come into the world as the Son of God that the Law was no longer necessary in the daily lives of the Nephites. Great pains were made in order to clarify the meaning of the scriptures and that the Law would persist notwithstanding the Lord's mortal birth. Having once erred, these faithful few were not doubt concerned about making a similar mistake. The Lord Jesus Christ assured them that this would not be the case.

*1.5.40.66* The meaning of the word "fulfill" is central to the Lord's teaching here. Its fundamental semantic value has to do with accomplishment or having met the original intent of something's establishment. Noah Webster's Dictionary of American English published in 1828 gives the following: "accomplish, perform, complete, to answer in execution that which has been foretold or promised, answer a design by execution, answer any desire by compliance or gratification, perform what is required, answer a law by obedience, complete in time, carry into effect".

*1.5.40.67* The Law of Moses had been given to a disobedient people, the House of Israel in the midst of the Sinai desert. Rather than destroy the Israelites completely for their refusal to accept the fullness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Lord God provided a lesser law, one that would guide and direct them in such a fashion that there would be a people prepared to receive him when he came into mortality. In that sense, the Law of Moses was successful. Among the Jews there were many who were prepared to accept the truth, inasmuch as their minds and hearts had been pointed in the proper direction by the symbolism of the lesser Law; they were able to perceive the Lord Jesus Christ for who and what he was. The same was true among the Nephites. No doubt that preparation was repeated in various places throughout the world as the Savior labored with the remnants of the House of Israel that had been scattered by the hand of the Lord. The pre-mortal Jesus of Nazareth was the great Jehovah, he who had given the Law to Moses to protect and guide his people. Jehovah had given that Law in anticipation of his own atoning sacrifice; everything in the Law pointed to the redemption of the House of Israel by their God. Once the sacrifice for sin and the resurrection from the dead were accomplished, the purpose of the Law of Moses was at an end, for the events to which the Law pointed had been accomplished. In the place of those symbolic harbingers, the Savior provided other symbols and ordinances that pointed to the realization of the promises of the Gospel in the individual lives of the faithful.

*1.5.40.68* The Law of Moses specifically pointed to the Meridian of Time when the keys of death and hell would be committed into the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Messiah and the Son of God. All of the prophets of God anxiously looked forward to that time, a seminal moment in the salvation of mankind. Many of those same prophets, however, also anticipated the final victory in the which the fullness of salvation would come to all of the sons and daughters of God, their sins redeemed and their bodies perfected through the power of the resurrection from the dead. Thus, many of the prophecies of the ancients remained unfulfilled. The Lord Jesus Christ assured the Nephites that these, too, would be realized in the latter days.

*1.5.40.69* The fulfillment of prophecy does not negate the power and witness of the prophets. In fact, the effect is quite the reverse. Fulfilled prophecy stands as a continuing and immovable witness to the foreknowledge of God and the righteousness of His servants. Fulfilled prophecies are not destroyed; they are perfected in their fulfillment. Fulfilled prophecy provides a foundation upon which the saints may build their house of faith, the confidence in the promises of eternity.

*1.5.40.70* The covenants between God and His children did not begin with the enslaved Israelites who were liberated from their bondage to the Egyptians. The promises were understood and accepted many generations before by the great patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Before them were the sons of Noah who survived the great flood. Generations of antediluvians were also participants in the covenants that provide eternal life to the faithful, including our first parents, Adam and Eve. Because these men and women observed to do all that the Father and the Son required of them, they had expectations of their own eventual salvation from death and hell long before the Law of Moses was given at the holy mount in Sinai. Those original covenants are still in effect even though the Law of Moses had served its purpose and would no longer be observed.

*1.5.40.71* Salvation in any era, from the creation of the earth until the time of its exaltation, can only come in and through the auspices of the Son of God. He has set the requirements for redemption from hell, inasmuch as he has paid the debt that justified the children of men being subjected to that awful monster. We can look nowhere else if we hope to obtain all that has been promised to the children of God. With the Law of Moses fulfilled, the saints were required to receive the law of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the fundamental principles of which Jesus had just presented to them.

*1.5.40.72* Without the Law of Moses as it had been recorded on the Plates of Brass, the posterity of Lehi would have been adrift spiritually. They would have dwindled in unbelief until they would have known nothing about their purpose upon the earth. They would have had little or no understanding of the great promises that had been extended to the children of Israel even in their lost and fallen state.

## 1.5.41 The Book of Job

*1.5.41.1* One last note regarding the writings of Moses on the Brass Plates. Clearly that which we know as Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy had been incised into the record, but there may have been one other volume as well: the book of Job.

*1.5.41.2* Notwithstanding all arguments to the contrary, we accept that Job was a man who lived and breathed, who was faithful in his tribulations, and whose worthy life became the subject of a magnificent literary work. Once having determined that Job was a living being who worked out his salvation with fear and trembling, the question remains as to where his place of residence was. Where and when was Job born? There is no want of speculation. Without going into all of the arguments that have been proffered over the centuries, we may simply state that we do not know. The answer to the question is as elusive as the identity of the author of the book and the timeframe in which the text was composed. As a result of perusing most of the suggestions put forth by scholars throughout the ages, I have become somewhat partial to the notion that Job was a native of the land of Midian and a near contemporary of the prophet Moses, at least within a generation or two. Rather than being a descendant of Esau, as many scholars have concluded, it is far more likely that Job was of the lineage of Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses.

*1.5.41.3* At the conclusion of the previous paragraph, I clearly indicated my preference as to the authorship of the story of Job. The list of possible contenders for authorship of the composition has been reduced by most students of the scriptures to either Moses or Solomon. Rather compelling arguments can be made for either man, but the most reasonable and satisfying point to Moses, the great Lawgiver. If Job were a contemporary of Moses, or at least a man with whose story Moses was decidedly familiar, then it would seem reasonable to assume that the book of Job was written during the time that the prophet lived under the tutelage of the patriarch Jethro, sometime between his fortieth and eightieth year; that is to say, sometime between the Adamic years 2366 and 2406.

*1.5.41.4* Given Moses' position in the development of the covenant people, it would seem certain that Moses' understanding of the fullness of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ informs the central thrust of the book of Job. The Law of Moses was a treatise that focused on the outward aspects of eternal truth. A believing Israelite, however, steeped in the law of carnal commandments, would have some difficulty discerning the spiritual value of trials and tribulations. Why do good people suffer? The Law of Moses does not answer that question; it cannot answer that question. Moses knew, however, that the question would eventually be raised and therefore provided a text that established the tools by which a discerning saint could work out the answer for himself. We cannot state with certainty as to when the text of Job was made available to the children of Israel.

*1.5.41.5* Although we cannot speak definitively on the matter, it would appear that Lehi was familiar with the book of Job or perhaps had access to source material that Moses may have referred to when compiling his biography on the great sufferer. In his last fatherly counsel to Laman and Lemuel, his rather recalcitrant eldest sons, Lehi calls them to repentance.

O that ye would awake; awake from a deep sleep, yea, even from the sleep of hell, and shake off the awful chains by which ye are bound, which are the chains which bind the children of men, that they are carried away captive down to the eternal gulf of misery and woe. Awake! and arise from the dust, and hear the words of a trembling parent, whose limbs ye must soon lay down in the cold and silent grave, from whence no traveler can return; a few more days and I go the way of all the earth. But behold, the Lord hath redeemed my soul from hell; I have beheld his glory, and I am encircled about eternally in the arms of his love. And I desire that ye should remember to observe the statutes and the judgments of the Lord; behold, this hath been the anxiety of my soul

from the beginning. My heart hath been weighed down with sorrow from time to time, for I have feared, lest for the hardness of your hearts the Lord your God should come out in the fulness of his wrath upon you, that ye be cut off and destroyed forever; Or, that a cursing should come upon you for the space of many generations; and ye are visited by sword, and by famine, and are hated, and are led according to the will and captivity of the devil. (2 Nephi 1:13-18)

*1.5.41.6* Laman and Lemuel had become oblivious to the whisperings of the spirit of God. Their rejection of truth and light, their rebellions against their father and his designated successor, their willful attempts to deprive the saints of God of their lives and means, all of these things had bludgeoned them spiritually to the point that they only knew and understood the things of the flesh. They had become, in almost every way, carnal, sensual, and devilish. Their eternal nature was enslaved, bound, gagged, and drugged. Without a serious reversal of intention, Lehi's elder sons would suffer the punishment of the wicked.

*1.5.41.7* Ignorant and perverse men have suggested that this passage is no more than a plagiarism from the playwright William Shakespeare. Anyone familiar with "Hamlet", or any other of the works of the Bard of Avon for that matter, would perceive immediately that both the matter and the manner of Lehi's discourse to his rebellious sons is radically different from those expressed in Act I, Scene 3 of Shakespeare's play about the prince of Denmark. Of the forty-six words in the verse, only three have any similarity whatsoever to the soliloquy in "Hamlet". Lehi's sentiments are far more consistent with those expressed in the book of Job, particularly in concert with Lehi's anxiety about his two sons.

*1.5.41.8* Notwithstanding Lehi's concern for Laman and Lemuel, his fear that they have put themselves beyond the grace of Christ, he has no distress concerning his own status before God. He desires only to have them be as he is. Without the Spirit of God to inspire them with hope, they look forward to the close of mortal life with great anxiety. Lehi, without question, has made his calling and election sure.

*1.5.41.9* Only through obedience to the principles and ordinances of the Gospel of Jesus Christ would the sons of Lehi ever find release from the chains which held them bound, from the sleep which deadened their spiritual sensitivity. Lehi counsels his sons to study the scriptures and obey the law of God so that they might be liberated from the deep sleep which had come upon them, that they might be loosed from the chains of hell which had them bound.

*1.5.41.10* We may safely conclude that had Laman and Lemuel been successful in ridding themselves of their father and brother, they would have been completely destroyed. Because of their various rebellions in the wilderness and at sea, the spirit of the Lord withdrew from them and they were at the point of perishing for want of food and water, sometimes almost overwhelmed by the elements. Had it not been for the righteous souls in their company and the promises which had been extended to them, Laman and those of his mind would have been delivered from their mortal experience long before.

*1.5.41.11* Laman and his followers were not to be utterly destroyed, but the prophesied curse would not be long in coming. Once Nephi and his associates were forced to flee for their lives, which flight took them into the mountains of Nephi, those who had chosen Laman and Lemuel's part soon fell beneath the chastening hand of the Lord God of Israel. The fruits of their apostasy were war,



poverty, hunger, social ostracism, and spiritual depravity. Therefore, they were constantly in a state of misery, abject unhappiness brought about by their deliberate rejection of the truth.

*1.5.41.12* As part of Job's defense against the accusations of his erstwhile friends, the prophet appeals to the Lord God Jehovah to explain the reversals of fortune that he had suffered in the temporal world.

If I be wicked, woe unto me; and if I be righteous, yet will I not lift up my head. I am full of confusion; therefore see thou mine affliction; For it increaseth. Thou huntest me as a fierce lion: and again thou shewest thyself marvellous upon me. Thou renewest thy witnesses against me, and increasest thine indignation upon me; changes and war are against me. Wherefore then hast thou brought me forth out of the womb? Oh that I had given up the ghost, and no eye had seen me! I should have been as though I had not been; I should have been carried from the womb to the grave. Are not my days few? cease then, and let me alone, that I may take comfort a little, Before I go whence I shall not return, even to the land of darkness and the shadow of death; A land of darkness, as darkness itself; and of the shadow of death, without any order, and where the light is as darkness. (Job 10:15–22)

*1.5.41.13* Job knew that wickedness never was happiness. If he were to indulge in unrighteous conduct he knew that within a short time he would suffer the consequences thereof. On the other hand, righteous men know from whence their righteousness comes and how their innocence is supplied. They are filled with gratitude and deep humility for their deliverance from all of their enemies, including death and hell. Job's conduct was founded in humility, but he did desire to know why his circumstances had fallen on such hard times.

*1.5.41.14* Job was being shuttled from pillar to post for no apparent reason. But notwithstanding the adversity, the strength of the Lord supported and sustained him in the midst of his afflictions. This was a tension that Job had difficult comprehending. While the doctrines and accusations that came from Job's three friends did not originate from God, yet they were allow to seek Job out and deliver their unjust rants to him.

*1.5.41.15* Job no doubt felt that he had been given a mission at the time of his physical birth upon this planet. He had spent his life trying to be a benefit and a blessing to those around him, and in large measure he had succeeded. The fact that a good and great man was suffering maladies of all kinds, together with defamation of character, made his life seem unprofitable indeed.

*1.5.41.16* Job previously had expressed a desire in a similar vein. It would have been better for him to have never been born than to serve as a negative example of what can happen to a righteous man. Who would ever have sufficient faith to press forward toward eternal life, if Job's example were constantly before them? If good men are badly treated by God, what is the point in keeping His commandments?

*1.5.41.17* Lehi's sentiments are far more consistent with those expressed in the book of Job, particularly in concert with Lehi's anxiety about his two sons. One wonders if the writings of Job were to be found on the Brass Plates that the family had carried away with them from the city of Jerusalem. If Moses had indeed written the account of the great prophet, it certainly is plausible. In any event, how else could Job describe the world of spirits, a place where all distinction between rich and poor, healthy and sick, famous or obscure, has been completely eliminated? Contact with the

material world is severely proscribed and all of the blessings associated with having a physical body have been removed until the time of the resurrection. It is a captivity of sorts, even though the righteous are free from most of the torments that the wicked suffer in death. Job testifies that he would not return from the world of spirits as a mortal man, but he will bear witness that he would have the opportunity to stand before God in his redeemed body of flesh and bone.

Oh that my words were now written! oh that they were printed in a book! That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever! For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me. (Job 19:23–27)

*1.5.41.18* There can be no question that Job had borne testimony of the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ on many occasions. His audiences had rejoiced in his confidence. He felt that his time on earth was about to come to an end and he wished to have that fervent witness continue among the children of men. It is a wonderful thing that nearly four thousand years after the fact we can read his unflinching testimony of the atoning sacrifice and the power of the resurrection over and over again.

*1.5.41.19* Papyrus and parchment are short-lived mediums for sacred principles. Job wished for more durable material upon which to commit his testimony. Some prophets have chosen brass and gold to preserve their words. Job desired a venue that would display his witness of the power of God for as long as the earth should stand.

*1.5.41.20* Although there may be those among the learned who doubt the fact, it is clear that the prophet Job was one who knew of the coming of the Son of God long before his humble birth in the meridian of time. Job had felt the power of the redemption in his own life, the sweet comfort of forgiveness and the power of faith that enters into the heart and mind of the true disciple while in the midst of obedience. He clearly anticipated the Millennial reign when the Lord Jesus Christ will dwell upon the earth for a thousand years that all of creation might be perfected and prepared for Celestial glory.

*1.5.41.21* Can anyone doubt Job's fervent conviction of the power of the literal resurrection from the dead? Can anyone hesitate to say that the prophet will be a participant in the morning of the first resurrection to rule and reign with Christ as is his due? The spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus Christ.

*1.5.41.22* Job had received the promise of the resurrection from the Lord God himself, and having no doubt of His truthfulness was pressing forward in faith through the trials and tribulations that had befallen him, notwithstanding any arguments to the contrary. Although his body might very well be reduced to dust, yet he knew that he would one day be held in esteem in the presence of all those who might have wished him harm. The eyes of Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar would also behold Job's glorious resurrection, and that to their own chagrin. Without sincere repentance from their attacks on the character of the prophet Job, they would find that their redemption from the grave would come at a later date and would be far less glorious.

## *1.6 Destiny of the Brass Plates*

*1.6.1* We cannot speak with certainty as to how the Brass Plates were employed prior to the day that Nephi and his siblings retrieved them from the house of Laban. The caretaker would not have had any interest in the contents of the work; their appeal to him appears to have been nothing more than a status-providing artifact, hardly more than a museum piece. If the plates were fabricated during the lifetime of Joseph who was sold into Egypt by his brethren, we are at a loss as to how to explain the provenance of the record. According to our chronology, Joseph died in the Adamic year 2324, or about the year 1559 BC. Nephi and his brethren obtained the plates about 3282 years after our first parents departed from the Garden of Eden, or about the year 601 BC. We have no way at present to account for the 958 years that intervened. Who edited the book after Joseph's time? Who decided what should be included? How did Lehi come to know of their existence? We stand in need of a revelator on the matter.

*1.6.2* We cannot adequately express the degree of importance the plates had for those who would receive the western hemisphere as their promised land. We have treated at length how some of the material was utilized in establishing a culture of righteousness among the righteous.

*1.6.3* As to the future, we can only cite what the Book of Mormon itself has said of them.

And now when my father saw all these things, he was filled with the Spirit, and began to prophesy concerning his seed—That these plates of brass should go forth unto all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people who were of his seed. Wherefore, he said that these plates of brass should never perish; neither should they be dimmed any more by time. And he prophesied many things concerning his seed. (1 Nephi 5:17–19)

*1.6.4* As is the case with almost all personal, faithful study of the writings of the prophets of God, Lehi finds access to great spiritual resources which provide him with personal revelation. He is empowered to speak of his family, generations upon generations of his children who would be blessed because Nephi and his brethren had been diligent in obtaining the record engraved upon the Brass Plates. This is a prophecy which has only been fulfilled in part. While the Nephite nation survived, during a thousand year period of time, the Brass Plates were constantly available to bless and strengthen the spiritual lives of Lehi's descendants. Since the time of Moroni, however, the Brass Plates have been kept with the other Nephite records in the depository established by Mormon. During the long ages of apostasy that followed the destruction of the Nephite civilization, the Lamanites suffered in ignorance. With the coming of the Europeans to this hemisphere, however, the record of the Jews, including the writings of Moses and many of the other prophets, were committed into the hands of the indigenous peoples of North and South America. With the translation of the Book of Mormon and the establishment of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, many of the posterity of Lehi have more of the writings that could be found upon the Brass Plates. It is by no means impossible that there will come a day in the which the Brass Plates will be brought forth and their writings made available to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people that constitute Lehi's posterity. Needless to say there will be other peoples who will have access to this ancient record as well.

*1.6.5* All of the prophets of God who labored in behalf of the descendants of Lehi have gone to extraordinary lengths to preserve all of the records of the Nephites, together with the Brass Plates and other ancient artifacts committed into the hands of Lehi and his sons. It would appear that at some point the Brass Plates had been dimmed by time. One wonders as to how frequently the Brass Plates had been resorted to by Laban or any of his immediate family while they were in their possession. For Laban the Plates could have been hardly anything more than a family heirloom. Certainly the Vision of the Tree of Life and the Allegory of the Olive Tree served as partial catalysts for the things which Lehi had to say to his family. The Allegory specifically would have been found on the Brass Plates, attributed to the prophet Zenos.

*1.6.6* Alma the younger had much the same to say to his own son Helaman regarding the preservation and usefulness of the Brass Plates in a coming day.

And now, my son Helaman, I command you that ye take the records which have been entrusted with me; And I also command you that ye keep a record of this people, according as I have done, upon the plates of Nephi, and keep all these things sacred which I have kept, even as I have kept them; for it is for a wise purpose that they are kept. And these plates of brass, which contain these engravings, which have the records of the holy scriptures upon them, which have the genealogy of our forefathers, even from the beginning— Behold, it has been prophesied by our fathers, that they should be kept and handed down from one generation to another, and be kept and preserved by the hand of the Lord until they should go forth unto every nation, kindred, tongue, and people, that they shall know of the mysteries contained thereon. And now behold, if they are kept they must retain their brightness; yea, and they will retain their brightness; yea, and also shall all the plates which do contain that which is holy writ. Now ye may suppose that this is foolishness in me; but behold I say unto you, that by small and simple things are great things brought to pass; and small means in many instances doth confound the wise. And the Lord God doth work by means to bring about his great and eternal purposes; and by very small means the Lord doth confound the wise and bringeth about the salvation of many souls. And now, it has hitherto been wisdom in God that these things should be preserved; for behold, they have enlarged the memory of this people, yea, and convinced many of the error of their ways, and brought them to the knowledge of their God unto the salvation of their souls. Yea, I say unto you, were it not for these things that these records do contain, which are on these plates, Ammon and his brethren could not have convinced so many thousands of the Lamanites of the incorrect tradition of their fathers; yea, these records and their words brought them unto repentance; that is, they brought them to the knowledge of the Lord their God, and to rejoice in Jesus Christ their Redeemer. And who knoweth but what they will be the means of bringing many thousands of them, yea, and also many thousands of our stiffnecked brethren, the Nephites, who are now hardening their hearts in sin and iniquities, to the knowledge of their Redeemer? Now these mysteries are not yet fully made known unto me; therefore I shall forbear. And it may suffice if I only say they are preserved for a wise purpose, which purpose is known unto God; for he doth counsel in wisdom over all his works, and his paths are straight, and his course is one eternal round. (Helaman 37:1–12)

*1.6.7* Alma had been given the Plates of Brass, the Urim and Thummim, the records of all of the Nephites that had been kept since the days of Nephi, and other historical treasures by King Mosiah. With those artifacts Alma was also given a charge that he should continue to record the

events that pertained to his day. It is to be imagined that he oversaw the production of the Large Plates of Nephi, as they had come to be called, but it is clear that he also made an accounting of his personal life and ministry from which Mormon was able to glean a great deal of insight into the affairs of the nation in those days, particularly as it pertained to the civil unrest that led to the tremendous blood-lettings that took place during the first twenty years of the reign of the judges.

*1.6.8* It seems clear that in addition to overseeing the production of the general Nephite history, adding to the compilation of the Large Plates directly, Alma also kept his own spiritual accounting of his life and ministry. In this sense, Alma composed his own “Small Plates of Alma” just as Nephi had produced his Small Plates of Nephi. It is probable that Helaman did much the same, an act that was of great benefit to Mormon later on. The preeminent reason that has manifested itself in our dispensation is that the various records preserved over the 30 generations of so of Nephite civilization served as the source material for the narrative which came to be known as the Book of Mormon. Without them Mormon would have had great difficulty compiling his history.

*1.6.9* It is highly likely that Joseph, the son of Jacob who was sold into Egypt by his brethren, was the one who initiated the record known as the Brass Plates. They contained a detailed genealogy of Joseph’s family as well as the writings of many of the prophets that pertained to the Kingdom of Israel rather than to the Kingdom of Judah.

*1.6.10* This is a prophecy, given by the prophet Lehi shortly after the Brass Plates came into his possession, which has only been fulfilled in part. While the Nephite nation survived, during a thousand year period of time, the Brass Plates were constantly available to bless and strengthen the spiritual lives of Lehi’s descendants. Since the time of Moroni, however, the Brass Plates have been kept with the other Nephite records in the depository established by Mormon. During the long ages of apostasy that followed the destruction of the Nephite civilization, the Lamanites suffered in ignorance. With the coming of the Europeans to this hemisphere, however, the record of the Jews, including the writings of Moses and many of the other prophets, were committed into the hands of the indigenous peoples of North and South America. With the translation of the Book of Mormon and the establishment of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, many of the posterity of Lehi have more of the writings that could be found upon the Brass Plates. It is by no means impossible that there will come a day in the which the Brass Plates will be brought forth and their writings made available to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people that constitute Lehi’s posterity. Needless to say there will be other peoples who will have access to this ancient record as well.

*1.6.11* As part of Lehi’s prophecy regarding the role of the Brass Plates in the history of the earth, he testified that they would never perish, neither should they be “dimmed any more by time”. The implication of his statement is that at some point they had been “dimmed” somewhat by time, perhaps an allusion to a period when they were thought of merely as an heirloom to be kept in a treasury somewhere. Certainly that was the attitude and conduct of Laban. The Book of Mormon makes it patently clear that the Plates of Brass were in constant use from the days of Lehi to the close of the Book of Mormon, at least as the durable source from which many copies were made for the education and edification of the Nephite peoples. The imagery that Alma is utilizing here may very well be drawn from the Psalms: “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (Psalm

119:105). Some commentators have gone so far as to suggest that if the Brass Plates were frequently handled they would not oxidize and would therefore remain “bright”.

*1.6.12* Certainly the preservation of the Brass Plates has exposed the foolishness of the self-proclaimed wise. Here is just one instance. Because the Brass Plates contained much of the prophecies of Isaiah, the servants of God were able to cite him frequently in their attempts to help their people come to a proper understanding of the destiny of the House of Israel and of the prophetic reality of the coming of the Messiah. As a result, large portions of Isaiah are to be found in the Book of Mormon. The implication of these citations, taken as they are from throughout the entire text of the prophet’s writings, is that the compilation of Isaiah’s writings had to have been made prior to 600 BC, inasmuch as that is the time that they came into Lehi’s possession and were carried out of Jerusalem, into the wilderness, and from thence to the Americas. Thus, any argument that purports to assign multiple authors to the text of the book of Isaiah is exposed for what it is: baseless foolishness. Think what the full text of the Brass Plates would provide the children of men in terms of a proper understanding of how God the Father and His Son have labored for the salvation of mankind from before the foundations of the earth were laid!

*1.6.13* When one contemplates the vastness of the world’s accumulated knowledge, its scientific treatises, its literary achievements, its philosophical ruminations, particularly as can be seen in an extensive library, one is struck by the virtual weight of men’s thinking on the nature and purpose of life. Yet, a simple text like the Book of Mormon or the New Testament dismisses much of the human vagaries that have been perpetuated in print by the vanity of man; one volume obviating tens of thousands of volumes. Men cannot be saved by the philosophies of other men; they can only be saved through the revealed word of God, given through the humblest of His servants.

*1.6.14* The narrative of the Book of Mormon is replete with specific instances where this very process has been illustrated. Alma’s own ministry is a living testimony to the effect that the scriptures can have on the hearts and minds of the doubting and impenitent. The records preserved on plates would guarantee their preservation into the future, to bless and strengthen the nations of the earth. Here Alma testifies that the recording and preservation of the religious history of the House of Israel and of the family of Lehi has been of enormous value already to generations that had long since passed away.

*1.6.15* It seems clear that the sons of Mosiah were more than passingly familiar with the history of their people and the contents of the Brass Plates. It would seem reasonable to assume that they had copies of their scriptures with them when they went up to the land of Nephi which they used in conjunction with their ministry to King Lamoni and his people.

*1.6.16* The salvation of men, that which comes when men come unto Christ, is facilitated by the word of God, whether verbal or recorded. Lehi’s Vision of the iron rod leading away from death and destruction to the Tree of Life is illustrative of this principle.

*1.6.17* We may safely say that the passage of two thousand years has not fully revealed the accumulated benefits that the Brass Plates, the Book of Mormon, and the other records of the Nephites will have produced by the time the final judgment of Christ upon the earth has been rendered. We may stand agape at what has transpired thus far, but we cannot begin to imagine what yet

lies in the future insofar as the direct impact that these records will have on the minds and hearts of men. We therefore are also caused to forbear lest we trivialize the work of God.

*1.6.1* Without attempting to be frivolous, we might contemplate the nature of the Lord's course, its absolute dimensions, wherein it can be both straight and round. Perhaps that is as accurate a depiction of the infinite as might be articulated by the finite mind. The imagery also allows us to understand that it is we of limited mortal experience who perceive his paths as straight, while our Father in Heaven has a far more expansive perspective.

## **2.0 Whether of Gold, Silver, or Copper, It Is the Same**

*2.1* One does not have to read very far into the text of the present edition of the Book of Mormon before one realizes that Nephi has been engaged in recording his life for a considerable period of time. We cannot speak with certainty on the matter, but it seems clear that as a very young man he committed his activities to some sort of media. In this he was very much like his father Lehi. Neither Lehi nor Nephi are clear as to how they preserved their records before Nephi began fabricating metallic plates. Lehi would have been familiar with Egyptian papyrus and it is conceivable that it could have been used, but this seems unlikely given its fragile nature. Parchment or some variation thereof could have been employed as well, but the ancients were aware that it was subject to eventual deterioration with the passage of a short time. Monumental works engraved in stone did endure, but they were impractical for personal record. It is no wonder then when Lehi's entourage arrived in what we now called the Americas, they turned to the most readily available and most enduring material that presented itself: the precious metals that were in abundance.

And it came to pass that I, Nephi, did guide the ship, that we sailed again towards the promised land. And it came to pass that after we had sailed for the space of many days we did arrive at the promised land; and we went forth upon the land, and did pitch our tents; and we did call it the promised land. And it came to pass that we did begin to till the earth, and we began to plant seeds; yea, we did put all our seeds into the earth, which we had brought from the land of Jerusalem. And it came to pass that they did grow exceedingly; wherefore, we were blessed in abundance. And it came to pass that we did find upon the land of promise, as we journeyed in the wilderness, that there were beasts in the forests of every kind, both the cow and the ox, and the ass and the horse, and the goat and the wild goat, and all manner of wild animals, which were for the use of men. And we did find all manner of ore, both of gold, and of silver, and of copper. (1 Nephi 18:22–25)

*2.2* With the use of the Liahona, Nephi was able to avoid the dangers and other obstacles that would have hindered the company in their voyage to the land of their inheritance. If we assume that Nephi's navigation took him south into the Indian Ocean, we might also suspect that he was guided deep into the southern hemisphere that he might sail south of Australia and New Zealand and then eastward to the western shores of South America, landing somewhere near northern Chile. These suppositions being the case, it would have taken "many days" indeed to traverse that vast tract of open sea.

2.3 Although the portion of land which the little company first settled was part of the promised land, many of the pioneers were not aware of the size of the continents which they had inherited from the Lord God of Israel through the covenant made with Lehi and Nephi. Notwithstanding the length of the voyage, their seed corn survived. The colonists planted all that they had with them in order to reap the promised harvest. Some of the seed must have been nearly ten years old when they planted it, yet given the richness of the soil and the blessings of God upon their labors, the harvests proved to be beyond their greatest desires.

2.4 The beasts that Lehi's company encountered appear to be native to the Americas, but undoubtedly many had originally been brought to the western hemisphere by the Jaredites in their eight divinely inspired ships. With the destruction of the Jaredites, in a battle that had raged in the far northern reaches of the land of promise, many of the domesticated animals inadvertently left behind began to populate the land. Lehi and his family became the beneficiaries. One is confronted with what appears to some to be a nomenclature problem. Are the names of the animals referred to here precisely those which describe the animals themselves, or are they words which Nephi chose to describe the myriad of species which he had never seen before? How would one describe a llama, an alpaca, a tapir, a vicuna, a huanacu, or any of the other new species to someone who had never seen such beasts? Would it not be in terms with which one is most familiar? Nephi had the challenge of expressing what he observed for his distant readers. Joseph Smith had an equally difficult task, even if he had seen these animals in vision before working the translation. It is interesting to note that in at least one case where unidentifiable animals are mentioned, that exotic names were provided. Many anti-Mormons have ridiculed the notion that the Nephites found horses in the Western Hemisphere, believing that the horse was not introduced into the Americas until the coming of the Europeans. Apologists have suggested that the nomenclature used by Nephi reflected general classes of animals based on appearance or function rather than popular or scientific terminology. Be that as it may, there will yet come a time when the truth of the matter will prove to be that there were "horses" among the Jaredites and among the posterity of Lehi not much different than those which now graze in pastures from Canada to Argentina. The amount of gold, silver, and copper found by the ancient inhabitants of the Americas is legendary in its scope.

2.5 What remains to be decided is which of the abundant commodities did Nephi use to produce his plates. Many have assumed that gold or a gold alloy of some kind was used, but there is nothing in the text of the Book of Mormon that would give us that specific piece of information. There were, however, records that were made of what appeared to be made of gold. At the time king Limhi was attempting to extricate himself and his people from personal bondage to the Lamanites in the land of Nephi, he sent a cadre of men to the north to recruit help from the land of Zarahemla. These men became lost in their journey and altogether missed meeting with king Mosiah and his people. They bypassed the cities and found themselves in what would be called the Land of Desolation, a place where many hundreds of thousands of Jaredites, the prior inhabitants of the land, had perished. As Limhi reveals to Ammon:

And the king said unto him: Being grieved for the afflictions of my people, I caused that forty and three of my people should take a journey into the wilderness, that thereby they might find the land of Zarahemla, that we might appeal unto our brethren to deliver us out of bondage.



And they were lost in the wilderness for the space of many days, yet they were diligent, and found not the land of Zarahemla but returned to this land, having traveled in a land among many waters, having discovered a land which was covered with bones of men, and of beasts, and was also covered with ruins of buildings of every kind, having discovered a land which had been peopled with a people who were as numerous as the hosts of Israel. And for a testimony that the things that they had said are true they have brought twenty-four plates which are filled with engravings, and they are of pure gold. (Mosiah 8:7–9)

2.6 We do not know exactly when this company was sent into the wilderness or how long these forty-three men wander about in the land of Desolation before returning to their king. We are told, however, that they returned from their foray just a few days before Ammon and his brethren arrived at the hill north of the land of Shilom.

2.7 We may be tempted to identify the region of country in which the company of forty-three found themselves when they discovered the ruins of the Jaredites. The explorers found a land of “many waters”. Were these lakes? Rivers? Swamps? We are not told. Were we to go to the exact geographical location today would it still be a land of many waters? We cannot say with certainty. The fact that between the time of the travels of Limhi’s company and the present day, great and catastrophic changes have taken place upon the entire face of the land in the Americas should breathe a word of caution to any precipitous arguments regarding Book of Mormon geography. We may safely conclude, however, that the land of the Jaredites lay north of the narrow neck of land which separated the land northward from the land southward. The destruction of the Jaredites transpired over a long period of time, ultimately concluding atop the Hill Ramah, the same hill which the Nephites called Cumorah, and which was the same geographical feature in which Mormon deposited the entire corpus of the Large Plates of Nephi. The Plates of Mormon and the breastplate containing the Urim and Thummim were hidden in a stone box on the northwestern prominence of that same hill by Mormon’s son Moroni. One may justly ask the question as to how the record of Ether, that narrative found upon the 24 gold plates, managed to be ensconced in a place where the forty-three men from Lehi-Nephi could easily find it. Clearly that record was transported by the prophet Ether himself after he witnessed the end of the battle between Corinatumr and Shiz. That it was a goodly trek we may surmise with some astonishment, but no less astonishing than the same trek made by Corinatumr himself. He would die in the care of the Mulekites after a lonely journey of more than five thousand miles through a ravaged and desolate land.

2.8 That the twenty-four plates of Ether were made of pure gold does not necessarily imply that any of the Nephite plates were made precisely the same way. The Jaredites were a people which had had no contact with the Semitic civilization since the confusion of tongues at the Tower of Babel. It is likely that the Large Plates of Nephi, the Small Plates of Nephi, and the plates fashioned by Mormon were more of a gold alloy rather than “pure gold”. The outward evidence of the 24 gold plates was compelling, for who would devise such a valuable and elaborate artifact to perpetrate an unnecessary fraud upon the king and the people of Lehi-Nephi?

2.9 The only other testimony that we have that any of the plates associated with the coming forth of the Book of Mormon had the appearance of gold is that of the Eight Witnesses who were

permitted to touch and examine the plates upon which Mormon and Moroni had committed their writings.

Be it known unto all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people, unto whom this work shall come: That Joseph Smith, Jun., the translator of this work, has shown unto us the plates of which hath been spoken, which have the appearance of gold; and as many of the leaves as the said Smith has translated we did handle with our hands; and we also saw the engravings thereon, all of which has the appearance of ancient work, and of curious workmanship. And this we bear record with words of soberness, that the said Smith has shown unto us, for we have seen and hefted, and know of a surety that the said Smith has got the plates of which we have spoken. And we give our names unto the world, to witness unto the world that which we have seen. And we lie not, God bearing witness of it.

CHRISTIAN WHITMER	HIRAM PAGE
JACOB WHITMER	JOSEPH SMITH, SEN.
PETER WHITMER, JUN.	HYRUM SMITH
JOHN WHITMER	SAMUEL H. SMITH

*2.10* Much has been made of the relationship between these eight men, mostly in derision. It is true that Christian, Jacob, Peter, and John Whitmer were all brothers and that Hiram Page had married one of their sisters. This fact does not persuade anyone with common sense to conclude that their testimony must of necessity then be false. The same can be said of Joseph Smith, Senior, and his two sons, Hyrum and Samuel, brothers of the Prophet Joseph Smith. Their familial relationship should have no bearing on the truthfulness of their witness any more than one should doubt the brothers Peter and Andrew, and their cousins James and John. The first Quorum of Twelve Apostles was filled with men who were of close kinship to one another. This did not make their experiences with the Lord Jesus Christ any less valid or inspiring. Five of the Eight Witnesses died in full faith and fellowship in the Church of Christ. Three of the Eight, John and Jacob Whitmer with their brother-in-law Hiram Page, left the Church of Christ at odds with the saints and servants of God. Those who knew the three men well testified that they never denied the truthfulness of the statement included in every copy of the Book of Mormon, bearing fervent witness of its truth on their deathbeds.

*2.11* These men saw the Plates of Mormon with their own physical eyes, as clearly as anyone might look at an artifact of any kind. None of these men were archeologists or metallurgists. They could only bear witness of that which they had seen with their own eyes as informed by their own limited experience in the world. The Plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated were undoubtedly made of some sort of gold alloy. Two-thirds of the six-inch collections of plates were bound by metal bands. The loose leaves were those of Mormon's Plates and the Small Plates of Nephi that Mormon had appended in his record. The Eight Witnesses handled each of these in turn. The engravings and the plates themselves looked ancient to them and they could say no more than that. Each of the men was given the opportunity to lift the collection of plates with their own physical strength. There could be no doubt that they had felt the weight of the Plates.

*2.12* Lehi and his family found great reserves of gold, silver, and copper after they arrived in the promised land. For whatever reason, Mormon chose to fabricate his plates out of a gold alloy of

some kind, but this was nearly one thousand years after the arrival of Nephi and his brothers. What did the prophets use in the beginning after they first arrived? Gold and silver would have been equally valuable as media. They were both malleable and they were resistant to decay. There were, however, vast amounts of copper which, when mixed appropriately with nickel and other materials will produce brass, a metal with which Nephi had great acquaintance. In conclusion, we simply do not know much about the metals upon which the vast history of the ancient saints in the Americas was written. Is it, in the end, important? What matters is that nearly a thousand years of Nephite history had been preserved, from which the prophet Mormon and his son, Moroni, were able to compile their own record which we have today as the Book of Mormon.

### **3.0 The Large Plates of Nephi**

*3.1* Early in the current text of the Book of Mormon, Nephi describes briefly what had been his practice in preserving his records and those of his father.

And all these things did my father see, and hear, and speak, as he dwelt in a tent, in the valley of Lemuel, and also a great many more things, which cannot be written upon these plates. And now, as I have spoken concerning these plates, behold they are not the plates upon which I make a full account of the history of my people; for the plates upon which I make a full account of my people I have given the name of Nephi; wherefore, they are called the plates of Nephi, after mine own name; and these plates also are called the plates of Nephi. Nevertheless, I have received a commandment of the Lord that I should make these plates, for the special purpose that there should be an account engraven of the ministry of my people. Upon the other plates should be engraven an account of the reign of the kings, and the wars and contentions of my people; wherefore these plates are for the more part of the ministry; and the other plates are for the more part of the reign of the kings and the wars and contentions of my people. Wherefore, the Lord hath commanded me to make these plates for a wise purpose in him, which purpose I know not. But the Lord knoweth all things from the beginning; wherefore, he prepareth a way to accomplish all his works among the children of men; for behold, he hath all power unto the fulfilling of all his words. And thus it is. Amen. (1 Nephi 9:1–6)

*3.2* We ought not to become agitated over two different sets of writing plates which bear the name of Nephi. The Large Plates of Nephi could more easily be referred to as the Large Plates of the Nephites, inasmuch as the people who followed the teachings of this son of Lehi chose to call themselves such, after the founder of their nation. The Large Plates continued for nearly one thousand years, volume after volume being fabricated so that the chroniclers might preserve an accurate history of their people. The Small Plates were made by the hand of Nephi and when the last plate was filled with writing there were no additional plates made, with the possible exception of the one upon which Mormon inscribed his last farewell.

*3.3* Strictly speaking, the account of the ministry of Nephi's people does continue on the Small Plates for seven generations. Of the nine contemporary authors who contributed to the narrative, Nephi, Jacob, Enos, and Jarom address the spiritual issues facing their people, together with their labors to restore the Lamanites to righteousness. Omni, Amaron, Chemish, and Abinadom do little

to add to the overall spiritual atmosphere of their people. Amaleki provides a breath of fresh air at the end of the Small Plates, bearing his testimony of the Christ and the value of keeping the commandments of God. We in this dispensation can easily perceive one of the more obvious reasons for the production of the Small Plates, particularly in light of the loss of the manuscript of the Book of Lehi, Mormon's account of Lehi and Nephi as derived from the Large Plates of Nephi.

3.4 It appears that Nephi is belaboring the distinction between the Large and Small Plates of Nephi, but given the confusion that is sometimes generated in the minds of the readers of the Book of Mormon, we might allow that Nephi takes the time and space wisely. In the text of the Book of Mormon from 1 Nephi to the Words of Mormon, "these plates" almost invariably refer to the Small Plates of Nephi; "other plates" almost always refers to the Large Plates of Nephi. There are some notable exceptions to that general rule.

3.5 Nephi may have thought that the manufacturing of the second set of Plates was redundant, but he was obedient, notwithstanding any doubts he may have had in the process. How grateful we should feel because of his obedience. It is intriguing to note that Mormon physically appended the Small Plates of Nephi to his own set of plates because he was moved upon by the Spirit of the Lord to do so.

3.6 Theologians are sometimes loath to attribute to the God of Heaven a perfect view of all things, past, present, and future. This, of course, reveals a lack of faith caused by excessive intellectualism. In order for deity to provide for problems yet unexpressed in time, God's awareness must needs be perfect. Inadvertent sins do not surprise Him; allowances and provisions have been made throughout all time, even though the provisions may have been realized many hundreds or thousands of years before they were required. So it is with the creation of the Small Plates of Nephi; that provision may yet adequately supply a future need which mortal man in his finite wisdom cannot foresee.

3.7 Nephi makes reference to the difference between the Large and Small Plates in a later chapter. Shortly after his arrival in the western hemisphere, Lehi's son receives rather direct instructions.

And it came to pass that the Lord commanded me, wherefore I did make plates of ore that I might engraven upon them the record of my people. And upon the plates which I made I did engraven the record of my father, and also our journeyings in the wilderness, and the prophecies of my father; and also many of mine own prophecies have I engraven upon them. And I knew not at the time when I made them that I should be commanded of the Lord to make these plates; wherefore, the record of my father, and the genealogy of his fathers, and the more part of all our proceedings in the wilderness are engraven upon those first plates of which I have spoken; wherefore, the things which transpired before I made these plates are, of a truth, more particularly made mention upon the first plates. And after I had made these plates by way of commandment, I, Nephi, received a commandment that the ministry and the prophecies, the more plain and precious parts of them, should be written upon these plates; and that the things which were written should be kept for the instruction of my people, who should possess the land, and also for other wise purposes, which purposes are known unto the Lord. Wherefore, I, Nephi, did make a record upon the other plates, which gives an account, or which gives a greater account of the wars and contentions and destructions of my people. And this have I done, and commanded my people

what they should do after I was gone; and that these plates should be handed down from one generation to another, or from one prophet to another, until further commandments of the Lord. And an account of my making these plates shall be given hereafter; and then, behold, I proceed according to that which I have spoken; and this I do that the more sacred things may be kept for the knowledge of my people. (1 Nephi 19:1–5)

3.8 For more than ten years, Nephi and his father had been keeping their records on perishable materials, probably papyri or parchment. With such media, the revelations of these great prophets would have unavoidably been lost to their posterity and to humanity. The Lord therefore called upon Nephi to preserve the writings of his father and Nephi's own interactions with deity upon metal plates. These voluminous plates would ultimately be called the Large Plates of Nephi and would suffice the needs of the company for nearly 20 years. Mormon, as he was compiling his own account of the Nephite civilization, initially drew upon these Large Plates of Nephi in order to compose his narrative. That summary record within the Book of Mormon was called the Book of Lehi. As the translation of the Book of Mormon progressed, there was an incident in which the manuscript containing the Book of Lehi was lost. Joseph Smith was commanded not to retranslate the Book of Lehi but to translate the record found in the Small Plates of Nephi, which Plates Mormon had appended to his own collection.

3.9 Thirty years after the departure of Lehi and his family from Jerusalem, Nephi would be commanded to make another set of plates, these to be of a different tenor, far more spiritually oriented, dedicated primarily to the teachings and revelations which Nephi and his father had delivered to the family. These would eventually be called the Small Plates of Nephi, the account from which we are presently reading. In making this second set of plates Nephi was quite discriminating and thought it unnecessary to recount many wonderful and important things which he had preserved on the Large Plates. Thus Lehi's record is quite truncated, as is Nephi's accounting of the family's eight years in the wilderness of Arabia. This is not to discredit in any fashion the material preserved on the Large Plates of Nephi, for they do contain the words and activities of Lehi and Nephi in greater detail, material that cannot be disparaged because of its quality of content. As he progressed for those twenty years, there can be no question that Nephi was attempting to fulfill the commandments of God by preserving his history. No doubt it was adequate and edifying.

3.10 Nephi's redaction of his own record is a blessing to all who read it. It is filled with faith, truth, and light, a tribute to faithful men who lived 2,600 years ago, who kept the commandments of God and advanced the cause of Christ among their posterity for many generations. They are worthy examples for those of us in this day who struggle from day to day in the midst of our own personal wildernesses. It is felicitous indeed that the second record was made, preserved for generations, physically attached to Mormon's set of plates, and eventually translated as a substitute for the lost Book of Lehi. That there are other wise motives for the production of the Small Plates of Nephi we have no reason to doubt.

3.11 Once Nephi and those who would follow him departed from the land of their first inheritance into the mountains of the land of Nephi, the animosity between the Nephites and the Lamanites increased exponentially. Much of this recorded antipathy is absent from the account given to us in the Small Plates of Nephi.

*3.12* The historical context for the making of the Small Plates of Nephi is recounted in the fifth chapter of Second Nephi. The synopsis of Lehi and Nephi's records from 600 BC until 570 BC are contained in First Nephi and the first five chapters of Second Nephi. Thereafter Nephi restricts himself almost exclusively to the teachings of his brother Jacob, the writings of Isaiah, and his own revelations.

*3.13* Jacob and his grandson Jarom also refer to the two sets of plates, both Large and Small, while commenting on their contributions to the spiritual writings of Nephi.

And a hundredth part of the proceedings of this people, which now began to be numerous, cannot be written upon these plates; but many of their proceedings are written upon the larger plates, and their wars, and their contentions, and the reigns of their kings. These plates are called the plates of Jacob, and they were made by the hand of Nephi. And I make an end of speaking these words. (Jacob 3:13–14)

*3.14* Jacob refers to his record by his own name, notwithstanding the fact that Nephi himself had fabricated the metal sheets upon which Jacob was writing. We ought to conclude that Jacob finished his account regarding his sermon at the Temple and then wrote his presentation of the Allegory of Zenos at a later time. There may very well be a space of time between the writing and commentary on the Allegory and Jacob's account of his encounter with Sherem. Surrounding the events of Jacob's spiritual life were a host of other events, political and economic, that found their way into the Large Plates of Nephi.

And I, Jarom, do not write more, for the plates are small. But behold, my brethren, ye can go to the other plates of Nephi; for behold, upon them the records of our wars are engraven, according to the writings of the kings, or those which they caused to be written. (Jarom 1:14)

*3.15* When Jarom states that the plates are small, he means that there are not many blank plates left upon which to write. One wonders why no one thought to manufacture more plates. Could anyone foresee how long the Small Plates of Nephi were going to remain in the hands of the family? It is clear that Jacob was purposefully taciturn in his own writings upon the plates because of their size. Although Enos does not specifically make reference to that fact, he is likewise quite brief in his remarks. The writers in the book of Omni will be even more circumspect.

*3.16* The first time in the narrative of the Book of Mormon where Mormon first mentions both the Small and the Large Plates is actually in his final entry in the book that bears his name.

And now, I speak somewhat concerning that which I have written; for after I had made an abridgment from the plates of Nephi, down to the reign of this king Benjamin, of whom Amaleki spake, I 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; and my fathers knowing that many of them have been fulfilled; yea, and I also know that as many things as have been prophesied concerning us down to this day have been fulfilled, and as many as go beyond this day must surely come to pass—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. (Words of Mormon 1:3–7)

3.17 While we cannot speak with absolute certainty as to where Mormon was in his narrative, it seems likely that he had just completed the history of the first Nephite king of Zarahemla, Mosiah 1, or about 176 BC. In reviewing the Large Plates of Nephi regarding the reign of the next king, Benjamin, he came across an entry that described the visit of Amaleki to King Benjamin and his gift of the Small Plates of Nephi. Historically, if our chronologies be correct, this would have taken place about 170 BC just before Amaleki died. This may seem to be insignificant facts save for the problem created by the loss of the 116 pages of manuscript which contained at least Mormon's book of Lehi. It seems logical to assume that the book of Lehi ended about the time of the departure of Mosiah 1 from the land of Nephi. Mormon's book of Mosiah, then, would have probably begun with the exodus from Nephi and the establishment of the three Nephite kings in the land of Zarahemla. Readers often assume that the book of Mosiah was named for King Benjamin's son, but it is far more likely that it was named primarily for King Benjamin's father. What we may conclude, then, is that all of Mormon's account of the reign of King Mosiah 1 and most of his narrative regarding the long reign of King Benjamin, covering a period of almost 80 years, were lost with the 116 pages. At issue here is to which part of King Benjamin's reign is Mormon referring in verses 12 through 18? Amaleki refers to serious wars between the Nephites and the Lamanites during the first six years of Benjamin's rule (see *OM-C 1.24*); that is, between 176 and 170 BC. At the beginning of the current text of the book of Mosiah, Mormon makes reference to wars that occurred shortly before he turned the reins of the Kingdom over to his son Mosiah (see *MS-C 1.1*); that is, about the year 124 BC. The "continual peace" spoken of that Benjamin enjoyed "all the remainder of his days" took place during the three years between 124 BC and 121 BC when he died. Logic would dictate that Mormon's connecting link on the Small Plates to his own history must have been in connection with events recounted in the narrative no longer in our possession. Thus, the peace spoken of in verse 18, probably occurred about the year 170 BC rather than toward the end of Benjamin's reign.

3.18 Nephi and others of the early prophets had gone to great pains to testify of the principle of revelation, that it was possible, through the influence of the Spirit of God, to know in exacting detail those events that lay ahead of them. Mormon, looking back over nearly one thousand years of history, could clearly see the fulfillment of all that had been prophesied by his glorious ancestors in conjunction with the prophets of ancient Israel. How could he have not been blessed, edified, and deeply moved by the things which he read on the Small Plates? Much of Mormon's object in writing the Book of Mormon was to establish the truth of the Second Advent of the Lord Jesus Christ and the principles and ordinances necessary for his posterity and the posterity of his brethren to be prepared against that day.

3.19 The great conundrum presented by this verse is an fascinating one. It is interesting that Mormon can find space on the Small Plates in order to write the more than 875 words which com-

prise the Words of Mormon. Some scholars have suggested that Mormon fashioned one additional plate which he appended to Nephi's original collection, yet that does not seem consistent with the spirit with which Mormon makes his intention known. It is upon "Nephi's" plates that he wished to make his final inscription. How can the plates be full, as Amaleki testified, and there still be room to inscribe a document half the size of the entire book of Omni? The answer appears to be in the nature of the Small Plates and the fact of their inclusion with Mormon's collection. As a practical matter, would any of the writers inscribing their words upon the Small Plates ever be tempted to write on the two outside faces of the cover plates? It seems unlikely, given how easily the characters could be effaced with just normal handling. Nephi no doubt began his account on the inside face of the collection of plates, and the subsequent writers would have done the same, writing on those plate faces that would be protected throughout the centuries by the cover plates. Amaleki declared that the plates were full when he finished his entry, undoubtedly indicating that there were no protected interior surfaces left upon which anything could be written. When Mormon physically attached the Small Plates of Nephi to his own collection, at least one of the cover faces would then be protected. Is it not reasonable to assume that Mormon wrote his concluding remarks on that protected surface? Mormon could not recount the hundredth part of the events of his own day, much less the hundredth part of the vast collection of plates that constituted the Large Plates of Nephi.

3.20 Here is Mormon's explicit intent to physically attach the Small Plates of Nephi to his own collection of plates containing his narrative of the Nephite people. Mormon, like Lehi, Nephi, and Jacob, has seen the day in which the Book of Mormon would come forth and thus is able to anticipate with certainty those things that would be a most value to the posterity of the Lamanites.

3.21 Mormon knew that the writings of Nephi, Jacob, and the others who recorded their testimonies on the Small Plates would be of great value to the descendants of the Lamanites, an excellent appendix to that which he had already composed as the book of Lehi. For that reason he was persuaded to physically append the Small Plates to his own record. Additionally, however, he knew in his heart that there were other reasons why the inclusion of the Plates would prove beneficial, even though he could not then articulate them.

3.22 In the midst of composing what we now have as 3 Nephi, Mormon discusses at length the relationship between his own record and the records of all those prophets who had preceded him.

And there had many things transpired which, in the eyes of some, would be great and marvelous; nevertheless, they cannot all be written in this book; yea, this book cannot contain even a hundredth part of what was done among so many people in the space of twenty and five years; But behold there are records which do contain all the proceedings of this people; and a shorter but true account was given by Nephi. Therefore I have made my record of these things according to the record of Nephi, which was engraven on the plates which were called the plates of Nephi. And behold, I do make the record on plates which I have made with mine own hands. And behold, I am called Mormon, being called after the land of Mormon, the land in which Alma did establish the church among the people, yea, the first church which was established among them after their transgression. Behold, I am a disciple of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. I have been called of him to declare his word among his people, that they might have everlasting life. And it hath become expedient that I, according to the will of God, that the prayers of those who have gone hence, who



were the holy ones, should be fulfilled according to their faith, should make a record of these things which have been done—Yea, a small record of that which hath taken place from the time that Lehi left Jerusalem, even down until the present time. Therefore I do make my record from the accounts which have been given by those who were before me, until the commencement of my day; And then I do make a record of the things which I have seen with mine own eyes. And I know the record which I make to be a just and a true record; nevertheless there are many things which, according to our language, we are not able to write. And now I make an end of my saying, which is of myself, and proceed to give my account of the things which have been before me. I am Mormon, and a pure descendant of Lehi. I have reason to bless my God and my Savior Jesus Christ, that he brought our fathers out of the land of Jerusalem, (and no one knew it save it were himself and those whom he brought out of that land) and that he hath given me and my people so much knowledge unto the salvation of our souls. (3 Nephi 5:8–20)

3.23 Mormon is confronted with a similar problem that John the Beloved had. How does one find enough time and space to write down everything accomplished by the Lord God of Israel, even in as short a time as four years? Mormon has told us little of the ministry of Nephi the son of Nephi during the twenty-five years since the appearance of the signs attending the birth of the Savior. When our historian refers to “this book”, he is speaking of the book that he Mormon wrote upon plates, much of which is published today as the Book of Mormon. Specifically, of course, Mormon is speaking of his book of 3 Nephi.

3.24 Mormon acknowledges that he has had access to two major sources for the history of this period of time. The first we should probably think of as the Large Plates of Nephi, that more secular accounting of the day to day activities of the Nephite people. The second was the private journal of his ministry kept by Nephi the son of Nephi during the same period of time.

3.25 We are at a loss to determine which of the two records Mormon primarily drew his own narrative. We are tempted to suggest that the small account made by the disciple of Jesus Christ is what is meant, but if so, Mormon has been somewhat general in his abridgement of Nephi’s record, inasmuch as the disciple of Christ is only mentioned by name in the first chapter of 3 Nephi. Thus, the history of the Nephites for that twenty-five year period has little of Nephi’s personal ministry included. As difficult as it is to accept, it is likely that Mormon is referring primarily to the Large Plates of Nephi being kept by Lachoneus and his administration.

3.26 In another place we discover that Mormon’s father was called by the same name. The land of Mormon was to be found in the land of Lehi-Nephi, south of the narrow strip of wilderness, where a colony of Nephites had been established during the days of Zeniff. Either Zeniff or his son Noah had named the region, presumably because of the good hunting reserve it had become. After he had been driven from the presence of King Noah, Alma, the father of Alma the first chief judge of the land of Zarahemla, began teaching those who wished to receive the truth of God. Eventually, he established a Church of Christ among them, baptizing more than 200 individuals in the waters of Mormon. Alma and his people eventually were forced to flee into the wilderness, to the land of Helam, and subsequently to the land of Zarahemla. Mormon does not explain precisely why his family favored that personal name, but we may rest assured that they were faithful in their discipleship to the Lord Jesus Christ.

3.27 Mormon lived more than 300 years after the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ in Bethlehem. For many years he served as the chief captain of the Nephite peoples in their fruitless war against the Lamanites. He commanded their armies at the final battle at the hill Cumorah. He was also divinely chosen to serve as the custodian of the vast collection of plates upon which was recorded the history of the Nephite nation. He hid these up within the hill Cumorah before the destruction of his people. He was also charged with the responsibility of making an abridgement of the Large Plates of Nephi, a record which was ultimately completed by his son Moroni. A large portion of this synopsis has been published in our day as the Book of Mormon. As far as his own ministry in the Gospel of Jesus Christ is concerned, there is hardly another servant of God to whom we could point who had a more frustrating task as did the prophet Mormon.

3.28 In their anxiety for their posterity, the ancient prophets of the Nephite people pled with the Lord God of Israel that there might be a record preserved by which their children might have an opportunity to hear and understand the principles of eternal life. Mormon's abridgement constitutes part of the Lord's promise to these great, good, and holy men.

3.29 Father Lehi left the city of Jerusalem about the year 600 BC. The permanent record of Nephi was begun once he and his people were ensconced within the mountain fastness of the land of Nephi. The Large Plates of Nephi and many ancillary texts were handed down from generation to generation until the prophet Ammaron entrusted the lot to Mormon about 320 years after the birth of Jesus Christ. We are not certain exactly when Mormon embarked on his composition of the Book of Mormon. We cannot identify with precision exactly what Mormon means by "present time". The first writing of any kind that Mormon produces was apparently engraved upon the Large Plates of Nephi during his 24th year of age, or about the year AD 345. The final battle at the hill Cumorah transpired about the year AD 384. We might conclude, then, that Mormon began his own encapsulation of Nephite history sometime during the period between the years AD 345 and 384 and had written the body of the Book of Mormon up to this point in his history.

3.30 Again, Mormon draws upon the collected records of the Nephite people that had been accumulating since the days of Lehi and his son Nephi, throughout the ages for about a thousand years. Mormon was born about the year AD 311. Ammaron hid up the body of plates about the year AD 320. and approached the boy Mormon about that same time. Note that Mormon would have been no more than nine or ten years old.

3.31 When Mormon was about 24 years of age, or about the year AD 335, he contributed his observations about the decline of the Nephite people at that time to the Large Plates of Nephi. We do not know when he began the narrative of the Book of Mormon in earnest, but he continued until he arrived at his own birth and early contact with Ammaron. The first seven chapters of the book of Mormon in the larger Book of Mormon recount those things which he had observed, some of which was a synopsis of that which he had written earlier.

3.32 We may only speculate about Mormon's apology here. What appears to be the case is that there were certain aspects of Nephite history which could not be translated into Reformed Egyptian, the language in which the Nephites prophets recorded their accounts. The fault seems to be with the symbols that were used, rather than with those who employed them. Without a complete description of the language itself, we cannot know much regarding the limitations to which Mormon refers. His

testimony is, however, that those things which he had preserved upon his plates were true and an accurate representation of what had happened among them for that long period of time.

3.33 Mormon was not ignorant of the fact that there would come a day in which the Nephite civilization would come to an end. He may have already known that it would come in his own day. Yet for all of the prospects of annihilation looming on the horizon, Mormon was conscious of the marvelous and magnificent events that had transpired among his people during their thousand year sojourn in the promised land. Millions of souls had been received into the paradise of God because of the labors of the servants of God who lived among them. In addition, the future held promise as well; the coming forth of the Nephite history to the world would be the means of bringing tens of millions more into the fold of Christ. Had Lehi and his family remained in the land of Jerusalem, no doubt that family line would have ended in the havoc perpetrated upon the Jews by the Babylonians. Even if they had survived, their lot would not have been much different than that which befell the rest of the House of Israel who remained in the land. Lehi's family had been set apart in an unknown land, preserved and protected by the hand of God, and given every opportunity, generation after generation, to accept the fullness of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Mormon had every reason to be grateful.

3.34 There is an interesting episode in the life of the prophet Mormon which seems to have bearing on his love and protective sentiments for the Large Plates of Nephi. As the final war between the Nephites and the Lamanites dragged on, Mormon found himself so distressed at the spiritual degeneracy of his fellow countrymen that he refused to lead them any more into battle. Regarding a particularly egregious battle, Mormon writes the following:

And now, because of this great thing which my people, the Nephites, had done, they began to boast in their own strength, and began to swear before the heavens that they would avenge themselves of the blood of their brethren who had been slain by their enemies. And they did swear by the heavens, and also by the throne of God, that they would go up to battle against their enemies, and would cut them off from the face of the land. And it came to pass that I, Mormon, did utterly refuse from this time forth to be a commander and a leader of this people, because of their wickedness and abomination. Behold, I had led them, notwithstanding their wickedness I had led them many times to battle, and had loved them, according to the love of God which was in me, with all my heart; and my soul had been poured out in prayer unto my God all the day long for them; nevertheless, it was without faith, because of the hardness of their hearts. (Mormon 3:9–12)

3.35 Mormon does not provide us with the number of Nephite casualties. In his point of view, the battle had been decisively in the Nephites favor. The Nephites did not rejoice in their having been delivered from their enemies, but rather chose to vaunt themselves, hyperventilating about what they would do next to the Lamanites. Their false pride is pathetic. As if the throne of God had been considered seriously in any of their deliberations about the war; as if any of these warriors had sought the power and guidance of the heavens at any time during the conflict. This is no more than blasphemous bravado.

3.36 The victorious battle took place in the year 362. Mormon refused to lead the Nephites until about the year 375. He would appear that he volunteered to guide them during their final years

as their chief captain in order to have the means to protect the vast collection of Nephite records that he would rescue from the hill Shim and later ensconce in the hill Cumorah.

3.37 Mormon refused to lead the Nephites into battle primarily because they were not willing to be led by him. He had been their commanding general, the one on whom they were to depend for the most effective way to prevail over their enemies. They were becoming, however, a vulgar unruly mob, bent on doing whatever their wicked hearts dictated. The stunning contrast between the attitude of the hardened Nephites and that of their commander is stunning. Mormon loved them in spite of their disobedience and willfulness. The Nephites had absolutely no compassion upon their enemies and would have slit the throat of every one of them if they had been given the opportunity.

3.38 About the year AD 375, the massive power of the Nephite army was completely broken. Mormon has been watching their destruction with anxiety for their souls, but knowing that there was little or nothing that could be done for them.

And the Lamanites did not come again against the Nephites until the three hundred and seventy and fifth year. And in this year they did come down against the Nephites with all their powers; and they were not numbered because of the greatness of their number. And from this time forth did the Nephites gain no power over the Lamanites, but began to be swept off by them even as a dew before the sun. And it came to pass that the Lamanites did come down against the city Desolation; and there was an exceedingly sore battle fought in the land Desolation, in the which they did beat the Nephites. And they fled again from before them, and they came to the city Boaz; and there they did stand against the Lamanites with exceeding boldness, insomuch that the Lamanites did not beat them until they had come again the second time. And when they had come the second time, the Nephites were driven and slaughtered with an exceedingly great slaughter; their women and their children were again sacrificed unto idols. And it came to pass that the Nephites did again flee from before them, taking all the inhabitants with them, both in towns and villages. And now I, Mormon, seeing that the Lamanites were about to overthrow the land, therefore I did go to the hill Shim, and did take up all the records which Ammaron had hid up unto the Lord. (Mormon 4:16–23)

3.39 The eight-year hiatus from armed conflict between the Lamanites and the Nephites is a modest indication as to the nature of the bloodletting that had been going on between the warring parties. The factions were war-weary, their armies depleted, their enthusiasm somewhat quenched. It is clear that the Lamanites intended to put an end to the conflict once and for all. This was not to be a piecemeal operation, and it eventually proved to be the beginning of the prolonged final thrust that would bring about the utter destruction of the Nephite civilization. This was to be a ten-year retreat that would culminate on the hill Cumorah in what we now call western New York state about the year 384.

3.40 Since the 362nd year, Mormon had refused to lead his people into battle because of their refusal to follow his counsel. During those 13 years Mormon had watched the reversal of fortunes of the Nephites, tens of thousands of them falling by the sword at the hands of their enemies. At this point in the history of the Nephites, the city of Desolation fell into the hands of the Lamanites for the last time, never again to be recovered by the armies of the Nephites. Again, it is the women and children who ignominiously suffer at the hands of the Lamanites (see 4.14).

3.41 In his account of the general flight of the Nephites from the lands of their possessions, Mormon does not articulate the names of the towns and villages, nor does he tell us the number of days that it took for the gathering body of refugees to travel from the land of Desolation to the land of Antum. We are not told when the Lord proposed the transfer of all of the Nephite records from Shim to Cumorah. It is clear that the records were not so well hidden that the Lamanites would not have found them in the process of time. It may be as well that Mormon was still composing the text of his own narrative and had further need of the various volumes within the archive. Shim was the hill in the land of Antum and near the city of Jashon within which the prophet Ammoron secretly hid all of the records of the Nephites. Some scholars have suggested that the hill Shim mentioned in the book of Ether is the same as that mentioned here. Within the geographical and narrative context of the Nephites and the Jaredites, this conclusion is not without merit. It is probable that the hill Shim was located somewhere in modern Nicaragua. We might here observe that the geographical distance between the hills Shim and Cumorah is considerable, perhaps many thousands of miles. Given that the forced retreat of the Nephites from the land of Desolation to the hill Cumorah consumed ten years, this degree of separation should not surprise us. Mormon is not speaking just of the record that had been begun by Nephi the Disciple of Jesus Christ, but rather the entire depository. We may assume that there were many wagon loads of plates and other artifacts for the which he felt personally responsible.

3.42 After Mormon realized that the task that he had taken upon himself at the end of chapter 4 was far too great for him to accomplish on his own, at the beginning of chapter 5 he immediately solves his transportation problem.

And it came to pass that I did go forth among the Nephites, and did repent of the oath which I had made that I would no more assist them; and they gave me command again of their armies, for they looked upon me as though I could deliver them from their afflictions. But behold, I was without hope, for I knew the judgments of the Lord which should come upon them; for they repented not of their iniquities, but did struggle for their lives without calling upon that Being who created them. (Mormon 5:1–2)

3.43 The chapterization of the current edition of the Book of Mormon disguises, in part, Mormon's motivation for taking command of the Nephite armies after having once utterly refused to lead them. In the first edition of the Book of Mormon, chapter 5 was merely a continuation of Chapter II. It is clear that Mormon became deeply concerned about the safety of the depository located at the hill Shim in the land of Antum, and was willing to do anything to protect and preserve the records that Ammoron had ensconced there. We may assume that Mormon did not make this decision on his own, but that the Lord specifically directed him as to what he should do. The transfer of all of the historical plates and other artifacts that pertained to the vast collection, from the hill Shim to the hill Cumorah, would have been no easy matter, one requiring an enormous amount of manpower. As commander in chief of all of the Nephite armies, Mormon would have access to whatever resources he needed to complete the task.

3.44 Mormon does not hesitate to tell us that he did not expect any repentance on the part of the Nephites, nor did he expect that the Nephites would ever again be victorious on the field of

battle. Again, his motivation for leading the army was not to save the people, but to save their written history. After a nine year retreat across the North American continent, the warring parties arrived at the site of the final battle between the Lamanites and the Nephites: the Hill Cumorah. This had been called the hill Ramah in the days of the Jaredites. Mormon tells us of his immediate actions regarding the immense library that his armies had carried with them in their flight northward.

And when three hundred and eighty and four years had passed away, we had gathered in all the remainder of our people unto the land of Cumorah. And it came to pass that when we had gathered in all our people in one to the land of Cumorah, behold I, Mormon, began to be old; and knowing it to be the last struggle of my people, and having been commanded of the Lord that I should not suffer the records which had been handed down by our fathers, which were sacred, to fall into the hands of the Lamanites, (for the Lamanites would destroy them) therefore I made this record out of the plates of Nephi, and hid up in the hill Cumorah all the records which had been entrusted to me by the hand of the Lord, save it were these few plates which I gave unto my son Moroni. (Mormon 6:5–6)

3.45 It would appear that all of those who considered themselves Nephites were gathered together at the hill Cumorah. We do not know from whence they came. Were they drawn in from Nephite settlements in the area or were they simply recruited from the scattered remnants of the people who had been fleeing for their lives for the preceding five years?

3.46 Modern day descriptions of the place where Mormon hid all of the Nephite plates indicate clearly that it was a large excavated room within the hill Cumorah itself. One wonders when it was constructed. Did Mormon and his men have time to build such a safe place for the records in such a fashion that it would not be discovered by the Lamanites after the Nephites were all killed? The Jaredite nation had perished at the same location many centuries before, they having referred to the hill Cumorah as the hill Ramah. Had the room that became the depository for the Nephite records been built then as part of a defensive network for the Coriantumr and his soldiers? We do not know, but it seems likely.

3.47 The prophet Brigham Young provides us with his account of Oliver Cowdery's experience with the place where Mormon hid the vast historical resources of the Nephite civilization.

Oliver Cowdery went with the Prophet Joseph when he deposited these plates. Joseph did not translate all of the plates; there was a portion of them sealed, which you can learn from the Book of Doctrine and Covenants. When Joseph got the plates, the angel instructed him to carry them back to the hill Cumorah, which he did. Oliver says that when Joseph and Oliver went there, the hill opened, and they walked into a cave, in which there was a large and spacious room. He says he did not think, at the time, whether they had the light of the sun or artificial light; but that it was just as light as day. They laid the plates on a table; it was a large table that stood in the room. Under this table there was a pile of plates as much as two feet high, and there were altogether in this room more plates than probably many wagon loads; they were piled up in the corners and along the walls. The first time they went there the sword of Laban hung upon the wall; but when they went again it had been taken down and laid upon the table across the gold plates; it was unsheathed, and on it was written these words: "This sword will never be sheathed again until the kingdoms of this world become the kingdom of our God and his Christ." I tell you

this as coming not only from Oliver Cowdery, but others who were familiar with it, and who understood it just as well as we understand coming to this meeting. . . . [Don] Carlos Smith was a young man of as much veracity as any young man we had, and he was a witness to these things. Samuel Smith saw some things, Hyrum saw a good many things, but Joseph was the leader. (Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, 17 June 1877, Volume 19, page 38)

#### **4.0 The Small Plates of Nephi**

4.1 At the beginning of the section immediately above, the distinction between the Small Plates of Nephi and the Large Plates of Nephi was made according to the text of the Book of Mormon as we presently have it. In short, the Large Plates contain a general history of the Nephites beginning with the first records composed by Lehi and Nephi beginning, presumably, with their exodus from the city of Jerusalem. It is likely, however, that Lehi's account antedated that departure.. Thus a rather detailed account exists of the travels of Lehi and Ishmael's families in the wilderness of the Arabian peninsula, a sojourn that lasted about eight years. When about ten years had lapsed, the entourage found themselves in their promised land, which we now call the northwestern portions of South America, busily developing fields and pastures and exploring the regions round about. In their investigations, it was not long before they discovered vast repositories of gold, silver, and copper which they began to use immediately. From some of these materials Nephi was commanded to fabricate plates upon which he incised the family records generated thus far. The purpose was to employ a medium that would endure through time, papyrus and parchment not being adequate for the family's needs.

4.2 These first permanent records Nephi called after his own name. In 590 BC they were the only metal records in existence. We cannot say with certainty how many plates were used to preserve what had already been written by Lehi and Nephi, but it appears that it was considerable given the size of the far more specific account that would be produced later. In actuality, the size of the record would have been irrelevant inasmuch as Nephi had access to an almost endless source of raw materials from which to make his plates.

4.3 After Lehi's death, Nephi and those willing to keep the commandments that had been revealed to them, departed into the wilderness east of their first landing place. They established a place of safety where they could protect themselves from those who had rebelled against the mind and will of God the eternal Father. These two distinctive peoples eventually became known as the Lamanites and the Nephites. Twenty years after the Lord commanded to begin what we have come to know as the Large Plates of Nephi, Nephi was instructed to fabricate a second set of metal plates upon which he was to record a specific account of the spiritual activities of his father's family

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. 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 5:28–34)

4.4 Thirty years from the time that Lehi and his family had left Jerusalem for the promised land, and twenty years since they had arrived in the promised land, Nephi was commanded to make a second set of plates which emphasized the spiritual tone of Nephi's life and ministry rather than the complete daily chronicle of his people. The Large Plates, therefore, were redacted and filtered into that which we now have in the Small Plates of Nephi. The subsequent writers upon the Small Plates were commanded to write in a similar vein. Some were more successful than others. The creation of this second set of Plates should not depreciate our consideration of the Large Plates. It was from this latter record, it will be remembered, that Mormon drew the vast majority of his own recounting of Nephite history, both temporal and spiritual. Again, Nephi reminds us that we are reading from the Small Plates of Nephi rather than from his original record contained on the Large Plates.

4.5 The Small Plates of Nephi serve as a touchstone for those who would be of a like mind with the Lord God of Israel. Nephi has produced a work under the direct inspiration of the Father; he knows that it is acceptable to God. Therefore, the righteous would take great delight in the words which he has placed there. Mormon was deeply moved by the content of the Small Plates of Nephi, so much so that he physically included them with his own collection of plates, upon which the Book of Mormon was preserved.

4.6 Nephi did not spend twenty years writing secular drivel. He wrote only that which he considered to be sacred, whether upon the Small Plates or the Large Plates. The Large Plates, however, contain more "history" in the traditional sense of the word. It should be noted that from time to time a telescoping of time is evident. In this case, ten years had transpired between verse 28 and verse 34. For those of us who would like to be knowledgeable in all things Nephite, we have been directed to the Large Plates. Unfortunately, the two records which might have shed more light on the matter are not readily available. The Large Plates, which Nephi began ten years after he arrived in the promised land, are ensconced with the multitude of Nephite records in the depository established by Mormon in the Hill Cumorah. The Book of Lehi, which Mormon wrote as his summation of the history of the early Nephites, was lost with the 116 pages of manuscript committed to the care of Martin Harris while the Book of Mormon was being translated.

4.7 Nephi the son of Lehi anticipated the future of the Small Plates and gave general instruction as to what should become of them after he had passed out of mortality.

Wherefore, I, Nephi, did make a record upon the other plates, which gives an account, or which gives a greater account of the wars and contentions and destructions of my people. And this have I done, and commanded my people what they should do after I was gone; and that these plates should be handed down from one generation to another, or from one prophet to another, until further commandments of the Lord. (1 Nephi 19:4)



4.8 The Small Plates of Nephi, unlike the Large Plates, was an intimate record that was to stay in the immediate family of the prophet. Nephi, Jacob, Enos Jarom, Omni, Amaron, Chemish, Abinadom, and Amaleki all wrote in turn upon the Small Plates, doing their best to follow the original charge given by the Lord to Nephi. In the days of Amaleki, the Small Plates were placed in the records depository maintained by King Benjamin. Eventually all of the Nephite records would come under the purview of the prophet Mormon who found the Small Plates so compelling that he physically attached them to his own account of the Nephites. A translation of the Small Plates was commanded by the Lord in order to replace that portion of Mormon's narrative that had been lost through the negligence of Martin Harris. The text of the current edition of the Book of Mormon from 1 Nephi to the Words of Mormon constitutes that translation.

For behold, it came to pass that fifty and five years had passed away from the time that Lehi left Jerusalem; wherefore, Nephi gave me, Jacob, a commandment concerning the small plates, upon which these things are engraven. And he gave me, Jacob, a commandment that I should write upon these plates a few of the things which I considered to be most precious; that I should not touch, save it were lightly, concerning the history of this people which are called the people of Nephi. For he said that the history of his people should be engraven upon his other plates, and that I should preserve these plates and hand them down unto my seed, from generation to generation. And if there were preaching which was sacred, or revelation which was great, or prophesying, that I should engraven the heads of them upon these plates, and touch upon them as much as it were possible, for Christ's sake, and for the sake of our people. (Jacob 1:1-4)

4.9 Assuming that Lehi left Jerusalem six hundred years before the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ, the year would have been approximately 546 BC. When one considers the great sermon given at the Temple in the land of Nephi, coupled with his presentation and commentary on the Allegory of Zenos, and concluding with his powerful rebuke of the anti-Christ, Sherem, one may fully appreciate the degree to which Jacob hearkened to the voice of his brother.

4.10 Nephi must have known the nature of the posterity of Jacob and how their obedience would preserve those precious plates which the Lord had instructed him to devise for the more sacred teachings among the people. He had undoubtedly seen both his own children and that of his brother in vision and knew, despite any pride that he might have had in his personal family, the charge would be better kept by another segment of the family. Nephi's obedience to the word of the Lord in this matter constitutes another example of his deep humility.

4.11 Nephi commanded Jacob to recount those things which constituted sacred preaching, revelation, and prophesying. Jacob chooses to give an example of each. Nephi and Jacob both had received great revelations regarding the future of their people and as a result did all within their power to preserve them against the impending destruction and to provide a document which could be instrumental in restoring their eventual posterity to a knowledge of their faithful forbearers and the covenants which they had taken upon themselves.

4.12 At the end of his personal ministry upon the earth, Jacob wistfully concludes his own contributions to the text of the Small Plates of Nephi.

And it came to pass that I, Jacob, began to be old; and the record of this people being kept on the other plates of Nephi, wherefore, I conclude this record, declaring that I have written according to the best of my knowledge, by saying that the time passed away with us, and also our lives passed away like as it were unto us a dream, we being a lonesome and a solemn people, wanderers, cast out from Jerusalem, born in tribulation, in a wilderness, and hated of our brethren, which caused wars and contentions; wherefore, we did mourn out our days. And I, Jacob, saw that I must soon go down to my grave; wherefore, I said unto my son Enos: Take these plates. And I told him the things which my brother Nephi had commanded me, and he promised obedience unto the commands. And I make an end of my writing upon these plates, which writing has been small; and to the reader I bid farewell, hoping that many of my brethren may read my words. Brethren, adieu. (Jacob 7:26–27)

4.13 Jacob began his record by recounting the words of his brother regarding the Small Plates. This specific counsel came fifty-five years after Lehi had left Jerusalem, or about 546 BC (see 1.1-8). Jacob would have been no less than forty-five years of age at the time. As far as can be discerned, this is the sole temporal marker given by Jacob in his narrative. The next temporal marker that appears in the Small Plates is found in the account of Enos, the son of Jacob. That was given when Enos himself had become old, after one hundred seventy-nine years had passed away, or about 422 BC. Thus, from the birth of Jacob in about 595 BC to the death of Enos about 422 BC, 173 years had passed. How old was Jacob when Enos was born? If Enos lived to be a centenarian, Jacob would have been approximately 75 years old when his faithful son was conceived. If Jacob lived to be a centenarian, their lives would have overlapped by 25 years. Given these assumptions, Jacob would have died in 495 BC and Enos would have been born in 522 BC. All of this is, of course, mere speculation, but reasonable. Having a wise man spiritually govern a people for more than fifty years would have established the Nephites in their faith. Hence, we should not be surprised when we see the Lord doing much the same in our own day.

4.14 Having faithfully served his people, having faithfully fulfilled the commandments given to him by his brother Nephi, having faithfully guided the spiritual affairs of the Nephites for a half a century, Jacob is prepared to leave mortality, to find rest for a time in the bosom of Abraham.

4.15 Enos, the son of Jacob, not only carried out his father's wishes, he also sensed the magnitude of the importance of all of the records that had been produced among the Nephites.

And it came to pass that after I had prayed and labored with all diligence, the Lord said unto me: I will grant unto thee according to thy desires, because of thy faith. And now behold, this was the desire which I desired of him—that if it should so be, that my people, the Nephites, should fall into transgression, and by any means be destroyed, and the Lamanites should not be destroyed, that the Lord God would preserve a record of my people, the Nephites; even if it so be by the power of his holy arm, that it might be brought forth at some future day unto the Lamanites, that, perhaps, they might be brought unto salvation—For at the present our strugglings were vain in restoring them to the true faith. And they swore in their wrath that, if it were possible, they would destroy our records and us, and also all the traditions of our fathers. Wherefore, I knowing that the Lord God was able to preserve our records, I cried unto him continually, for he had said unto me: Whatsoever thing ye shall ask in faith, believing that ye shall receive in the name of Christ, ye shall

receive it. And I had faith, and I did cry unto God that he would preserve the records; and he covenanted with me that he would bring them forth unto the Lamanites in his own due time. And I, Enos, knew it would be according to the covenant which he had made; wherefore my soul did rest. And the Lord said unto me: Thy fathers have also required of me this thing; and it shall be done unto them according to their faith; for their faith was like unto thine. (Enos 1:12–18)

*4.16* Faith is belief in true things. Enos had received a remission of his sins because of his faith in Jesus Christ, the Messiah who would come in the Meridian of Time. He received a promise regarding his family because his desire in their case was consistent with the mind and will of the Lord. The redemption of the Lamanites and the preservation of the Nephite records were also harmonious with the economy of God. The acquisition of faith is the acquisition of the knowledge of God. We may not be able to articulate precisely how and why a thing is true, but in our hearts we know that it is true. We trust the familiar whisperings of the Spirit of God, a voice with which we have been acquainted from eternity to eternity.

*4.17* From whence did Enos get this notion if not from the teachings of his father, Jacob? From the earliest days of the covenant between Lehi and the Lord God of Israel, the patriarchs knew that there would come a day in which the righteous, the Nephites, would cease to exist upon the land of promise. It was also revealed to Nephi and Jacob that the Lamanites would continue dwelling in the land long after the Nephites were destroyed. Nephi had preserved the record of his father, wrote his own account, and gave commandments to the faithful that they should be diligent in keeping a record of their doings, both secular and ecclesiastical. Nephi also taught that by means of the preserved record the posterity of his brethren would eventually find redemption. Enos here is adding his petition for all of these things because he has believed his father, the teachings of the living prophet.

*4.18* Enos understood the potential for disaster. He knew the precarious position that the Nephites were in, even in their bastion in the mountains of the land of Nephi. There had been many wars and contentions. The Lamanites were determined in their oppressions and had they been victorious over the Nephites at that hour, they no doubt would have destroyed any and all records that revealed their perfidy or that of their ancestors. The desire that Enos expresses here would be repeated much later as Mormon prepared a place wherein the Nephite records could be hidden, a depository that could not be discovered by the Lamanites after the final conflict between the Nephites and the Lamanites at the Hill Cumorah. How Mormon managed to devise such a stronghold for the plates is unknown, but that he was successful there can be no doubt for it has remained intact unto the present day.

*4.19* Enos does not tell us how much he understood about the potential for a single volume that would bless the lives of his brethren the Lamanites. It seems that both Lehi and Nephi knew that there would be such a book, for it was shown to them in vision. One wonders, however, how much they comprehended the relationship between their own preserved accounts and that which would eventually serve as the scriptural voice of their people.

*4.20* The Nephites had attempted to bring their brethren to a knowledge of the truth but have been roundly rejected by the Lamanites. This, however, did not dissuade them. The promise had been given that the Lamanites would one day come to a knowledge of the truth. The Nephites felt it in their best interests that that glorious day come sooner than later, and labored exceedingly to

facilitate that great work. Enos apparently understood the importance of the Nephite records in the conversion process and sought for divine intervention, as others had previously done, for their preservation.

4.21 Certainly Lehi and Jacob had besought the Lord God in this matter, but we should not exclude the probability that Enos' ancestors back to Joseph, the son of Jacob, had desired the preservation of their records that the apostate portions of their posterity might eventually be blessed with truth and light. Should we not also see in the miraculous preservation of those records which can be found in the Old and New Testaments and in the Pearl of Great Price a reflection of a universal desire on the part of the servants of God that their testimonies might be effective long after they had passed out of mortality? The coming forth of the sacred records of the lost Ten Tribes and other covenant people will undoubtedly be attended by the faithful desires of those who produced them.

4.22 We cited Jarom's record above in connection with the preservation of the genealogy of Lehi's family. Clearly, however, Jarom understood in the intent of the Small Plates was more extensive than continuing a family pedigree chart.

Now behold, I, Jarom, write a few words according to the commandment of my father, Enos, that our genealogy may be kept. And as these plates are small, and as these things are written for the intent of the benefit of our brethren the Lamanites, wherefore, it must needs be that I write a little; but I shall not write the things of my prophesying, nor of my revelations. For what could I write more than my fathers have written? For have not they revealed the plan of salvation? I say unto you, Yea; and this sufficeth me. (Jarom 1:1–2)

4.23 Many students of the Book of Mormon have looked at Jarom's statement here as a bit of a confession rather than as a statement of fact. The issue has to do with why Jarom had not received special insights into the scriptures as had Lehi, Nephi, Jacob, and Enos, such that he would have felt compelled to inscribe them on the Small Plates. Many have suggested that this is part of a perceivable pattern to be found in the Small Plates, an indication of a gradual spiritual degeneration that culminated in the Nephites being driven from the land of Nephi into the land of Zarahemla during the time of Mosiah I. While the spiritual degeneration may have certainly taken place, is it necessary to tacitly slander the character of Jarom himself? The fact remains that Jarom received many revelations and prophesied extensively in the name of the Lord. His natural modesty as a servant of God, accentuated by the limited space on the plates, seems a more just explanation as to why he put but little in writing here. That Jarom's experiences with the Lord, his teachings and prophesying, are recorded elsewhere, there can be no doubt. It will be with great pleasure that the faithful will one day review his complete writings. At the end of his entry upon the plates Jarom clearly indicates who is to succeed him.

And it came to pass that two hundred and thirty and eight years had passed away—after the manner of wars, and contentions, and dissensions, for the space of much of the time. And I, Jarom, do not write more, for the plates are small. But behold, my brethren, ye can go to the other plates of Nephi; for behold, upon them the records of our wars are engraven, according to the writings of the kings, or those which they caused to be written. And I deliver these plates into the hands of my son Omni, that they may be kept according to the commandments of my fathers. (Jarom 1:13–15)

4.24 This is the second temporal marker of Jarom and the nearly last given by the sequential writers on the Small Plates of Nephi. The first marker had been given in reference to the two-hundredth year after the departure of Lehi from Jerusalem. In this context, we should probably suppose that Jarom desired us to understand that during the intervening thirty-eight years the Nephites and Lamanites had been engaged in war. Yet, it would be relatively easy to extend the implication to include the entire 238 years. We might conclude that Jarom died in this year, which would have been approximately 363 BC.

4.25 Once again the steward of the Small Plates changes, this time to Omni, Jarom's son. The original instructions had been given to Jacob. Jacob transmitted Nephi's wishes to his son Enos. Jarom testified that his father had given the same instructions to him, but emphasis is more upon the preservation of their genealogy, a record of who had been given custody of the Small Plates. Each of those entrusted with the plates recorded that fact until Amaleki entrusted them to King Benjamin. Almost as an echo of the instructions given by Nephi, Mormon adds his own postscript to the Small Plates explaining how it was that they had come into his custody and what he determined should be their final disposition.

4.26 We have already cited Omni observations regarding his role in preserving the Small Plates of Nephi. In the third verse of his short entry the son of Jarom states his intentions.

Behold, it came to pass that I, Omni, being commanded by my father, Jarom, that I should write somewhat upon these plates, to preserve our genealogy— Wherefore, in my days, I would that ye should know that I fought much with the sword to preserve my people, the Nephites, from falling into the hands of their enemies, the Lamanites. But behold, I of myself am a wicked man, and I have not kept the statutes and the commandments of the Lord as I ought to have done. And it came to pass that two hundred and seventy and six years had passed away, and we had many seasons of peace; and we had many seasons of serious war and bloodshed. Yea, and in fine, two hundred and eighty and two years had passed away, and I had kept these plates according to the commandments of my fathers; and I conferred them upon my son Amaron. And I make an end. (Omni 1:1–3)

4.27 We may not know the significance of this particular six-year period of time between 323 BC and 317 BC. It may be nothing more than an indication that verses 1, 2, and the first part of 3 were written in 323 BC, with Omni generalizing about his life as a warrior up until that time, assuring his readers that there had been periods of time when there were seasons of peace notwithstanding the times of war. Omni may have lamented somewhat that he had nothing spiritual to contribute to the record, a product of his sense of unworthiness as a wicked man. Some scholars have pointed to Omni's confession as a commentary on the spiritual degeneracy of the entire Nephite culture. This extrapolation may be unwarranted. Amaron's entry is also short, but therein he notationally passes the baton to his brother.

And now I, Amaron, write the things whatsoever I write, which are few, in the book of my father. Behold, it came to pass that three hundred and twenty years had passed away, and the more wicked part of the Nephites were destroyed. For the Lord would not suffer, after he had led them out of the land of Jerusalem and kept and preserved them from falling into the hands of their enemies, yea, he would not suffer that the words should not be verified, which he spake unto our

fathers, saying that: Inasmuch as ye will not keep my commandments ye shall not prosper in the land. Wherefore, the Lord did visit them in great judgment; nevertheless, he did spare the righteous that they should not perish, but did deliver them out of the hands of their enemies. And it came to pass that I did deliver the plates unto my brother Chemish. (Omni 1:4-8)

4.28 Amaron gives his temporal marker in verse 5 as being 320 years since the time Lehi and his family departed from Jerusalem, which corresponds to the year 281 BC. We may justifiably assume that Amaron was nearing death inasmuch as he entrusted the Small Plates of Nephi into the hands of his brother, Chemish, the same day that he wrote his last. Amaron refers to the Small Plates as belonging to his father, Omni, rather than as a record begun by Nephi. One wonders as to how much of the book had been read by Amaron, even though they had been in his possession for thirty-eight years.

4.29 The wicked among the Nephites, the more part of them, had been destroyed. Amaron does not tell us precisely how that transpired, but we may assume that it took place as a result of the great wars that had intensified during the life of Omni, during which he was compelled to take the lives of his brethren in order to preserve his people. Whether Omni fell in battle, we know not, but apparently many of the Nephites had lost their lives in the conflict which appears to have continued for most of Amaron's life.

4.30 This same warning appears in Jarom's record in conjunction with Lehi dying testament to his family. The warning was the flip side of the promise, that the Nephites would be protected and preserved from their enemies if they would keep the commandments. They had done so for many years and therefore reaped the blessings. When the Nephites began to fall into apostasy, the reversal of fortunes had to take place as well and thus they were afflicted, sometimes with great loss of life, by the Lamanites.

4.31 As the Nephites were afflicted, great numbers of the wicked among having been killed, there came a resurgence of repentance on the part of the survivors and a reciprocating forgiveness on the part of the Lord. The righteous were spare and were delivered from their enemies. The consummate deliverance of the Nephites from the hands of their brethren would be the escape from the land of Nephi into the wilderness and eventually to the land of Mulekite Zarahemla, being led by Mosiah 1, the father of King Benjamin and the grandfather of King Mosiah 2. We cannot at present discern precisely when that exodus took place. But we can be certain that it took place sometime between 281 BC and 200 BC, the latter date being the year that we suppose that Zeniff and his people returned to the land of Nephi from Zarahemla in order to re-inherit their first possession.

4.32 We may assume that Chemish is a younger brother of Amaron and younger son of Omni, but there is little to sustain that supposition save for the fact that Chemish appears to have outlived his brother. Chemish is likewise tacit regarding his experiences with the Small Plates of Nephi.

Now I, Chemish, write what few things I write, in the same book with my brother; for behold, I saw the last which he wrote, that he wrote it with his own hand; and he wrote it in the day that he delivered them unto me. And after this manner we keep the records, for it is according to the commandments of our fathers. And I make an end. (Omni 1:9)

4.33 We have no way of knowing when Chemish made his entry upon the Small Plates of Nephi, inasmuch as neither he nor his immediate successors give any indication as to the passage of time. Any chronology during the period of time beginning with the death of Amaron in 317 BC and ending with the birth of King Mosiah 2 in 154 BC can be nothing but the most tentative of speculations based on insubstantial assumptions. Chemish's son is more forthcoming than his father, but the entry is short nonetheless.

Behold, I, Abinadom, am the son of Chemish. Behold, it came to pass that I saw much war and contention between my people, the Nephites, and the Lamanites; and I, with my own sword, have taken the lives of many of the Lamanites in the defence of my brethren. And behold, the record of this people is engraven upon plates which is had by the kings, according to the generations; and I know of no revelation save that which has been written, neither prophecy; wherefore, that which is sufficient is written. And I make an end. (Omni 1:10–11)

4.34 Like his grandfather, Omni, Abinadom was a warrior, hard-pressed to deliver his people out of the hands of the Lamanites. The military pressure undoubtedly continued because of the rising generation's failure to comprehend the causes that brought about the destruction of their grandparents.

4.35 Note that Abinadom does not confess transgressions, but he does testify that to his knowledge, nothing more has been added to the scriptures. This does not necessarily impugn the character of Abinadom but it probably does suggest that the Nephites were having some difficulty living what they already had. Abinadom may have been among the few who were reading the scriptures at the time.

4.36 As we noted earlier in this monograph, Amaleki was the last of Jacob's direct descendants who wrote upon the Small Plates of Nephi. He recounts the escape of the Nephites from their enemies, the Lamanites, when they fled from the land of Nephi northward into the land of Zarahemla where they joined with the Mulekites, the great nation that had developed from a scion of Zedekiah, the king of Judah at the time Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the city and temple of Jerusalem. This union was facilitated by one Mosiah who was selected to be king over the entire country. Amaleki sees in king Benjamin, Mosiah's son, a trustworthy man.

Behold, I, Amaleki, was born in the days of Mosiah; and I have lived to see his death; and Benjamin, his son, reigneth in his stead. And behold, I have seen, in the days of king Benjamin, a serious war and much bloodshed between the Nephites and the Lamanites. But behold, the Nephites did obtain much advantage over them; yea, insomuch that king Benjamin did drive them out of the land of Zarahemla. And it came to pass that I began to be old; and, having no seed, and knowing king Benjamin to be a just man before the Lord, wherefore, I shall deliver up these plates unto him, exhorting all men to come unto God, the Holy One of Israel, and believe in prophesying, and in revelations, and in the ministering of angels, and in the gift of speaking with tongues, and in the gift of interpreting languages, and in all things which are good; for there is nothing which is good save it comes from the Lord; and that which is evil cometh from the devil. (Omni 1:23–25)

4.37 It would seem reasonable to assume that Amaleki participated in the exodus from the land of Nephi to the land of Zarahemla and was an eye-witness of all that he records in his narrative.

Once the Lamanites perceived in about 221 BC that a portion of the Nephites had left the land of Nephi, they would have been tenacious in their attempts to discover where they had gone. With the return of Zeniff and his colony sometime around 200 BC, the Lamanites would have been stirred up once again to find the land of Zarahemla. It would seem certain, then, by the year 176 BC that the Lamanites had figured out how to descend upon the land of Zarahemla, but not in sufficient numbers to destroy them.

4.38 The greatest troubles that came upon the Nephites were a result of not believing in the omniscience of God, that there was safety in His covenants because He knew all things from the beginning to the end, from all eternity to all eternity. The Nephites eventually failed to believe that men could be endowed by their creator with power by which the children of men might be spared the horrors of both death and hell. Amaleki has witnessed for himself the gift of tongues in the person of Mosiah 1. He probably enjoyed that blessing himself as the Mulekites and the Nephites came together to become one people.

4.39 In a previous section above we cited Mormon's sudden awareness of the existence of the Small Plates of Nephi while he was reading from the Large Plates of Nephi that had been fabricated from the days of Lehi until the reign of king Benjamin. He had been drafting his own record much of which we have today as the Book of Mormon.

And now I, Mormon, proceed to finish out my record, which I take from the plates of Nephi; and I make it according to the knowledge and the understanding which God has given me. Wherefore, it came to pass that after Amaleki had delivered up these plates into the hands of king Benjamin, he took them and put them with the other plates, which contained records which had been handed down by the kings, from generation to generation until the days of king Benjamin. And they were handed down from king Benjamin, from generation to generation until they have fallen into my hands. And I, Mormon, pray to God that they may be preserved from this time henceforth. And I know that they will be preserved; for there are great things written upon them, out of which my people and their brethren shall be judged at the great and last day, according to the word of God which is written. (Words of Mormon 1:9–11)

4.40 The text of the Book of Mormon as we have it today, up to and including chapter seven of the book of Mormon, had already by this time been written. "Finishing" the record in this case is nothing more than continuing his narrative as to the historical connection between the Small Plates of Nephi and that part of the story that he had already long since written.

4.41 For three hundred years the Large and Small Plates of Nephi had been preserved by different hands. The Large Plates had been kept by the kings of the Nephites and enlarged upon by themselves and the recorders which they had appointed to preserve the secular history of the Nephite people. The Small Plates had been kept as a personal record of Nephi, to be passed on within the immediate family. Thus, Jacob, Enos, Jarom, Omni, and the others who wrote upon the plates were the custodians of this sacred record until Amaleki bestowed them upon King Benjamin. Benjamin placed them in the keeping of the custodians of the public records whereupon they became so integrated among the other plates that they disappeared from view until Mormon had cause to uncover them five hundred years later.



4.42 The Small Plates would be preserved for a number of reasons, not the least of which being that Mormon had physically coupled them with his own record. Never again would they be bundled with the vast collection of plates upon which the entire secular history of the Nephites had been inscribed. Mormon is also convinced that the Lord would not allow a divinely mandated record to perish. We should take heart that the writings of all of the prophets since the beginning of time have been likewise preserved somewhere. We will enjoy at some future date the publication of these spiritual accounts of great and holy men and women. Note as well, that all men will be judged by that which was revealed in their own day.

4.43 Understanding how we came to have the translation of the Small Plates of Nephi at the beginning of the present edition of the Book of Mormon provides us interesting historical insights. After a four year preparatory period, from 1823 to 1827, Joseph Smith was permitted to retrieve the plates of Mormon and begin the translation process by means of the Urim and Thummim which had been provided by the angel Moroni. Martin Harris had been selected to serve as Joseph's scribe. That is to say, as Joseph deciphered the characters of reformed Egyptian which had been used by the ancient American prophets to record Nephite history, Martin would write down that which the prophet spoke aloud. In relatively short order, from 12 April to 14 June 1828, Joseph and Martin had succeeded in transcribing 116 pages of holographic manuscript. From testimonials given at the time, we learn that Joseph had begun his translation at the first of Mormon's record which was entitled the Book of Lehi. This apparently covered the first four hundred years or so of the history of the posterity of Lehi. It seems clear from other sources, that the initial part of what we now called the book of Mosiah had already been translated as well. Through unwise decisions made by Joseph Smith and Martin Harris, this large manuscript was lost. The pair were severely chastised for their foolishness. Eventually Joseph was restored to his role as the translator of the Book of Mormon and another scribe was provided, this time in the person of Oliver Cowdery.

4.44 Oliver began writing down the prophet's translation of the characters on Mormon's plates on 7 April 1829 and continued until the whole of the text as we now have was completed, sometime around the middle of June 1829. From all that we can tell, Joseph and Oliver resumed the translation at the point where the prophet and Martin Harris had ended, some place after the beginning of the book of Mosiah. They continued apace until they reached the final chapter of the book of Moroni. The question as to how they should deal with the missing portions that had been lost with the 116 pages of manuscript came to the fore. Joseph then referred to revelations that he had received on the matter. In July 1828, shortly after the debacle of the missing manuscript, the prophet Joseph Smith received the following:

Remember, remember that it is not the work of God that is frustrated, but the work of men; For although a man may have many revelations, and have power to do many mighty works, yet if he boasts in his own strength, and sets at naught the counsels of God, and follows after the dictates of his own will and carnal desires, he must fall and incur the vengeance of a just God upon him. Behold, you have been entrusted with these things, but how strict were your commandments; and remember also the promises which were made to you, if you did not transgress them. And behold, how oft you have transgressed the commandments and the laws of God, and have gone on in the persuasions of men. For, behold, you should not have feared man more than God. Although men

set at naught the counsels of God, and despise his words— Yet you should have been faithful; and he would have extended his arm and supported you against all the fiery darts of the adversary; and he would have been with you in every time of trouble. Behold, thou art Joseph, and thou wast chosen to do the work of the Lord, but because of transgression, if thou art not aware thou wilt fall. But remember, God is merciful; therefore, repent of that which thou hast done which is contrary to the commandment which I gave you, and thou art still chosen, and art again called to the work; (D&C 3:3–10)

4.45 No man is intelligent enough to overthrow the wisdom of God. Even Lucifer in his great pride thought that he could subvert the will of the Lord regarding the salvation and exaltation of mankind, but he knew not the mind of God. He has been thwarted on every hand, as have been all those who have lifted up their heels against the servants of the most high.

4.46 Here the prophet Joseph Smith and Martin Harris serve as archetypal examples of the failure of men to anticipate the wickedness of their fellows. Notwithstanding the fact that Joseph had been personally taught and comforted by the Father and the Son early in his life, that he had been instructed personally by the angel Moroni and other angelic ministers for more than four years, that he had been the instrument in the hands of the Lord to translate a goodly portion of that which had been engraved upon the gold plates, yet he had been overpowered by the solicitations of his friend and his friend's wife. Martin Harris had learned for himself the wisdom and inspiration of the young prophet as he had visited with the worldly wise of his day. How, then, could either of these good men be persuaded to ignore the counsel of the God of Heaven. Martin was plagued with a termagant wife; Joseph could not bring himself to disappoint his erstwhile benefactor. We may be somewhat hardpressed to point to Joseph's boasting, but it is clear that Martin Harris was afflicted with this aspect of pride. Not only did he overextend himself with respect to the nature of the covenant that he had made with the Lord, he also took glory unto himself as he presented the manuscript to any and all who desired to see the 116 pages. When the mind and heart of a man is set upon the things of this world, he has distracted himself sufficiently that he will certainly trip in his progress on the path to eternal life. Joseph wished to maintain his friendship with his friend and benefactor; Martin wished to appease his wife at any cost. For Joseph Smith, part of the vengeance was manifested in the retrieval of the Urim and Thummim and the plates of the Book of Mormon. For both Joseph and Martin the withdrawal of the Spirit of God from them personally, was sufficient for them to know that they no longer had a desire to disappoint the God of Heaven again. Martin would never again be entrusted with the task of helping with the translation of the Book of Mormon.

4.47 The instructions that Joseph Smith had received regarding Mormon's plates and the Urim and Thummim were quite specific. No doubt the counsel regarding the manuscript was similar, both to Joseph and to Martin. Joseph had been physically entrusted with the Urim and Thummim and the plates containing the Book of Mormon. In addition he had been tasked to translate the record and to protect the manuscript as it was being produced. The angel Moroni had been candid about the manner in which the plates should be protected, and painfully explicit that if he dared to show them or the interpreters to any, other than those who would be identified, Joseph would be destroyed. He had also been commanded to consider the plates and the translation process as part of the great work to build up the Kingdom of God upon the earth. If he expressed any other intent,

whether in thought or deed, he would not be able to obtain the plates, or as happened, would not be able to retain them. Joseph was promised that if he was true and faithful to the instructions that he had received, he would be continually aided in maintaining control over the plates.

4.48 We are not privy to every instance of disobedience perpetrated by the prophet Joseph Smith from 1820 until July of 1828, but certainly the Lord could allude to many. In the twentieth section of the Doctrine and Covenants Joseph reveals that this had been the case (see 20.5–6). It would be easy to make excuses for a young man making his way from his fifteenth to his twenty-third year in the midst of intense persecution. The Lord, however, does not afford Joseph the opportunity to do so.

4.49 It is quite certain that Joseph did not want to lose the patronage and friendship of Martin Harris, one of the few outside of his own family who had believed his account of the first vision and the visit of the angel Moroni. In this specific case, Martin Harris had gone off on his own track. Joseph was never given leave to compare himself with the conduct of Martin. While it is true that in some respects Martin had offended God in a grievous way, Joseph was still very much culpable in the episode. Joseph could not cover his own sins with the sins of others. Certainly we may view Martin's flagrant neglect of his covenant with Joseph and the Lord as fulfilling this aspect of the Lord's words as given here. In addition, however, it is clear that Martin's appreciation of that which he had written as dictated by the prophet was not as great as it should have been, particularly in light of the fact that he cavalierly neglected his charge once he had accomplished the task of satisfying his wife that had not been idly whiling away the hours in Harmony, Pennsylvania, for more than two months.

4.50 The faithlessness of Martin Harris could not ameliorate the failure of the prophet Joseph to follow the counsel of the Lord. The Lord is perfectly clear here. If Joseph had hearkened to the voice of the Lord in the first place, taking the Lord at his word that the manuscript should not leave his hands, Martin indeed might have taken extreme offense and might have abandoned the Lord's servant to the vagaries of the world. He might have also joined the ranks of Joseph's oppressors out of spite. The Lord, however, is plain. Had these eventualities transpired, the Lord God of Israel would have protected him and lifted him up and away from all of the machinations of the wicked.

4.51 In the far distant past, before the foundations of the earth were laid, the sons and daughters of God who would pertain to this planet were organized into dispensations and families, each spirit receiving particular assignments to achieve while dwelling in mortality. That Joseph Smith was foreordained to participate in opening the Dispensation of the Fullness of Time is a certainty. He was not, however, predestined to succeed in every instance. The prophet passed through a period of instruction during which he learned from his own experience the difference between good and evil. He made mistakes and then, like all of us who would inherit the Celestial Kingdom, he passed through a period of repentance, receiving forgiveness and proceeding to press forward in faith toward perfect obedience to the mind and will of God. Through all of this he was a moral agent with definite choices placed before him.

4.52 Never again would Joseph allow the manuscript of the Book of Mormon out of his hands. In April 1829, Oliver Cowdery would join with the prophet in Harmony, Pennsylvania, and act as scribe during the renewed translation process. By the middle of June 1829, the translation process

was complete. Oliver then made a copy of the entire narrative of the Book of Mormon as it had been translated. This copy would serve the typesetter as the Book of Mormon was being published. The original manuscript was carefully guarded so that the adversary could not have an opportunity to corrupt the text of the book. Joseph would be equally concerned about the integrity and preservation of the various revelations that he had caused to be written during his ministry, as well as the various accounts of his life and the rise of the Church of Jesus Christ in the last days.

4.53 Later in the summer of 1828 a second revelation was given to the prophet Joseph Smith as to how he should proceed, inasmuch as the translation of the book of Lehi and the first part of Mosiah had been lost through the carelessness of Martin Harris and the perfidy of his wife. After describing what would happen to him and the publication of the Book of Mormon if he returned to the beginning of the book of Lehi to retranslate the missing material, the Lord proposes a solution which Joseph wisely follows.

And now, verily I say unto you, that an account of those things that you have written, which have gone out of your hands, is engraven upon the plates of Nephi; Yea, and you remember it was said in those writings that a more particular account was given of these things upon the plates of Nephi. And now, because the account which is engraven upon the plates of Nephi is more particular concerning the things which, in my wisdom, I would bring to the knowledge of the people in this account— Therefore, you shall translate the engravings which are on the plates of Nephi, down even till you come to the reign of king Benjamin, or until you come to that which you have translated, which you have retained; And behold, you shall publish it as the record of Nephi; and thus I will confound those who have altered my words. I will not suffer that they shall destroy my work; yea, I will show unto them that my wisdom is greater than the cunning of the devil. Behold, they have only got a part, or an abridgment of the account of Nephi. Behold, there are many things engraven upon the plates of Nephi which do throw greater views upon my gospel; therefore, it is wisdom in me that you should translate this first part of the engravings of Nephi, and send forth in this work. (D&C 10:38–45)

4.54 The Small Plates of Nephi had been physically attached to the plates upon which Mormon was engraving his own account of the Nephite people. There were, in the archives of the Nephite people, two sets of plates which were originated by Nephi the son of Lehi. The first set contained a detailed history of the affairs of the Nephites that eventually became enormous in content and volume, aptly named the Large Plates of Nephi. These probably would have constituted many wagonloads of plates, covering as they did nearly one thousand years of history. It was to the Large Plates of Nephi that Mormon originally resorted when he began to compile his work that would eventually come to be known as the Book of Mormon. Several years after Nephi had initiated the Large Plates of Nephi, he was commanded by the Lord God of Israel to fabricate another set of plates that would confine itself to the more spiritual aspects of the Nephite culture of his day. This record was supplemented by the writings of other chosen men for about 400 years, at which time the last of these writers turned the Small Plates of Nephi over to the curator of the entire archive of Nephite records. There they remained until in his research, Mormon discovered them in the general collection. He was so impressed by the things which he read there that he physically included that small collection of plates with his own record, as a kind of appendix. As it turned out, the historical

narrative of the Small Plates of Nephi almost covered the entire part of Mormon's own work that had been lost in the 116 pages of the initial translation of the Book of Mormon. It is to the Small Plates of Nephi that the Lord is referring

4.55 As Joseph and Martin had been translating the book of Lehi and the first part of the book of Mosiah, they read of and recorded Mormon's experiences with the Small Plates of Nephi. Even though Joseph did not have the 116 pages in front of him, he did remember Mormon's notation. He undoubtedly made note of the Small Plates of Nephi in the collection that he held in his hands as the translation progressed. At that point he had received no instructions regarding their future translation and publication.

4.56 We do not know what would have happened if Martin Harris would have remained faithful to his covenants regarding the 116 pages of the Book of Mormon manuscript. We might speculate that the rest of the translation would have continued as had been anticipated in an uninterrupted fashion, the main text of the Book of Mormon being finished in the summer of 1828, rather than the following year. It seems clear, however, that at some point the Lord would have required Joseph Smith and his companions to translate the Small Plates of Nephi as well, given the sentiments recorded here.

4.57 After Joseph and Oliver completed the last of the book of Moroni, they then turned their attention to the Small Plates of Nephi, beginning with the First Book of Nephi. They pursued their labors until they came to the last plate in the collection upon which was recorded the Words of Mormon, a passage that explained in some detail the relationship between the Small Plates of Nephi and the plates that Mormon himself had fashioned for his own record. Thus, Mormon made the final connections between the writings of Amaleki in the book of Omni and his own labors on the history of the three righteous kings of the land of Zarahemla, Mosiah 1, Benjamin, and Mosiah 2.

4.58 The record of Nephi referred to here would be published in several sections with the names 1 Nephi, 2 Nephi, Jacob, Enos, Jarom, Omni, and the Words of Mormon, all of the narrative having been identified as having been translated from the Small Plates of Nephi. Needless to say, the efforts of Lucy Harris and her cohorts to destroy Joseph Smith's righteous influence in the world came to naught.

4.59 The devil does not and cannot know the mind of God. Therefore, all of his efforts to destroy the work of God ultimately advance the whole Church and Kingdom of God. We do not know at this point exactly what the reaction of this nefarious cabal was when the Book of Mormon finally appeared in print, but they must have been vastly disappointed. One wonders if any of the participants in the conspiracy other than Martin Harris ever fully repented of their wickedness.

4.60 The historical material included in the Small Plates of Nephi had also been inscribed upon the Large Plates of Nephi in far more secular detail. Mormon had extrapolated his book of Lehi from the Large Plates. Thus, Mormon's account of the spiritual life of the Nephites during the first four hundred years of their existence had been abridged from a record that was primarily secular in its orientation. The Small Plates of Nephi had been desirable in Mormon's eyes because they were far more explicit in recounting the spiritual aspects of their society.

4.61 Anyone who has perused the writings of Nephi and his brother Jacob cannot help but be impressed by their grasp on the principles of eternal life and exaltation. These were men who were as

familiar with the workings of the Spirit of God as any men who ever lived upon the earth. Jacob was well acquainted with the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ as if he had lived in the days of the Savior. The brother contributed wonderful citations taken from the Brass Plates that preserved for us the writings of hitherto unknown prophets, seers, and revelators who had served the House of Israel long before Lehi and his family left Jerusalem. We may be assured that Joseph and Oliver translated all of the engravings made upon the Small Plates of Nephi, including all of the words which Mormon appended to the record. The Small Plates of Nephi, however, would serve as the “first part” of the published Book of Mormon in the absence of the book of Lehi.

## **5.0 The Plates of Mormon**

5.1 We cannot speak with certainty as to when Mormon began his monumental work that has come to be known as the Book of Mormon. Perhaps if we were in possession of the book of Lehi and the other lost materials that could be found on the 166 pages of manuscript lost by Martin Harris, we could be more definitive. What we can discern is that Mormon is, indeed, the narrator throughout most of the material to be found between the book of Mosiah and the sixth chapter of the book of Mormon, his personal account of his own day and age. He is, of course, the narrative voice of the Words of Mormon which explains the relationship between the Small Plates of Nephi and his historical compilation. A few examples should serve to illustrate the facts of the matter.

5.2 In the book of Mosiah, Mormon recounts the interaction between Ammon and king Limhi, when the former went up out of the land of Zarahemla to the land of Nephi to find out what had happened to Limhi’s grandfather Zeniff and the colonists who accompanied him two generations before. In the course of their conversations, Limhi revealed to Ammon that he had sent 46 of his men to make their way through the narrow strip of wilderness separating the land of Nephi from the land of Zarahemla in order to obtain help to throw off the enslavement that the Lamanites had perpetrated upon him and his kingdom. The men lost their way in their journey and ended up in the land of Desolation, a ruined area north of the narrow neck of land which had once been inhabited by an ancient people known as the Jaredites. Limhi’s men returned to the land of Nephi having found various relics, including 24 gold plates with strange character incised upon them. Limhi asked Ammon if he could read ancient writings. Ammon said that he could not, but that the king of Zarahemla, Mosiah, could do so. After escaping from the land of Nephi, king Limhi asked king Mosiah to translate the record, which he did by the gift and power of God facilitated by a Urim and Thummim that he had in his possession. After recounting the nature of the translation and a brief summary of the contents of the 24 gold plates, Mormon makes a promise to his readers.

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 28:17–19)

5.3 The density of the language of Jared and his brother is here manifested. The 24 gold plates contained a history of the earth from the creation down to the time of the great flood and from thence to the building of the Tower of Babel. Before the confusion of tongues at the Tower of Babel, all of the people spoke the language of Adam, which language is the language of God. From the time of the Tower, the record related the history of Jared and his brother as they made their way from Mesopotamia, across the Mediterranean Sea to the northwest coast of Africa. There the company would build eight water-tight crafts which would carry them across the ocean to the land which is now called North and South America. The record also contained an outline of Jaredite history from the time of their arrival in the promised land until their destruction on the hill Ramah, about the same time Lehi and his family arrived from across the western ocean. Only Coriantumr and Ether survived that conflict. Ether hid up his record in such a fashion that Limhi's men would be able to find it and Coriantumr wandered in the desolation of his land until he happened upon the people of Mulek shortly after they arrived in the western hemisphere from the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians.

5.4 The account of Ether is both a glorious and a tragic tale. Hardly a greater prophet, seer, and revelator has ever lived upon the earth than the brother of Jared. He spoke face to face with his creator many hundreds of years before the Lord would come into mortality and viewed him as he would be during his mortal ministry in the Meridian of Time. Yet for all of their exchange with the God of Heaven, the Jaredites fell into gross transgressions, fought viciously among themselves, and engaged in practices unbecoming the sons and daughters of God, courting the powers of Lucifer and his minions. The record of Ether proved to be an ancient echo of the parameters that had been placed upon the posterity of Lehi. So long as they worshipped the God of the land who is Jesus Christ, they would prosper. If they were to forsake their God, they would be swept away and another people take their place. Their recent brush with the sort of apostasy that laid the Jaredites low must have immediately come to the forefront of their memory as they learned of the history that had played out in the lands of their inheritance many hundreds of years before.

5.5 Mormon promises to include the history of the Jaredites in his own work. He is unable to fulfill that task, but apparently passed that responsibility to his son, Mormon. Thus, the narrative editor of the book of Ether is Moroni, as is clearly perceived from the opening verses of the book of Ether.

And now I, Moroni, proceed to give an account of those ancient inhabitants who were destroyed by the hand of the Lord upon the face of this north country. And I take mine account from the twenty and four plates which were found by the people of Limhi, which is called the Book of Ether. And as I suppose that the first part of this record, which speaks concerning the creation of the world, and also of Adam, and an account from that time even to the great tower, and whatsoever things transpired among the children of men until that time, is had among the Jews—Therefore I do not write those things which transpired from the days of Adam until that time; but they are had upon the plates; and whoso findeth them, the same will have power that he may get the full account. But behold, I give not the full account, but a part of the account I give,

from the tower down until they were destroyed. And on this wise do I give the account. He that wrote this record was Ether, and he was a descendant of Coriantor. (Ether 1:1–5)

5.6 King Mosiah 2 had made a translation of the twenty-four plates of Ether five centuries before), but we do not know what became of that work nor how it figured into Moroni's task. The text of the book of Ether is replete with references to Moroni's apparent knowledge of the contents and the nature of the language of the Jaredites, as if he himself had worked with the record directly. That he had access to the Urim and Thummim, the translators which Mosiah used, may be considered a given. How they were employed in his compilation of the book of Ether can only be a matter of conjecture.

5.7 No doubt Moroni compared that which was related in the first part of Ether's record with the writings of Moses that were found on the Plates of Brass. Neither the Jaredites nor the prophet Ether would have had access to the writings of Moses, but it seems certain that Moses had access to ante-Diluvia accounts that were similar in content to those which the Jaredites carried with them. It seems clear as well that Abraham had access to such ancient texts long before his descendant Moses did, as we may see in Abraham's own account of the creation.

5.8 We may not know at this point how much space Ether's account of the dispensation of Adam to Noah consumed of the twenty-four plates. By the same token, we cannot know just how greatly the record of Ether was condensed by Moroni. We are also at a loss as to how dense the written language of the Jaredites was in comparison to the human languages of our day. The current text of the book of Ether is contained in less than 30 printed pages, but we should probably assume that had the original text, as set forth by Ether, been transmitted to us verbatim, the volume would be unimaginably larger than it is now. Moroni's narrative would cover the 1900 years of history from the confusion of tongues until the final destruction of the Jaredite peoples at the hill Ramah.

5.9 The book of Alma is filled with little asides in which Mormon makes his personal observations about the historical narrative that he is recounting. Frequently, he will use the phrase "and thus we see" to introduce those asides. Mormon also reveals something of his narrative strategy as he introduces portions of his history that are somewhat anachronistic. This is particularly true when he deals with events that transpire at the same time in different places. This manifests itself when he is compelled to use flashbacks. One or two examples should suffice to illustrate the practice. After recounting the conversion of the people of Lamoni by the sons of Mosiah and their companions, the disciples among the Lamanites choose to bury their weapons of war rather than take the lives of their brethren who were coming against them; they feared for their own salvation if they once again resorted to the taking the lives of others. Mormon comments on the tenacity of their faith.

And now it came to pass that when the king had made an end of these sayings, and all the people were assembled together, they took their swords, and all the weapons which were used for the shedding of man's blood, and they did bury them up deep in the earth. And this they did, it being in their view a testimony to God, and also to men, that they never would use weapons again for the shedding of man's blood; and this they did, vouching and covenanting with God, that rather than shed the blood of their brethren they would give up their own lives; and rather than take away from a brother they would give unto him; and rather than spend their days in idleness they would labor abundantly with their hands. And thus we see that, when these Lamanites were



brought to believe and to know the truth, they were firm, and would suffer even unto death rather than commit sin; and thus we see that they buried their weapons of peace, or they buried the weapons of war, for peace. (Alma 24:17–19)

5.10 Much might be said of this simple act of faith. Comparisons might be made to similar historical events, doctrinal implications might be reviewed, and the aggregate wisdom or foolishness of these disciples of Christ might be brought into question. What remains, however, is the demonstration of a confidence so strong that many of the parties involved in this covenant went to their deaths without fear or regret.

5.11 The wonder here is that these children of God actually accomplished the almost inconceivable task that they placed before themselves. Though their sacrifice they proved themselves to God the Father that they were willing to preserve themselves for Him. By the same token, they bore testimony to their fratricidal brethren among the Lamanites that they were more than sincere about the religious stance that they had taken. A man who would go to his death rather than betray his convictions cannot easily be dismissed. They chose to give their lives, rather than take life away. In that singular act, they were the means of bringing hundreds unto Christ, providing life where life had been taken from them. Their industry would be perpetual. Once they were settled in the lands of their inheritance provided by the Nephites, the Anti-Nephi-Lehies labored with the hands to raise crops and herds in order that they might be a blessing and a benefit to those who had preserved their lives from their enemies. This they would continue to do all the days of their lives.

5.12 Mormon's point here is that anyone may find salvation at the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ, through his atoning sacrifice, if they desire it, if they are willing to follow the whisperings of the spirit of God. Later in the narrative Mormon pauses to provide the reader with a series of rather lengthy treatises delivered by Alma the Younger to his three sons, Helaman, Shiblon, and Corianton. This digression is introduced in Alma chapter 35.

And thus ended the seventeenth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi. And the people of Ammon departed out of the land of Jershon, and came over into the land of Melek, and gave place in the land of Jershon for the armies of the Nephites, that they might contend with the armies of the Lamanites and the armies of the Zoramites; and thus commenced a war betwixt the Lamanites and the Nephites, in the eighteenth year of the reign of the judges; and an account shall be given of their wars hereafter. (Alma 35:12–13)

5.13 The seventeenth year of the reign of the judges corresponds to a period of time that includes portions of the years 75–74 BC. A great deal transpired during the latter end of this year.

5.14 The people of Ammon were covenantally forbidden to do battle against their enemies; the poor Zoramites most certainly were unarmed when they left the land of Antionum. Any improvements that might have been made during the two years that the Anti-Nephi-Lehies had dwelt in the land of Jershon were now abandoned in favor of the Nephite military. The relocation to Melek may have been recommended by Amulek and Zeezrom who apparently had settled there. The eighteenth year corresponds to a period of time that includes portions of the years 74–73 BC. Mormon resumes his historical account of the conflict between the Nephites and the combined forces of the Zoramites

and the Lamanites in Alma 43 and concludes the narrative of this war when Zerahemnah makes his covenant with Moroni at the end of the battle at the river Sidon in Alma 44.

5.15 After having dedicated considerable space for the counsel given by Alma to his sons (chapters 35 through 42), he decides to return to the original historical narrative he was composing prior to the digression.

And now it came to pass that the sons of Alma did go forth among the people, to declare the word unto them. And Alma, also, himself, could not rest, and he also went forth. Now we shall say no more concerning their preaching, except that they preached the word, and the truth, according to the spirit of prophecy and revelation; and they preached after the holy order of God by which they were called. And now I return to an account of the wars between the Nephites and the Lamanites, in the eighteenth year of the reign of the judges. (Alma 43:1–3)

5.16 Alma was still of the same mind after his missionary labors to the land of Antionum as he was beforehand; that is to say, that the preaching of the word had a tendency to lead the people to do that which was just. The remainder of the book of Alma focuses the attention of the reader on the manifold conflicts between the Nephites and their antagonists. Dissident Nephites of all stripes and hues combined with the Lamanites to wage war on their brethren.

5.17 Mormon had left off his historical narrative of the rebellion of the people of Antionum in order to recount Alma's words of counsel to his three sons. He had promised to resume his narrative and does so here. The Nephite preparations for what follows had been the voluntary exodus of the people of Ammon from the land of their inheritance in Jershon to the land of Melek in the western regions of the land of Zarahemla (see 35.13). The Ammonites consisted of the Lamanite converts of the sons of Mosiah who had entered into a covenant with the Lord God of Israel that they would no longer resort to warfare, as part of their repentance from grievous sin. As was stated above, the eighteenth year corresponds to portions of the years 74–73 BC. The reign of the judges began in about 91 BC. The mission to the Zoramites had taken place during the seventeenth year of the reign of the judges, or sometime during the years 75–74 BC, but probably in 74 BC.

5.18 In the book of Helaman similar markers are used to point to Mormon's person commentary. At the beginning of his narration of Helaman's ministry, Mormon treats the activities of Kishkumen and Gadiaton, two of the prominent members of a secret band of robbers who operated against the government and the people of the land of Zarahemla. In an attempt to destroy the chief judge, Helaman the son of Alma, Kishkumen is discovered and slain. Gadianton found himself on tenterhooks.

And it came to pass that Helaman did send forth to take this band of robbers and secret murderers, that they might be executed according to the law. But behold, when Gadianton had found that Kishkumen did not return he feared lest that he should be destroyed; therefore he caused that his band should follow him. And they took their flight out of the land, by a secret way, into the wilderness; and thus when Helaman sent forth to take them they could nowhere be found. And more of this Gadianton shall be spoken hereafter. And thus ended the forty and second year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi. And behold, in the end of this book ye shall see that this Gadianton did prove the overthrow, yea, almost the entire destruction of the people of Nephi. Behold I do not mean the end of the book of Helaman, but I mean the

end of the book of Nephi, from which I have taken all the account which I have written.  
(Helaman 2:10–14)

5.19 Whatever had been the exact relationship between the servant of Helaman and the chief judge prior to the execution of Kishkumen, it seems that the servant had not as yet had the opportunity to reveal to Helaman what had happened the night before as he had met with the members of the combination. Once having explained his activities during the night and then of his encounter with Kishkumen that day, the servant then explained his rationale behind his rather proactive approach to disposing of the threat against the chief judge. Armed with the information that the servant was able to provide regarding the location of the meeting held the night before, officers of the law were sent to apprehend the miscreants.

5.20 At what hour had Kishkumen left his band? What had been the intended hour of return? What circumstances had delayed Kishkumen before he came in contact with the servant of Helaman? We do not know, but something had interfered with the timetable, else Gadianton would not have been antsy about Kishkumen's failure to return. Helaman's response to the report of his servant would have been immediate and the capture of the band would have been accomplished without much ado. The delay must have been prior to the meeting of Kishkumen and the servant, a delay that serendipitously afforded Gadianton an opportunity to flee the city.

5.21 Gadianton as an actor in the narrative history of the Nephites is not mentioned by name again. His band, however, is. Seven years later, during the 49th year of the reign of the judges, the combination inveigled its way back into the society of the Nephites. Although there were many intrigues that may have involved the secret combinations, the band of murderers are not specifically mentioned until 67th year of the reign of the judges, some twenty-five years after Mormon left Gadianton and his men weltering in the wilderness. Gadianton may have survived those years, but it seems unlikely. The end of the 42nd year of the reign of the judges occurred during the first part of the year 49 BC.

5.22 The eventual destruction of the Nephites at the hill Cumorah came about in large measure as the result of the first covenants established by Kishkumen and Gadianton being continually exploited by the wickedness of the Nephites. The spirit of that band, the desire for power, wealth, and self-gratification, would fuel the last conflicts between the Lamanites and the Nephites. As will be seen, Mormon is referring to his entire history of the Nephites and not just the account ascribed to Helaman and his sons. By the book of Nephi, Mormon means the general history begun by Nephi the son of Lehi which came to be known as the Large Plates of Nephi. Those plates encompassed the entire thousand year history of the Nephites, from which Mormon drew much of his account.

5.23 In the book of 3 Nephi, the prophet-historian Mormon embarks upon a long aside that establishes once and for all the relationship between his own record and the other records that had been kept by the Nephites from the beginning.

And there had many things transpired which, in the eyes of some, would be great and marvelous; nevertheless, they cannot all be written in this book; yea, this book cannot contain even a hundredth part of what was done among so many people in the space of twenty and five years;

But behold there are records which do contain all the proceedings of this people; and a shorter but true account was given by Nephi. Therefore I have made my record of these things according to the record of Nephi, which was engraven on the plates which were called the plates of Nephi. And behold, I do make the record on plates which I have made with mine own hands. And behold, I am called Mormon, being called after the land of Mormon, the land in which Alma did establish the church among the people, yea, the first church which was established among them after their transgression. Behold, I am a disciple of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. I have been called of him to declare his word among his people, that they might have everlasting life. And it hath become expedient that I, according to the will of God, that the prayers of those who have gone hence, who were the holy ones, should be fulfilled according to their faith, should make a record of these things which have been done—Yea, a small record of that which hath taken place from the time that Lehi left Jerusalem, even down until the present time. Therefore I do make my record from the accounts which have been given by those who were before me, until the commencement of my day; And then I do make a record of the things which I have seen with mine own eyes. And I know the record which I make to be a just and a true record; nevertheless there are many things which, according to our language, we are not able to write. And now I make an end of my saying, which is of myself, and proceed to give my account of the things which have been before me. I am Mormon, and a pure descendant of Lehi. I have reason to bless my God and my Savior Jesus Christ, that he brought our fathers out of the land of Jerusalem, (and no one knew it save it were himself and those whom he brought out of that land) and that he hath given me and my people so much knowledge unto the salvation of our souls. (3 Nephi 5:8–20)

5.24 Mormon is confronted with a similar problem that John the Beloved had. How does one find enough time and space to write down everything accomplished by the Lord God of Israel, even in as short a time as four years? Mormon has told us little of the ministry of Nephi the son of Nephi during the twenty-five years since the appearance of the signs attending the birth of the Savior. The phrase “this book” refers to the book that Mormon wrote upon plates, much of which is published today as the Book of Mormon. Specifically, of course, Mormon is speaking of his book of 3 Nephi.

5.25 Mormon acknowledges that he has had access to two major sources for the history of this period of time. The first we should probably think of as the Large Plates of Nephi, that more secular accounting of the day to day activities of the Nephite people. The second was the private journal of his ministry kept by Nephi the son of Nephi during the same period of time.

5.26 We are at a loss to determine which of the two records Mormon primarily drew his own narrative. We are tempted to suggest that the small account made by the disciple of Jesus Christ is what is meant, but if so, Mormon has been somewhat general in his abridgement of Nephi’s record, inasmuch as the disciple of Christ is only mentioned by name in the first chapter of 3 Nephi. Thus, the history of the Nephites for that twenty-five year period has little of Nephi’s personal ministry included. As difficult as it is to accept, it is likely that Mormon is referring primarily to the Large Plates of Nephi being kept by Lachoneus and his administration.

5.27 In another place we discover that Mormon’s father was called by the same name. The land of Mormon was to be found in the land of Lehi-Nephi, south of the narrow strip of wilderness, where a colony of Nephites had been established during the days of Zeniff. Either Zeniff or his son Noah had named the region, presumably because of the good hunting reserve it had become. After

he had been driven from the presence of King Noah, Alma, the father of Alma the first chief judge of the land of Zarahemla, began teaching those who wished to receive the truth of God. Eventually, he established a Church of Christ among them, baptizing more than 200 individuals in the waters of Mormon. Alma and his people eventually were forced to flee into the wilderness, to the land of Helam, and subsequently to the land of Zarahemla. Mormon does not explain precisely why his family favored that personal name, but we may rest assured that they were faithful in their discipleship to the Lord Jesus Christ.

5.28 Mormon lived more than 300 years after the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ in Bethlehem. For many years he served as the chief captain of the Nephite peoples in their fruitless war against the Lamanites. He commanded their armies at the final battle at the hill Cumorah. He was also divinely chosen to serve as the custodian of the vast collection of plates upon which was recorded the history of the Nephite nation. He hid these up within the hill Cumorah before the destruction of his people. He was also charged with the responsibility of making an abridgement of the Large Plates of Nephi, a record which was ultimately completed by his son Moroni. A large portion of this synopsis has been published in our day as the Book of Mormon. As far as his own ministry in the Gospel of Jesus Christ is concerned, there is hardly another servant of God to whom we could point who had a more frustrating task as did the prophet Mormon.

5.29 In their anxiety for their posterity, the ancient prophets of the Nephite people pled with the Lord God of Israel that there might be a record preserved by which their children might have an opportunity to hear and understand the principles of eternal life. Mormon's abridgement constitutes part of the Lord's promise to these great, good, and holy men.

5.30 Father Lehi left the city of Jerusalem about the year 600 BC. The permanent record of Nephi was begun once he and his people were ensconced within the mountain fastness of the land of Nephi. The Large Plates of Nephi and many ancillary texts were handed down from generation to generation until the prophet Ammaron entrusted the lot to Mormon about 320 years after the birth of Jesus Christ. We are not certain exactly when Mormon embarked on his composition of the Book of Mormon. We cannot identify with precision exactly what Mormon means by "present time". The first writing of any kind that Mormon produces was apparently engraved upon the Large Plates of Nephi during his 24th year of age, or about the year AD 345. The final battle at the hill Cumorah transpired about the year AD 384. We might conclude, then, that Mormon began his own encapsulation of Nephite history sometime during the period between the years AD 345 and 384 and had written the body of the Book of Mormon up to this point in his history

5.31 Again, Mormon draws upon the collected records of the Nephite people that had been accumulating since the days of Lehi and his son Nephi, throughout the ages for about a thousand years. Mormon was born about the year AD 311. Ammaron hid up the body of plates about the year AD 320 and approached the boy Mormon about that same time. Note that Mormon would have been no more than nine or ten years old.

5.32 When Mormon was about 24 years of age, or about the year AD 335, he contributed his observations about the decline of the Nephite people at that time to the Large Plates of Nephi. We do not know when he began the narrative of the Book of Mormon in earnest, but he continued until he arrived at his own birth and early contact with Ammaron. The first seven chapters of the small

book of Mormon in the larger Book of Mormon recount those things which he had observed, some of which was a synopsis of that which he had written earlier.

5.33 We may only speculate about Mormon's apology here. What appears to be the case is that there were certain aspects of Nephite history which could not be translated into Reformed Egyptian, the language in which the Nephites prophets recorded their accounts. The fault seems to be with the symbols that were used, rather than with those who employed them. Without a complete description of the language itself, we cannot know much regarding the limitations to which Mormon refers. His testimony is, however, that those things which he had preserved upon his plates were true and an accurate representation of what had happened among them for that long period of time. Mormon proposes to return to his narrative of those events transpiring during the years immediately following the Savior's birth, after he adds his personal testimony.

5.34 Mormon was not ignorant of the fact that there would come a day in which the Nephite civilization would come to an end. He may have already known that it would come in his own day. Yet for all of the prospects of annihilation looming on the horizon, Mormon was conscious of the marvelous and magnificent events that had transpired among his people during their thousand year sojourn in the promised land. Millions of souls had been received into the paradise of God because of the labors of the servants of God who lived among them. In addition, the future held promise as well; the coming forth of the Nephite history to the world would be the means of bringing tens of millions more into the fold of Christ. Had Lehi and his family remained in the land of Jerusalem, no doubt that family line would have ended in the havoc perpetrated upon the Jews by the Babylonians. Even if they had survived, their lot would not have been much different than that which befell the rest of the House of Israel who remained in the land. Lehi's family had been set apart in an unknown land, preserved and protected by the hand of God, and given every opportunity, generation after generation, to accept the fullness of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Mormon had every reason to be grateful.

5.35 In 4 Nephi, Mormon provides another aside in the which he identifies himself as narrator.

And it came to pass that Nephi, he that kept this last record, (and he kept it upon the plates of Nephi) died, and his son Amos kept it in his stead; and he kept it upon the plates of Nephi also. And he kept it eighty and four years, and there was still peace in the land, save it were a small part of the people who had revolted from the church and taken upon them the name of Lamanites; therefore there began to be Lamanites again in the land. And it came to pass that Amos died also, (and it was an hundred and ninety and four years from the coming of Christ) and his son Amos kept the record in his stead; and he also kept it upon the plates of Nephi; and it was also written in the book of Nephi, which is this book. And it came to pass that two hundred years had passed away; and the second generation had all passed away save it were a few. And now I, Mormon, would that ye should know that the people had multiplied, insomuch that they were spread upon all the face of the land, and that they had become exceedingly rich, because of their prosperity in Christ. (4 Nephi 1:19–23)

5.36 We do not know exactly when Nephi the Disciple of Jesus was born, even though we have speculated that he may have been born during the 50th year of the reign of the judges or about the year 42 BC. If we are correct about our estimation, Nephi the disciple would have been about

76 years of age at the time Jesus appeared to the saints gathered at the city of Bountiful. The burning question here is whether his son Nephi was born before or after the Savior's visit. If before, we have no idea whatsoever exactly when that birth took place. If he were born when his father was a relatively young man, then Nephi the son of Nephi was an extraordinarily old man when he eventually passed away, perhaps as much as 130 years. If Nephi had been born after Jesus appeared to the Nephites, then he would have been part of the "first generation" from Christ that lasted until the year 110, the year in which he himself died. This possibility is not particularly troubling or insightful in and of itself. However, Nephi the Disciple, in order to be part of the raising of his son to an age when he could take possession of the Nephite records, must have continued in mortality until he was nearing his hundredth year. This would seem improbable, given the Lord's assurance to the Nephite Nine, unless Nephi were one of the Three. The "last record" mentioned here is that record from which Mormon was drawing a portion of his narrative found in 4 Nephi. Large Plates of Nephi contained the entire written history of the Nephite civilization. It seems clear, however, that a duplicate record was also kept on a separate set of plates that had been fashioned by Amos' father

5.37 Amos the son of Nephi kept the record from about the year AD 110 until AD 194. Mormon does not reveal to us in his narrative the causes for the rebellion of those who became known as Lamanites in the days of Amos. It seems clear that Amos, the son of Nephi, was a member of the second generation from Christ. By the year AD 200, almost all of the second generation had passed out of mortality. As stated above, we do not know precisely when Amos was born. However, assuming that Amos was at least 20 years of age when he assumed charge of the records, he would have been born no later than AD 90. Assuming this birth year reveals that he was at least 104 years of age when he passed away; he may have been far older. Again, assuming that Amos' son was 20 years of age when the custodial responsibilities were transferred, the second Amos would have been born no later than year AD 174. This assumption suggests that Amos the son of Amos dwelt in mortality no less than 131 years. Ammoron, the son of the first Amos and the brother of the second, must have been born prior to AD 194, the date of the death of his father. We have assumed the year AD 184, making Ammoron 10 years younger than his brother. This being accepted, Ammoron would have been 136 years of age when he assigned Mormon the task of caring for the Nephite depository of records and continuing the history of the Nephite people. All of this is quite conservative. It is possible that some of these inspired men lived to a far greater age than indicated here.

5.38 Some scholars have proposed a rather narrow geographical region for the holdings of the Nephites during this period of time. It is clear, however, that in addition to the land of Zarahemla, the Nephites possessed much of the land northward, far beyond the narrow neck of land and the land of Desolation. It is clear as well, that they rebuilt the land of Nephi which lay to the south of Zarahemla, and probably other regions of the land beyond the narrow strip of wilderness. We ought not to diminish in any fashion the rather bold statements by our historian, who was in a far better position to know how extensive the lands of the ancient inhabitants of the Americas really was.

5.39 Mormon was commissioned by Ammoron to continue the narrative of the Nephite peoples on the Plates of Nephi, which he did on at least two occasions. It seems unlikely that Mormon would have begun his own text until he had had opportunity to review all of the writings that were part of the vast depository of Nephite records. The first practical time that Mormon could have

begun his researches took place during the 12-year period between 334 and 346. The next opportunity would have been between 350 and 360 when the Nephites enjoyed a ten year peace. Another 14 or 15 year period which could have been devoted to study and writing transpired while Mormon refused to lead the Nephites because of their wickedness; that is, between 363 and about 377. Mormon's motivation for reassuming leadership of the Nephite armies most certainly had to do with the preservation of the records deposited at the hill Shim. These were transported from Shim to the hill Cumorah during the eight-year flight before the Lamanite armies. It is possible, therefore, that Mormon had as many as 35 years to research and write that which we presently call the Book of Mormon. If Mormon had finished the account of the visit of the Lord Jesus Christ to the Nephites toward the end of his military hiatus or about the year 377, his brief treatment of the events recorded in 4 Nephi and the seven short chapters in his own book may very well have been written shortly after the battle at the hill Cumorah, before his death at the hands of the Lamanites.

5.40 We are fairly certain that the book of Mormon within the greater Book of Mormon does not constitute the totality of what the prophet Mormon wrote regarding his own time and place. His own account seems to indicate that there was more than just the seven chapters of the book of Mormon.

And now I, Mormon, make a record of the things which I have both seen and heard, and call it the Book of Mormon. And about the time that Ammaron hid up the records unto the Lord, he came unto me, (I being about ten years of age, and I began to be learned somewhat after the manner of the learning of my people) and Ammaron said unto me: I perceive that thou art a sober child, and art quick to observe; Therefore, when ye are about twenty and four years old I would that ye should remember the things that ye have observed concerning this people; and when ye are of that age go to the land Antum, unto a hill which shall be called Shim; and there have I deposited unto the Lord all the sacred engravings concerning this people. And behold, ye shall take the plates of Nephi unto yourself, and the remainder shall ye leave in the place where they are; and ye shall engrave on the plates of Nephi all the things that ye have observed concerning this people. And I, Mormon, being a descendant of Nephi, (and my father's name was Mormon) I remembered the things which Ammaron commanded me. (Mormon 1:1-5)

5.41 When Mormon was 24 years old, he made his first entries in the Plates of Nephi. It seems certain that he did so again some eleven years later in 345. We have speculated about possible times set apart for research and writing prior to the final battle on the hill Cumorah. We have suggested that 4 Nephi and the first seven chapters of Mormon were written shortly after that decisive battle in which the Nephite civilization came to an end. It would appear that seventeen years passed between chapters seven and eight of the book of Mormon. We do not know how long Mormon continued in the flesh after his people were destroyed by the Lamanites. He had hoped to compile what we now have as the book of Ether, but it is clear that he was not given sufficient time to do so and passed that responsibility on to Moroni. Mormon refers to his own small account of his own time and place as the book of Mormon. It seems unlikely that Mormon himself called his entire redaction of Nephite history by his own name. We may undoubtedly point to Moroni, his son, as the originator of that title.



5.42 Mormon was a precocious child, one who had been born of goodly parents who had taught him a great deal about the language and learning of their fathers. He clearly was a boy of great faith, a child chosen before the foundations of the earth were laid to bring forth a great work that would be the means of providing knowledge of the salvation of Christ to hundreds of millions of the children of God.

5.43 Mormon did exactly as he was commanded, resorting to the hill Shim when he turned twenty-four years of age. It is clear that he went a second time eleven years later. The hill Shin was in the land of Antum and near the city of Jashon within which the prophet Ammoron secretly hid all of the records of the Nephites. Mormon would later remove all of the records from the hill Shim and transport them to the hill Cumorah. Some scholars have suggested that the hill Shim mentioned in the book of Ether should be understood as the same named here. Within the geographical and narrative context of the Nephites and the Jaredites, this conclusion is not without merit. It is probable that the hill Shim was located somewhere in modern Nicaragua.

5.44 During the fourteen years from the time of Ammoron's commission until his twenty-fourth year, Mormon was privy to the wickedness and warfare of the Nephites. At fifteen he was forbidden to preach the Gospel to a recalcitrant people; at sixteen he was the commander in chief of all of the armies of the Nephites; at age twenty he and his army defeated the arch-villain Aaron. We must assume that this collection of plates entrusted to Mormon by Ammaron was enormous, perhaps many wagonloads of plates, upon which several hundreds of years of history had been preserved by the political and religious leaders of the Nephites.

5.45 Through his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, his devotion to the truth, and his allegiance to the traditions of his fathers, the boy Mormon was deeply impressed by Ammoron's instructions, so much so that he did not fail to observe all that he had been commanded to do. This is the only time that the father of Mormon and the grandfather of Moroni is mentioned by name in the narrative of the Book of Mormon. Apparently, both Mormon and his son were named after the place where Alma the elder organized the Church of Christ in the land of Lehi-Nephi.

5.46 A chapter later Mormon refers to two occasions on which he went to the hill Shim to record his observations regarding the plight of the Nephites.

And it came to pass that in the three hundred and forty and fifth year the Nephites did begin to flee before the Lamanites; and they were pursued until they came even to the land of Jashon, before it was possible to stop them in their retreat. And now, the city of Jashon was near the land where Ammaron had deposited the records unto the Lord, that they might not be destroyed. And behold I had gone according to the word of Ammaron, and taken the plates of Nephi, and did make a record according to the words of Ammaron. And upon the plates of Nephi I did make a full account of all the wickedness and abominations; but upon these plates I did forbear to make a full account of their wickedness and abominations, for behold, a continual scene of wickedness and abominations has been before mine eyes ever since I have been sufficient to behold the ways of man. (Mormon 2:16–18)

5.47 The Nephites had been gathering in the northwest portion of the land of Zarahemla, if our observations have been correct. They apparently had been boxed in, awaiting almost certain destruction, when they overcame the Lamanite king Aaron and his army. With the defeat of the

Lamanites, the Nephites would then have had access to the narrow neck of land and the lands northward. Their flight in the battle recorded here no doubt took them a considerable distance north of the narrow neck of land. The 345th year since the appearance of the signs announcing the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ would have included portions of the years AD 344 and 345.

5.48 According to the narrative of the Book of Mormon, our historian visited the hill Shim on at least three occasions, even though it is clear that he resorted there many times during times of peace. His first visit took place about the year 334 at the behest of the prophet Ammoron. This had taken place four years after the defeat of the Lamanite king Aaron. The second recorded visit is related here which took place in the year 345. The third recorded visit to the hill Shim took place sometime after the second attack of the Lamanites at the city of Boaz, or sometime after the year 375. The purpose of this latter visit was to remove all of the Nephite artifacts from Ammoron's hiding place and transport them with the fleeing Nephites until they were ultimately ensconced in the hill Cumorah about ten years later.

5.49 Mormon recorded all that had transpired among the Nephites from the time he was ten (about the year 320) until he was twenty-four (about the year 334). His account would have included the horrific battles between the Lamanites and Nephites which Mormon recounted in a letter to his son Moroni, which the latter eventually included in his addendum to his father's work. Mormon chose not to be as explicit in the record included here.

5.50 Later in his account, Mormon reveals his intent in writing anything at all. Certainly his motivations came about as he compiled the body of work which we have come to know as the Book of Mormon. In the 362nd year, after the Nephites blasphemed against heaven in their determination to destroy the Lamanites, Mormon resigned from his position as chief captain.

And it came to pass that I utterly refused to go up against mine enemies; and I did even as the Lord had commanded me; and I did stand as an idle witness to manifest unto the world the things which I saw and heard, according to the manifestations of the Spirit which had testified of things to come. Therefore I write unto you, Gentiles, and also unto you, house of Israel, when the work shall commence, that ye shall be about to prepare to return to the land of your inheritance; Yea, behold, I write unto all the ends of the earth; yea, unto you, twelve tribes of Israel, who shall be judged according to your works by the twelve whom Jesus chose to be his disciples in the land of Jerusalem. And I write also unto the remnant of this people, who shall also be judged by the twelve whom Jesus chose in this land; and they shall be judged by the other twelve whom Jesus chose in the land of Jerusalem. And these things doth the Spirit manifest unto me; therefore I write unto you all. And for this cause I write unto you, that ye may know that ye must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, yea, every soul who belongs to the whole human family of Adam; and ye must stand to be judged of your works, whether they be good or evil; And also that ye may believe the gospel of Jesus Christ, which ye shall have among you; and also that the Jews, the covenant people of the Lord, shall have other witness besides him whom they saw and heard, that Jesus, whom they slew, was the very Christ and the very God. And I would that I could persuade all ye ends of the earth to repent and prepare to stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. (Mormon 3:16–22)

5.51 For the next 13 years or so, Mormon took no part in the defense of his country, primarily because the army would no longer follow his righteous counsel. It was probably at this time that the Lord commanded him to be earnestly engaged in the production of his great testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ. Perhaps we have in this passage an indication as to what Mormon was about during the time he was not guiding the affairs of the Nephite military. No doubt Mormon was compiling his summary of Nephite history during his hiatus from the army.

5.52 The promise had been made by the Lord Jesus Christ that when his teaching began to be revealed to the Gentiles and the remnants of the House of Israel, that the last gathering of Israel to their lands of inheritance would begin in earnest. The implication of this phrasing of this passage is that much of Mormon's work on the Book of Mormon had already been accomplished by the time that he resumed command of the Nephite military in the year 375.

5.53 The House of Israel had been scattered throughout the world over the centuries, but there would come a time when they would hear the voice of the spirit, heralding the advent of the fullness of truth once more in the earth. In the inception of that work, the coming forth of the Book of Mormon would play a marvelous role. To the degree that the remnants of the House of Israel took to heart the teachings of the Book of Mormon would determine the nature of the judgment that would be rendered them as they stood before the Apostles of the Lamb who were ordained by the Savior during his mortal ministry.

5.54 The posterity of Lehi, Ishmael, and Mulek would eventually stand before the Twelve Disciples chosen by the Jesus during his appearance to the Nephites at the Temple in the city of Bountiful. They would judge their worthiness, in the same way that the Apostles would judge theirs: according to the truths that had been preserved and revealed unto the world by the servants of God.

5.55 No one will escape the judgment of God. Every man, woman, and child who has ever breathed a breath upon this planet will come forth from the grave to reap the blessings that they acquired through their faithfulness, the qualities, characteristics, and perfections that derive from living the principles of truth and righteousness, and adhering to all of the commandments that have been given unto the children of men.

5.56 Mormon knew that his work was destined to provide the world with another testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ, separate and distinct from that which would be preserved by the Jews. Yet, it would partake of the same spirit. The Gentiles, the Jews, and the other remnants of the House of Israel would ultimately be left without excuse for not accepting the fullness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

5.57 The message from the Father does not change much from one generation to another. He continually pleads with His children to fulfill their destiny, to become as He is that they might enjoy a fullness of joy, being exalted in the Celestial Kingdom, filled with light, truth, and eternal life.

5.58 In the 375th year, with the Lamanites poised to overthrow the land where the Nephite historical depository was, Mormon gathered up all of the plates out of the hill Shim and saw that they were thereafter transported northward to safety, eventually ensconcing them in the hill Cumorah. As we have speculated before, it was probably the necessity for manpower to carry the records to safety that prompted him to reengage himself as the chief captain of the Nephite armies.

5.59 Mormon was cautious about giving too great detail in his account of the deprecations perpetrated by either side of the conflict against the other. In personal letters to his son Moroni, he provides a more descriptive account of those things perpetrated by the Nephites and the Lamanites against each other.

And now behold, I, Mormon, do not desire to harrow up the souls of men in casting before them such an awful scene of blood and carnage as was laid before mine eyes; but I, knowing that these things must surely be made known, and that all things which are hid must be revealed upon the house-tops— And also that a knowledge of these things must come unto the remnant of these people, and also unto the Gentiles, who the Lord hath said should scatter this people, and this people should be counted as naught among them—therefore I write a small abridgment, daring not to give a full account of the things which I have seen, because of the commandment which I have received, and also that ye might not have too great sorrow because of the wickedness of this people. And now behold, this I speak unto their seed, and also to the Gentiles who have care for the house of Israel, that realize and know from whence their blessings come. For I know that such will sorrow for the calamity of the house of Israel; yea, they will sorrow for the destruction of this people; they will sorrow that this people had not repented that they might have been clasped in the arms of Jesus. Now these things are written unto the remnant of the house of Jacob; and they are written after this manner, because it is known of God that wickedness will not bring them forth unto them; and they are to be hid up unto the Lord that they may come forth in his own due time. And this is the commandment which I have received; and behold, they shall come forth according to the commandment of the Lord, when he shall see fit, in his wisdom. And behold, they shall go unto the unbelieving of the Jews; and for this intent shall they go—that they may be persuaded that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God; that the Father may bring about, through his most Beloved, his great and eternal purpose, in restoring the Jews, or all the house of Israel, to the land of their inheritance, which the Lord their God hath given them, unto the fulfilling of his covenant; (Mormon 5:8–14)

5.60 However appalling the destruction wrought by the opposing armies had been up to this point, the conduct of the fleeing and advancing armies exceeded all that had gone on before. Mormon is mercifully general about the desolation that occurred in the path of battle. No doubt Mormon had an opportunity to record his experiences in far more detail elsewhere, but for all intents and purposes for the Book of Mormon, his record is quite terse and not particularly graphic. This he did because of his own sensibilities, as he was instructed by the power and influence of the Holy Ghost that was upon him. Whether in reference to his account of the Nephite peoples as a whole, or to his own person treatise of the last ten years of the Nephite nation, the meaning is clear.

5.61 Mormon had attempted to teach the Nephites, repeatedly calling them to repentance, that they might be forgiven and spare the ignominy of utter destruction for their wickedness. It had been a bootless exercise, but one he felt compelled to pursue. Notwithstanding Mormon's decision to resume commanding the Nephite army, he knew that they would never again hearken to his voice in spiritual matters. Thus, he turns his attention to their distant posterity and to the Gentiles would be the instruments by whom the children of Lehi would receive salvation and exaltation.

5.62 In the latter days, the fullness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ was to come to a people who would be perceived as pertaining to the Gentile nations. These Gentiles would have the scriptures of the Jews and would also be the means by which the records of the Nephites would be made available to the posterity of father Lehi. The spiritual sensitivity of these men would be such that they would believe all of the words of the ancient prophets, whether from the Old or New World, and would perceive the truth contained in their writings. Such faith, such acceptance of the historical reality, would bring great sadness to those who would peruse the preserved texts, knowing that the accounts given there spoke of real people who forfeited their eternal blessings because of their desires for the vain and ephemeral things of this world.

5.63 The whole of Mormon's project was guided by the hand of the Lord, inspired by the spirit of the Holy Ghost moving upon the heart and mind of the prophet. Mormon wrote with clarity and boldness because he knew that when the time came for the Book of Mormon to come forth, those engaged in its translation and distribution would be men of faith and righteousness. It should not surprise us to learn that the prophet Mormon had seen in vision precisely where he was to take the vast collection of records in his charge. He knew that there was a place where he could safely ensconce the Nephite plates. He also knew that he would find there a location where his own work might be preserved from the hands of the Lamanites, to come forth in the latter days to be a blessing to the world.

5.64 The work of preserving the essence of the Lord's dealings with the children of Lehi had been guided in every aspect by the hand of the Lord. Mormon knew in his heart and in his mind that the preservation and the restoration of the truth for the benefit of the children of Lehi would likewise be guided and directed in every aspect. In this, he was perfectly justified.

5.65 We may speculate at great length about the destiny of the Jewish people and how it is that they will come to believe in the Lord Jesus as the Son of the living God. Whatever the sequence of events, whatever the instruments involved, however the prophecies might be interpreted and applied, it is certain that the Book of Mormon will be one of the major motivations for their acceptance of the Christ. Their transition from incredulity to belief will be as sweet as it has been for other remnants of the House of Israel, no matter whatever trials and tribulations they may be called to pass through. In conjunction with their faith in Jesus Christ will be the confirmation of their lands of promise, that they might have a habitation there in time and in eternity.

5.66 At the end of his personal account of his own time and day, Mormon counsels with those who would eventually come to read his words, many of whom would be the posterity of his brethren the Lamanites.

Therefore repent, and be baptized in the name of Jesus, and lay hold upon the gospel of Christ, which shall be set before you, not only in this record but also in the record which shall come unto the Gentiles from the Jews, which record shall come from the Gentiles unto you. For behold, this is written for the intent that ye may believe that; and if ye believe that ye will believe this also; and if ye believe this ye will know concerning your fathers, and also the marvelous works which were wrought by the power of God among them. And ye will also know that ye are a remnant of the seed of Jacob; therefore ye are numbered among the people of the first covenant; and if it so be that ye believe in Christ, and are baptized, first with water, then with fire and with

the Holy Ghost, following the example of our Savior, according to that which he hath commanded us, it shall be well with you in the day of judgment. Amen. (Mormon 7:8–10)

5.67 The remnants of the House of Israel would be provided with two witnesses, the Bible and the Book of Mormon, which would testify of the truth of the promised Messiah, the coming of the Christ into the world, and of his redemption of the children of men from the awful monsters, death and hell.

5.68 In some respects, the record of the Jews, the Bible, was imposed upon the inhabitants of the western hemisphere by those Gentiles who colonized the Americas. Surely this ancient record was received grudgingly in the beginning, and not exactly as an act of faith. The posterity of those roughly introduced to Christianity might indeed have persisted in the newly acquired traditions of their fathers for political or social reasons, but there would come a time when they would be given an opportunity to receive the writings of the Bible as teachings that had once been faithfully observed by their distant ancestors, long before the conquest by the Gentile nations. The means for their faith would be the testimony of the prophets, seers, and revelators whose teachings grace the pages of the Book of Mormon. The posterity of Lehi would then no longer view themselves as a displaced people, but rather as children of the promise, a covenant people with an eternal inheritance on earth and in the heavens.

5.69 The Book of Mormon would bear witness to the posterity of Lehi that they were descended from a faithful people who had received the fullness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ from the lips of the very man who had made salvation and exaltation possible. They would also discover that Lehi and the other faithful were themselves descendants from the grand patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, through whom the blessings had been established as the House of Israel. In nothing need the remnants of the children of Lehi look upon themselves as inferior. They might easily partake of the principles and ordinances of the Gospel of Christ, partaking of the ancient covenants and blessings preserved unto them by the servants of God.

5.70 Nearly at the point of death during the final conflict between the Nephites and the Lamanites, Mormon chooses to record his last words on the last plate in the collection known today as the Small Plates of Nephi.

And now I, Mormon, being about to deliver up the record which I have been making into the hands of my son Moroni, behold I have witnessed almost all the destruction of my people, the Nephites. And it is many hundred years after the coming of Christ that I deliver these records into the hands of my son; and it supposeth me that he will witness the entire destruction of my people. But may God grant that he may survive them, that he may write somewhat concerning them, and somewhat concerning Christ, that perhaps some day it may profit them. (Words of Mormon 1:1–2)

5.71 Mormon's final inscription upon the Small Plates of Nephi takes place shortly after his inscription upon his own plates which may be found in the seventh chapter of Mormon. A cursory review of that chapter will quickly inform the reader of the difference in the tenor of the two inscriptions. Chapter seven constitutes Mormon's final testimony regarding the great labor he had performed in producing the Book that would eventually be called by his name. What we find in the Words of Mormon establishes the historical connection between the text of the Small Plates and the

narrative that Mormon had composed. Moroni was the last prophet among the Nephites and the servant of God entrusted with the care and keeping of the Nephite records preserved in the Hill Cumorah. The main depository hidden deep within the hill has remained the primary site for the vast body of records known as the Large Plates of Nephi, having been placed there by the hand of Mormon himself. The stone box wherein the plates of Mormon were placed by Moroni was undoubtedly built by Moroni himself. This same Moroni, as a resurrected being, would appear to the prophet Joseph Smith first in September of 1823 and then regularly until the translation process was completed. No doubt Moroni was Joseph's personal tutor in all things Nephite as the translation progressed. According to the record preserved by Mormon in his own account, three hundred eighty-five years had passed since the sign had been given confirming the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ in Bethlehem.

5.72 Moroni would survive the conflagration of the Nephite civilization by more than thirty-six years. During those years he would finish his father's account of the destruction of the Nephites, his account comprising that which we call the eighth and ninth chapters of Mormon today. He would also effect a translation and synopsis of the 24 gold plates found by the men of Limhi, the king of the land of Lehi-Nephi, as they searched for the city of Zarahemla. Mormon had promised such an account but had not lived long enough to produce it. This also bears witness to us that Moroni had relative access to the main depository where the plates of Ether were ensconced. Thirdly, Moroni transcribed a collection of some of the most important documents that he had in hand, in order to help the posterity of the Lamanites to come to an understanding of the conduct of the Church in his day, together with some of the brilliant discourses written by his father to the Nephites and to himself. These are found in the section of the Book of Mormon that we refer to today as the book of Moroni. Moroni is also responsible for the Title Page of the Book of Mormon.

## **6.0 The Plates of Moroni**

6.1 In the paragraph immediately above, the products of Moroni's literary labors were articulated. It was an extraordinary achievement given his circumstances. Everyone that he had known in his mortal sojourn upon the earth had perished. He was a singular survivor in a world populated by men and women who were determined to destroy anything and everything that bespoke of the Nephite culture. In order to finish his assigned tasks it was essential that he have a degree of peace and quiet. Where would he go in order to have this luxury? He may have found resort in the place where his father had hidden all of the records of the Nephites, the large underground room within the hill Cumorah. It is unlikely that he was able to stay there for any length of time.

6.2 There appear to be three separate projects that Moroni accomplished during his 36 years of personal exile. Certainly chapters 8 and 9 of the small book of Mormon came about at the direct request of his father Mormon to finish his account of the fall of the Nephite peoples. The account of the Jaredite peoples found upon the 24 gold plates discovered by Limhi's men was a work that had been promised by Mormon himself while writing about Zeniff's ill-fated colony in the land of Nephi. He had not been able to write an appropriate summary of the great nation that had preceded the family of Lehi in the western hemisphere. Although he may have specifically asked Moroni to

edit that work, there is nothing in the text that suggests that he did. It is just as likely that in his own perusal of his father's work he noted the promise and decided to fulfill it himself. The third project is encapsulated in the book that bears Moroni's name. This small compilation in many respects serves as an appendix to the whole work devised by Mormon, including as it does additional observations by Mormon on the doctrine of Christ taken from sermons and letters written by Mormon during his mortal ministry. Moroni describes his circumstances in the opening verses of the eighth chapter of the book of Mormon.

Behold I, Moroni, do finish the record of my father, Mormon. Behold, I have but few things to write, which things I have been commanded by my father. And now it came to pass that after the great and tremendous battle at Cumorah, behold, the Nephites who had escaped into the country southward were hunted by the Lamanites, until they were all destroyed. And my father also was killed by them, and I even remain alone to write the sad tale of the destruction of my people. But behold, they are gone, and I fulfil the commandment of my father. And whether they will slay me, I know not. Therefore I will write and hide up the records in the earth; and whither I go it mattereth not. Behold, my father hath made this record, and he hath written the intent thereof. And behold, I would write it also if I had room upon the plates, but I have not; and ore I have none, for I am alone. My father hath been slain in battle, and all my kinsfolk, and I have not friends nor whither to go; and how long the Lord will suffer that I may live I know not. Behold, four hundred years have passed away since the coming of our Lord and Savior. (Mormon 8:16)

6.3 The final battle between the Lamanites and the Nephites took place at the hill Cumorah sometime during the year 384. To Mormon's knowledge, there were only 24 souls whom he could name who survived that destruction, he and his son Moroni being included in that number. Additionally, there were some stragglers who fled to the south and a few others who had deserted to the Lamanite army. Mormon wrote his last sometime after the disaster at Cumorah, but we cannot be certain as to the year that he was ultimately killed by the remnants of the Lamanite army. Many readers assume that his demise took place in the same year that the Nephites breathed their last, but there is no warrant for that assumption. Moroni dates his own record as having been started sometime during the year 400. Thus, the death of Mormon could have taken place anytime during the sixteen year interval. We have speculated before as to when Mormon might have had sufficient time to read through the Nephite records and write his narrative: the years 334–346, 350–360, and 363–377. We also speculated at that time that the text of 4 Nephi and Mormon 1–7 were probably written after the battle at Cumorah, thus explaining in part the seeming disjuncture between 3 and 4 Nephi. No doubt Moroni refers to the final two chapters of the book of Mormon, although he already may have had in mind his synopsis of the book of Ether as well. The book of Moroni was clearly an afterthought some twenty years later.

6.4 We are not told how long it took the Lamanites to track down the fleeing Nephites. Most readers assume that it was within a few months of the destruction at Cumorah. We are not privy as to how far the Nephites travelled before they were killed by the pursuing Lamanites. Fleeing due south could have taken the Nephites through the present states of New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and other Atlantic coast states before they were caught.



6.5 Again, we cannot speak to the amount of time that passed before Mormon was caught and killed; whether a few days to a number of years. Moroni simply does not give us enough information to be definitive. We are not told what transpired to the other twenty-two men who escaped death with Mormon and Moroni. By the year 400, however, Moroni was completely on his own. As to the details of the specific instructions that Mormon gave Moroni we are not certain, but we can assume that the completion of his own record, what we now have as chapters 8 and 9 of Mormon, was a distinct part of Moroni's duties. If Mormon survived any extended time passed the end of the Nephite civilization, he may very well have contemplated the importance of compiling the book of Ether. He had promised his readers earlier that he would do so. When it became apparent that he would not live long enough to do as he had promised, he may have commissioned Moroni to do that work for him. It is possible, however, that the task might have slipped Mormon's mind in the heat of battle, Moroni later discovering the promissory note in the book of Mosiah as he perused his father's book.

6.6 We are not certain as to when the stone box which housed Mormon's plates, the breastplate, and the Urim and Thummim was made. We should probably conclude that Moroni did not carry that irreplaceable volume with him in his journeys. It seems likely that the box was constructed sometime while Mormon still lived; that Mormon and Moroni made the small depository together. The rest of the records were already hidden up in the interior of the hill Cumorah in a large room probably constructed by the Jaredites many centuries before. If our assumptions be correct, Mormon's plates would have remained in the stone box from the year 385 or so until about the year 400. After writing what he thought was his last inscriptions, Moroni hid them up a second time in the same box. Twenty-one years later, about the year 421, Moroni returned to the hill Cumorah to write what we now have as the book of Moroni, after which he sealed them up again until the time of the restoration of the Gospel and Church of Jesus Christ and coming forth of the Book of Mormon in the early part of the nineteenth century. The four hundredth year since the appearance of the signs announcing the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ would have included portions of the years AD 399 and 400.

6.7 Moroni is quite sensitive about the manner in which his father's volume might be received by future generations. This is a reoccurring theme in his writings.

And whoso receiveth this record, and shall not condemn it because of the imperfections which are in it, the same shall know of greater things than these. Behold, I am Moroni; and were it possible, I would make all things known unto you. Behold, I make an end of speaking concerning this people. I am the son of Mormon, and my father was a descendant of Nephi. And I am the same who hideth up this record unto the Lord; the plates thereof are of no worth, because of the commandment of the Lord. For he truly saith that no one \*shall have them to get gain; but the record thereof is of great worth; and whoso shall bring it to light, him will the Lord bless. For none can have power to bring it to light save it be given him of God; for God wills that it shall be done with an eye single to his glory, or the welfare of the ancient and long dispersed covenant people of the Lord. And blessed be he that shall bring this thing to light; for it shall be brought out of darkness unto light, according to the word of God; yea, it shall be brought out of the earth, and it shall shine forth out of darkness, and come unto the knowledge of the people; and it shall be done by the power of God. And if there be faults they be the faults of a man. But behold, we know

no fault; nevertheless God knoweth all things; therefore, he that condemneth, let him be aware lest he shall be in danger of hell fire. (Mormon 8:12–17)

6.8 Moroni is deeply troubled by the possibility that any of the children of men might discount his father's work because of any inadequacy on his part. Moroni understood the import of his father's labor and the effect that it would have on the honest of heart in the latter days. This caution to avoid nitpicking is repeated by Mormon's son several times in his writings, including the title page to the Book of Mormon. We should also willingly accept the fact that by the time Moroni is completing his father's record, he is just as knowledgeable and just as spiritually grounded as his father had been. One wonders who would be qualified to criticize the Book of Mormon. Who is knowledgeable enough on the affairs of the ancient Nephites and Lamanites to be able to identify any error on Mormon's part? Moroni will, however, bemoan the fact that incising the characters of Reformed Egyptian upon the plates was an arduous task for one accustomed to open-field warfare. Who but a prophet of the living God could begin to evaluate in any fashion the teachings and doctrines revealed to the Nephite prophets? In the course of our studies we have identified possible minute errors having been made and then corrected by the writers. The same may be said of the translation process, and some of the corrections and clarifications that were made to the text during the Prophet Joseph Smith's life. We ought to be grateful for the process of continuing revelation instead of pretending to find fault with matters that transcend mortal life.

6.9 Had the plates upon which Mormon had recorded his narrative been made of pure gold, their intrinsic material value would be reduced to nil because of the inestimable spiritual value of the writings that had been committed to them. Any man who would seek to enrich himself by means of the plates would be partaking of the spirit of the fallen Lamanites and the Gadianton robbers, who would have thought nothing of destroying the plates in order to obtain their gold alloy. This verse would provide a cautionary tale for all those who would serve as guardians of the plates during the translation process and thereafter. The only blessings available by means of the Mormon's record would be from the text that would come to light in the latter days, both in the translation of the work and in the dissemination that would come as the servants of God would take the Book of Mormon into all of the world.

6.10 This observation applies not only to the translator of the plates, but also to any soul who is gracious enough to present the same to those who have never encountered the book before. The presenter of such a gift is bound by the same caveats; he must do so with an eye single to the glory of God and the welfare of the remnants of the House of Israel unto who it is to come. Who would ever introduce the text of the Book of Mormon to another human being if he himself had not been touched by the Spirit of the Lord in his mind and in his heart as to its truthfulness?

6.11 Moroni would literally point out to the Prophet Joseph Smith the precise location of the stone box on the hill Cumorah. Joseph would literally take the plates from the earth into the light of day. Through the gift and power of God, the English translation of the Book of Mormon came forth, a light shining in a dark place, the lost and fallen world of men.

6.12 Mormon and Moroni wrote as they were inspired of the Lord and as a result of that process they could discern no errors in that which they had written. Yet, Moroni was experienced enough to acknowledge that both he and his father were mortal, and thus were capable of making

errors. Moroni simply cautions his readers that it would not do for them to dismiss the teachings of the Book of Mormon for anything they might assume to be a fault or error in the writing. If they would read with a sincere heart with real intent they would have the power and influence of the Holy Ghost to help them avoid those attitudes that would bring them to destruction.

6.13 At the close of his remarks on the fall of his people, Moroni again warns the reader to be cautious as to how they treat the work that he and his father have done.

Behold, I speak unto you as though I spake from the dead; for I know that ye shall have my words. Condemn me not because of mine imperfection, neither my father, because of his imperfection, neither them who have written before him; but rather give thanks unto God that he hath made manifest unto you our imperfections, that ye may learn to be more wise than we have been. And now, behold, we have written this record according to our knowledge, in the characters which are called among us the reformed Egyptian, being handed down and altered by us, according to our manner of speech. And if our plates had been sufficiently large we should have written in Hebrew; but the Hebrew hath been altered by us also; and if we could have written in Hebrew, behold, ye would have had no imperfection in our record. But the Lord knoweth the things which we have written, and also that none other people knoweth our language; and because that none other people knoweth our language, therefore he hath prepared means for the interpretation thereof. And these things are written that we may rid our garments of the blood of our brethren, who have dwindled in unbelief. (Mormon 9:30–35)

6.14 Moroni was writing some four hundred years after the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. His father, his friends, his comrades in arms had all perished in the final conflict between the Lamanites and the Nephites. We do not know the year that Moroni was born, but if we assume that Mormon married some time during his mid-twenties, his son may have come into the world about the year 335. Moroni, then would have been just shy of his 50th year of mortality during the battle at the hill Cumorah and about 65 years of age as he wrote the concluding two chapters of the book concerning his father's life. He would then be about 86 years of age when he wrote his last upon the plates, 421 years after the birth of the Savior. Moroni knew that no one of his generation would ever read his words as mortals, but he had every confidence that there would come a time when the entire earth would have an opportunity to contemplate that which he and his father had transcribed upon the plates.

6.15 This represents only one of the many times that Moroni cautioned the readers of the Book of Mormon to be careful how they regarded the testimonies that had been preserved of the Nephite dealings with their God. He was painfully aware of the great difficulty that there was in making the characters upon so small and delicate a surface, especially for men who had been primarily trained as military men rather than as literati. We have been fortunate indeed that plates devised by Mormon have not been subjected to the sort of academic scrutiny that exists in our day. Faithless analysis is no analysis at all.

6.16 The written language of the Nephite people differed somewhat from their spoken language. We may not, at present, understand completely the advantages associated with preserving their records in what they called “reformed Egyptian”, but they successfully did so for more than a thousand years. As is the case with all forms of communication, written or verbal, the symbols used

change over time. We may speculate at length about the origins of “reformed Egyptian”; perhaps it was an idiom developed by Joseph the son of Jacob or any one of a number of Israelite exiles dwelling in that foreign land. However it came to be, it had been successfully codified upon the Plates of Brass which Lehi and his family took with them at the time they fled the city of Jerusalem about the year 600 BC. This became their primer in the preservation of their permanent records. We are not privy as to the nature of any further developments of the writing system during the thousand years that the Nephites used it, except that Moroni states that it did change and apparently for that reason, Moroni sensed that the whole book might be criticized as a result. This would have been particularly true when comparing the writings preserved upon the Small Plates of Nephi with that which Mormon and Moroni had produced upon their own plates.

6.17 We may argue at length about the properties of the Nephite written language that derived from Hebrew and those that derived from Egyptian. The fact of the matter is that we know little or nothing regarding the system, even though some of the individual characters have been preserved in the records of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. Scholars have supposed that one of the great advantages of “reformed Egyptian” was that a great deal of information could be condensed into a small number of characters and, thus, a relatively small space. Rationally speaking, the denser the linguistic representation of complex intellectual concepts becomes, the more difficult the translation process or even the reading process becomes. Mormon and Moroni may have supposed that they had correctly represented the history of their forefathers, but there was always the possibility that they might have misread some of the ancient inscriptions. Moroni simply states that in nothing should the Lord or his teachings be brought into question.

6.18 Moroni had long since learned of the existence of the “interpreters”, the Urim and Thummim, which had been preserved among the Nephites for centuries. We do not know precisely who fabricated the breastplate, the piece of armor upon which were mounted the instruments of translation, but it seems likely that Mormon was the man. We can only surmise as to how and why Mormon would think their proximity to him was important to him as he compiled his own work. Perhaps the differences between the early written records and the latter inscriptions were greater than we have heretofore supposed. Perhaps Mormon was perfectly aware as to how his plates would ultimately be translated and was inspired to create a place of safety for the two stones. It seems clear that Moroni wore his father’s armor after the latter’s demise, and certainly used the interpreters as he made his synopsis of the plates of Ether. The process of translating the plates into English involved the wearing of the breastplate, leaving the hands free to manipulate the various plates of the record. The depository that held Mormon’s plates for fourteen hundred years also was the receptacle of the breastplate and the accompanying Urim and Thummim, suggesting that the depository was somewhat larger than the usual artistic conception. As an aside and contrary to popular conception, the sword of Laban was not included with the plates and the breastplate. This instrument was ensconced in the larger repository within the hill Cumorah itself.

6.19 The Book of Mormon was written in order to provide a means whereby the posterity of the Nephites and the Lamanites might have an opportunity to know of the faith of their fathers, receive the teachings of Christ, and then come unto him in humility and peace. That singular opportunity would eventually be the means of bringing millions upon millions of the children of Lehi into

the fold of Christ, both from among the living and from among the dead. The cry of Mormon and Moroni for the children of Lehi to repent and be baptized would echo up and down the corridors of time as the fullness of the Gospel would be taken into all of the world and into the innermost recesses of the world of spirits.

6.20 In another place Moroni agonizes over his inability to do justice to the material that had been committed into his hands. The Lord comforts the prophet by telling him that the faithful are made equal to the task, whether in writing or in reading.

And I said unto him: Lord, the Gentiles will mock at these things, because of our weakness in writing; for Lord thou hast made us mighty in word by faith, but thou hast not made us mighty in writing; for thou hast made all this people that they could speak much, because of the Holy Ghost which thou hast given them; And thou hast made us that we could write but little, because of the awkwardness of our hands. Behold, thou hast not made us mighty in writing like unto the brother of Jared, for thou madest him that the things which he wrote were mighty even as thou art, unto the overpowering of man to read them. Thou hast also made our words powerful and great, even that we cannot write them; wherefore, when we write we behold our weakness, and stumble because of the placing of our words; and I fear lest the Gentiles shall mock at our words. And when I had said this, the Lord spake unto me, saying: Fools mock, but they shall mourn; and my grace is sufficient for the meek, that they shall take no advantage of your weakness; And if men come unto me I will show unto them their weakness. I give unto men weakness that they may be humble; and my grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them. Behold, I will show unto the Gentiles their weakness and I will show unto them that faith, hope and charity bringeth unto me—the fountain of all righteousness. And I, Moroni, having heard these words, was comforted, and said: O Lord, thy righteous will be done, for I know that thou workest unto the children of men according to their faith; (Ether 12:23–29)

6.21 Having read the writings of Ether and perhaps those of the great Jaredite prophets as well, Moroni knew of the power of their language and their facility with it. Moroni feared that he could not do the content justice, because the nature of the Nephite written language was radically different from that of the Jaredite. In addition, Moroni had not been raised as an academic; he had been a soldier for most of his life, as had been his father Mormon. The delicacy and accuracy of writing in reformed Egyptian would have been a challenge to them both. All things combined, Moroni felt somewhat inadequate to the task.

6.22 If our assumptions regarding the language of the Jaredites be true, then the only way that Moroni could ever have understood the writings of Ether would be by the power and influence of the Holy Ghost. We may only speculate about the effects produced on the mind and heart of those given leave to use the Urim and Thummim, but clearly between the nature of the language itself and the divinely appointed instrument of translation, Moroni was deeply moved.

6.23 Again, we may only speculate about the relationship between the spoken and written languages of the Nephites. From Moroni's point of view, however, he frequently did not feel equal to the task, particularly with respect to the magnificent teachings of the greatest of the Jaredite prophets.

6.24 While it is true that the finished record might be criticized by the faithless wicked, their barbs could only be leveled at the translation rendered into modern languages. No man but one would have access to the plates upon which the Book of Mormon was written. Who would ever have the opportunity to compare the writings of Ether or those of the brother of Jared with the synopsis made by the son of Mormon? The only kind of mockery available to the Gentiles of the latter days would be that which springs from faithless wickedness, men who will prove to be spiritual fools, for the which there will be no hope of salvation without sincere repentance. Those of every nation who will read the words transcribed by Mormon, Moroni, and other inspired scribes with real intent, seeking guidance and direction from the Spirit of God, will receive in deep humility all that will be presented to them.

6.25 The children of men who come unto the Son of God in humility and faith, will do so because they have begun to recognize within themselves a great inadequacy, leading to a desire to be forgiven of their transgressions against the law of God. While exercising patience in humility, those who wish to be cleansed from all iniquity will have no inclination to criticize anything that the Lord God has wrought, including the content of the Book of Mormon. Those who have exercised faith, repenting of their sins, having accepted the saving ordinances of the Gospel of Christ, being filled with the power and influence of the Holy Ghost, will never raise a critical note against the efforts of Mormon and his son. They are too overcome with gladness and joy that the historical record and the sublime teachings of the ancient Americans have been preserved for them. Who, then, is left to mock? Only the sin-laden fools whose lack of self-control and surplus of willful ignorance have rendered them incapable of sensing the still, small voice of the Spirit whispering along testifying of the truth.

6.26 For the redeemed, even the simplest truths delight their hearts and minds. The world of men may casually brush aside the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, find fault with the most sacred of traditions, and dismiss the faith, testimony, and experiences of the saints of God, but they do so at the peril of their own souls. Those things which this lost and fallen world find weak or insignificant, will out-last all vain philosophies and elaborate plans of those who would embrace the natural man. Only faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, coupled with the bright hope of salvation for one's self and the whole of humanity, will establish in the hearts of men the power sufficient to become as he is.

6.27 Moroni essentially acknowledges that this relationship between the righteous and the works of God would serve as another example of a miracle founded in the faith of the honest in heart.

6.28 This same appeal to not overly criticize the writings of Mormon appears on the title page of the Book of Mormon which was undoubtedly composed by Moroni.

Which is to show unto the remnant of the House of Israel what great things the Lord hath done for their fathers; and that they may know the covenants of the Lord, that they are not cast off forever— And also to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that JESUS is the CHRIST, the ETERNAL GOD, manifesting himself unto all nations—And now, if there are faults they are the mistakes of men; wherefore, condemn not the things of God, that ye may be found spotless at the judgment-seat of Christ. (Title Page, Book of Mormon, paragraph two)

6.29 Moroni knew of no mistakes in the writings of his father or himself, yet like every writer he was certain that his own frailties might easily be manifested in the awkwardness of preserving

their history in such as condensed and difficult language as Reformed Egyptian. He was also aware the difficulties involved in making adequate translations from one language into another and anticipated the challenge presented to Joseph Smith, he unto whom the record would come for interpretation. Even if the translation were perfectly rendered in every way, the text still had to pass through the vagaries of type-setting and printing. Most of the changes that have been made in the Book of Mormon since the first edition have been corrections of mistakes made by those responsible for originally publishing the text.

6.30 God does not make mistakes; sometimes His servants do. We ought not to condemn the Father of all because He has been willing to work with us in our fallen state. Eventually all things will be put to right and perfection will bear sway. In the mean time we ought not endanger our own promised perfection through unjust and undue criticism of those things which have come to us from God. Redemption from sin comes as a result of faith in Christ unto salvation, coupled with repentance from all sin. A spirit of criticism of those things delivered to us in our imperfect state will hinder our progress towards eternal life.

6.31 The book that bears Moroni's name is clearly an afterthought as Mormon's son clearly states in the opening verses of the volume.

Now I, Moroni, after having made an end of abridging the account of the people of Jared, I had supposed not to have written more, but I have not as yet perished; and I make not myself known to the Lamanites lest they should destroy me. For behold, their wars are exceedingly fierce among themselves; and because of their hatred they put to death every Nephite that will not deny the Christ. And I, Moroni, will not deny the Christ; wherefore, I wander whithersoever I can for the safety of mine own life. Wherefore, I write a few more things, contrary to that which I had supposed; for I had supposed not to have written any more; but I write a few more things, that perhaps they may be of worth unto my brethren, the Lamanites, in some future day, according to the will of the Lord. (Moroni 1:1–4)

6.32 It is a matter of some discussion as to when Moroni compiled the book that bears his name. If all ten chapters were incised upon his father's plates at the same time, the issue is easily resolved. Moroni tells us in the final chapter that it has been more than 420 years since the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in the flesh. The final destruction of the Nephite people took place at the hill Cumorah about the year 385 AD. For about fifteen years, Moroni would evade the warring bands of Lamanites, living on his own in a desolated land until he had an opportunity to finish his father's record, the last two chapters of Mormon, which he did about the year 400. We cannot determine exactly when Moroni translated and abridged the record of Ether, but given the nature of the transition between the books of Mormon and Ether as compared with the transition between Ether and Moroni, the readers senses that it is far more likely that Mormon and Ether were written at about the same time. If our conclusion is correct, then writing of Ether and the compilation of Moroni were separated by a period of at least twenty years. It is rather easy to become somewhat melancholy in our sympathies toward the last Nephite in the Americas. That his journeys were far-ranging we cannot help but concede. Prophets, seers, and revelators of our own dispensation have made it clear that Moroni did not live a sedentary life. Once the plates were finally sealed up in the small depository at the crest of the northwest corner of the hill Cumorah, Moroni would wander for

another period of time before he departed mortality. When he first appeared to the Prophet Joseph Smith in 1823, Moroni was a resurrected being.

6.33 It is important for us to understand the relationship of the book of Moroni to Mormon's overall narrative structure. Once Mormon embarked on his labor, he proposed to compose major parts whose arrangement would be as instructive as the material contained therein. He began with the book of Lehi, which traced the history of the patriarch's family from their departure from Jerusalem until Mosiah 1 was compelled to depart with the Nephites from the land of Nephi to the land of Zarahemla. The second portion of the book that Mormon wrote, named the book of Mosiah, traced the careers of six kings. In the land of Zarahemla, the lives and ministries of Mosiah 1, Benjamin, and Mosiah 2 are related to good effect. In the land of Lehi-Nephi, the lives of Zeniff, Noah, and Limhi are recounted. The positive and negative aspects of a monarchy are compared and contrasted, the book ending with the decision of the people of Zarahemla to be governed by judges rather than kings. The book of Alma traces the beneficial aspects of the rule of judges when the voice of the people is consistent with the will of God. The fourth book in Mormon's planned account was called Helaman, and treated the rise of secret combinations among a free people. The anarchy and wickedness of a fallen people is recounted, together with their social and spiritual redemption is related in 3 Nephi. The short chapter that constitutes the book 4 Nephi sets the stage for the resurgence of the secret combinations and the eventual demise of the Nephite civilization that is related in the first seven chapters of Mormon. As has been discussed before, the book of Lehi and first portion of the book of Mosiah were lost to the world through the perfidy of individuals who claimed to be friends and aides of the prophet Joseph Smith during the translation and publishing of the Book of Mormon. Mormon had been inspired to include with his own plates, a small collection of plates devised by Nephi, the son of Lehi, and added upon by subsequent members of Nephi's family. This collection of plates, traditionally referred to as the Small Plates of Nephi, were physically attached to Mormon's body of plates, forming what we might call a virtual Appendix to Mormon's record. This Appendix was used to replace the lost portions of Mormon's original text, and is published today as 1 Nephi through the Words of Mormon.

6.34 Just as the Small Plates of Nephi might be looked upon as Appendix A of the book that Mormon wrote, so also the Book of Ether prepared by Moroni may be considered as Appendix B to the overall text. Both of these addendums serve as witnesses to the fact that those who would prosper upon this land will only do so while worshipping the God of this land who is Jesus Christ. Otherwise they will be swept off the face of the land and their inheritance given to another people. The book of Moroni, in this same light, might be viewed as Appendix C to the whole. It is a collection of individual instructions and articulated doctrines that Moroni thought would be profitable to the saints of the latter days. The eight chapters that follow this introduction constitute Moroni's judgment as to the needs of Lehi's surviving posterity in the latter days. The fundamental principles and ordinances of Christianity are set forth in five simple vignettes, together with the text of a discourse delivered to a gathering of Church members and two letters. All three of these latter documents were originally composed by Mormon many years before his death.



## 7.0 The Plates of Ether

7.1 The book of Ether is a brief redaction of a far more expansive account made by the last of the Jaredite prophets. Ether's record was found by a body of forty-three men who were attempting to find the city of Zarahemla, but who in the wilderness between the lands of Zarahemla and Nephi lost their way and missed their object, passing through the narrow neck of land northward into what was called the land of Desolation. The land of Desolation was an uninhabited region of country noted for its vast ruins that antedated the arrival of father Lehi and his family to the Americas. These ruins were first discovered by a party of Jewish exiles who would later be referred to as the Mulekites, men and women who were apparently courtiers in the Kingdom of Judah during the reign of King Zedekiah. These same Mulekites, named for the sole surviving son of King Zedekiah, entertained the last of the Jaredites in the person of Coriantumr, who lived with them for nine months before his death.

7.2 The Jaredites were a body of exiles from the building of the Tower of Babel and from the confusion of tongues that took place there. Traditional chronologies place the building of the tower around 2350 BC and the confusion of the tongues a few years later. The appearance of the last Jaredite king, Coriantumr, among the Mulekites, took place sometime after arrival of the Mulekites to the land which they would eventually call Zarahemla; certainly it would have been after 589 BC when the city of Jerusalem was overthrown by the Babylonians and perhaps as late as 575 BC. If so, the short record of Ether covers nearly 1,900 years of Jaredite history, almost twice the amount of time covered by the main text of the Book of Mormon.

7.3 The existence of the Jaredites was made known to the Nephites about the year 200 BC when Mosiah 1 escaped with the faithful Nephites from the land of their first inheritance into the land of Zarahemla in order to avoid extinction at the hands of their brethren, the Lamanites. After nearly 400 years of isolation, the Mulekites had lost much of their culture, so much so that they could no longer read their own monuments. The people of Mosiah and the people of Zarahemla became one people, Mosiah and his associates helping the Mulekites to regain that which they had lost through time and apostasy. The Mulekites, for their part, brought a large stone upon which was engraved the history of Coriantumr, a record they could no longer read. Mosiah 1 translated the record for the benefit of the descendants of Mulek and his own people. Our knowledge of this record was preserved upon the Small Plates of Nephi by Amaleki.

7.4 We do not know whether Mormon treated this episode in his own history, inasmuch as that portion of his record, the book of Lehi and the first portion of the book of Mosiah, were lost during the translation process, through the perfidy of some of the erstwhile friends and associates of the Prophet Joseph Smith. The discovery of the 24 gold plates of Ether by the embassy of King Limhi would prove to be a great blessing to those of the Nephites who desired further light and knowledge regarding that ancient civilization that preceded them in the Americas. Limhi desired to have the contents of the record revealed and asked his friend Ammon if he knew anyone who could translate from ancient languages. Ammon replied that the king of the land of Zarahemla, the grandson of Mosiah 1, had an instrument by which he could indeed bring the record to light.

7.5 After King Limhi and his people resorted to the land of Zarahemla from the land of Lehi-Nephi, Mosiah 2 did translate the entirety of the record of Ether for the benefit of the people. It is at

that point in his narrative that Mormon promised his readers that he would eventually provide a synopsis of the book of Ether. For a want of time, Mormon was not able to fulfill his editorial promise and that responsibility was passed on to his son Moroni. We are not certain as to when exactly Moroni took up the task, except to say that it was more than 400 years after the manifestation of the signs announcing the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ.

7.6 The text of the final section of the Book of Mormon, the book of Moroni, was written about the year 421. The question that remains is whether the book of Ether was compiled about the same time that chapters 8 and 9 of Mormon were written, or whether the labor was in conjunction with the writing of the book of Moroni. Without further evidence, it seems likely that the former was the case. Moroni introduces his summary of the translation of the 24 gold plates thusly:

And now I, Moroni, proceed to give an account of those ancient inhabitants who were destroyed by the hand of the Lord upon the face of this north country. And I take mine account from the twenty and four plates which were found by the people of Limhi, which is called the Book of Ether. (Ether 1:1–2)

7.7 King Mosiah 2 had made a translation of the twenty-four plates of Ether five centuries before, but we do not know what became of that work nor how it figured into Moroni's task. The text of the book of Ether is replete with references to Moroni's apparent knowledge of the contents and the nature of the language of the Jaredites, as if he himself had worked with the record directly. That he had access to the Urim and Thummim, the translators which Mosiah used, may be considered a given. How they were employed in his compilation of the book of Ether can only be a matter of conjecture.

7.8 Despite all arguments to the contrary, when speaking of the "north country" Moroni is referring to the region which we now call the western portion of the state of New York, within which lies the hill Cumorah, the site of the final battle between the last of the Jaredites during the fifth century before Christ. This same site served as the place where the Lamanites destroyed the last of the Nephite armies.

7.9 Moroni decides that the full account of the Jaredite record is unnecessary. Part of the motive may be redundancy, but at the heart of the matter is the fact that Moroni's resources are limited, inasmuch as he is the sole survivor of the holocaustic ending of the Nephite culture. Plates are hard to come by; times of safety during which he can translate and write are likewise scarce.

And as I suppose that the first part of this record, which speaks concerning the creation of the world, and also of Adam, and an account from that time even to the great tower, and whatsoever things transpired among the children of men until that time, is had among the Jews—Therefore I do not write those things which transpired from the days of Adam until that time; but they are had upon the plates; and whoso findeth them, the same will have power that he may get the full account. But behold, I give not the full account, but a part of the account I give, from the tower down until they were destroyed. (Ether 1:3–5)

7.10 No doubt Moroni compared that which was related in the first part of Ether's record with the writings of Moses that were found on the Plates of Brass. Neither the Jaredites nor the prophet Ether would have had access to the writings of Moses, but it seems certain that Moses had access to

ante-Diluvia accounts that were similar in content to those which the Jaredites carried with them. It seems clear as well that Abraham had access to such ancient texts long before his descendant Moses did, as we may see in Abraham's own account of the creation.

7.11 We may not know at this point how much space Ether's account of the dispensation of Adam to Noah consumed of the twenty-four plates. By the same token, we cannot know just how greatly the record of Ether was condensed by Moroni. We are also at a loss as to how dense the written language of the Jaredites was in comparison to the human languages of our day. The current text of the book of Ether is contained in less than 30 printed pages, but we should probably assume that had the original text, as set forth by Ether, been transmitted to us verbatim, the volume would be unimaginably larger than it is now.

7.12 Moroni's narrative would cover the 1,900 years of history from the confusion of tongues until the final destruction of the Jaredite peoples at the hill Ramah. The son of Mormon perceived, as did his father, the significance of the plates in interpreting what was happening to the Nephites in their final gasps as a civilization. Speaking of the Lord's admonitions to the brother of Jared, Moroni observes:

And he had sworn in his wrath unto the brother of Jared, that whoso should possess this land of promise, from that time henceforth and forever, should serve him, the true and only God, or they should be swept off when the fulness of his wrath should come upon them. And now, we can behold the decrees of God concerning this land, that it is a land of promise; and whatsoever nation shall possess it shall serve God, or they shall be swept off when the fulness of his wrath shall come upon them. And the fulness of his wrath cometh upon them when they are ripened in iniquity. For behold, this is a land which is choice above all other lands; wherefore he that doth possess it shall serve God or shall be swept off; for it is the everlasting decree of God. And it is not until the fulness of iniquity among the children of the land, that they are swept off. And this cometh unto you, O ye Gentiles, that ye may know the decrees of God—that ye may repent, and not continue in your iniquities until the fulness come, that ye may not bring down the fulness of the wrath of God upon you as the inhabitants of the land have hitherto done. Behold, this is a choice land, and whatsoever nation shall possess it shall be free from bondage, and from captivity, and from all other nations under heaven, if they will but serve the God of the land, who is Jesus Christ, who hath been manifested by the things which we have written. (Ether 2:8–12)

7.13 The Jaredites would one day forsake the covenants by which they had inherited the land of promise, and by that apostasy were destroyed. The posterity of Lehi and Ishmael were extended the terms of that same covenant, as were the descendants of Mulek who initially settled the land of Zarahemla. The Nephites, those who willingly took upon themselves the principles and ordinances of the fullness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, prospered upon the face of the promised land until they, too, forsook that which they knew to be right and just. They then forfeited the blessings that the covenants had afforded them and they, too, were swept off the face of the earth. Those who were termed the Lamanites were given a special dispensation by which their seed was to continue upon the earth until the coming of the Gentiles nations among them. Their present prosperity is also hinged upon their willingness to worship the God of this land who is Jesus Christ. The Gentiles also

may prosper, but only upon the conditions initially established in the covenants made between the Lord God and the company led by Jared and his brother.

*7.14* This is a fundamental principle by which nations have been established upon the face of this hemisphere. There is no leeway. Those nations who refuse to be governed by the God of Heaven will perish, just as surely as the dew before the rays of the summer sun. Men may judge of themselves, in part, just how ripened they have become in their iniquity by comparing themselves to the nations that have preceded them upon this land. It is clear that the Lord God is patient with His children, but when they refused to be governed by righteousness, it is but a short time before they are completely displaced.

*7.15* The consummation of this decree will reach a milestone at the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ which will usher in the Millennial reign of the Savior. Those that are unwilling to abide by his counsel during that thousand years, will spend their time in another place, waiting upon the day of the second resurrection. At the end of the Millennium, the earth will pass through a short season, after which the earth will receive the fullness of the Celestial glory. Those who will inherit the land at that day will be those who, through the atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, have been cleansed and sanctified. The exalted saints will dwell upon the earth forever more. Those who have not been so qualified will spend eternity elsewhere.

*7.16* The key to the salvation of the Gentiles who will come upon this perpetual land of promise will be in their knowledge of and their willingness to abide by the covenants established between the Jaredites and the Lord. It is reasonable to assume that for the present, the only way that knowledge can be acquired is by a rather substantive reading and comprehension of the Book of Mormon.

*7.17* Qualifying for an inheritance in the land of promise comes about through a willingness to live by the word of the Lord God of Heaven. Such a willingness in any dispensation in the history of the earth would have included the teachings of the Son of God, his atoning sacrifice, and his personal and general power over the death of the body and the power of the resurrection. Revelation would follow regarding the nature and disposition of the Son of God, together with the commandment to become like unto him, through repentance and obedience. The saving and exalting ordinances of the Gospel would also be introduced among the faithful. Therefore, bondage to sin and degradation would find no place among them. They would not be enslaved by their unrestrained passions and the lusts of the natural man. So long as they observed to do all that the Lord commanded them, they would have nothing to fear from the marauding hords that would otherwise overrun them. Those who dwell upon the promised land in the present day are under the same dictum; no nation can expect to continue in prosperity, save they be willing to keep the covenants which the Father and the Son have prepared for them.

*7.18* The brother of Jared had sought wisdom at the hands of the Lord God of Heaven as he ran into difficulties with the eight barges that he had been commanded to build to facilitate the company's travels across the great deep. In order to solve one of the problems, the prophet had fashioned sixteen stones that could be touched by the finger of the Lord so that they might be used to illuminate the interior of the barges. As the Lord touched the stones, the brother of Jared saw a portion of the Savior's mortal body as it would be in the Meridian of Time; the prophet's faith had allowed him to witness that future condition. A rather intriguing exchange took place between the

brother of Jared and the Lord, much of which was apparently included in Ether's record. For one reason or another, Moroni truncates the account somewhat to serve his purposes.

And now, as I, Moroni, said I could not make a full account of these things which are written therefore it sufficeth me to say that Jesus showed himself unto this man in the spirit, even after the manner and in the likeness of the same body even as he showed himself unto the Nephites. And he ministered unto him even as he ministered unto the Nephites; and all this, that this man might know that he was God, because of the many great works which the Lord had showed unto him. And because of the knowledge of this man he could not be kept from beholding within the veil; and he saw the finger of Jesus, which, when he saw, he fell with fear; for he knew that it was the finger of the Lord; and he had faith no longer, for he knew, nothing doubting. Wherefore, having this perfect knowledge of God, he could not be kept from within the veil; therefore he saw Jesus; and he did minister unto him. (Ether 3:17–20)

7.19 When the Savior appeared to the Nephites at the temple in the city of Bountiful, he was newly resurrected from the tomb. What is implied is that whether one were to see the Lord Jesus Christ as a pre-mortal spirit, as a mortal clothed in a tabernacle of clay, or as a glorified being filled with the light of eternity, he would not be mistaken for any other than the Son of God. We must assume that for the most part, the same may be said for all of the sons and daughters of God who will have lived here upon the earth. We are all obviously the posterity of the same Being.

7.20 We may safely assume that the interviews between the Lord and the brother of Jared were extensive, even though Moroni confined himself primarily to the narrative surrounding the touching of the sixteen stones. The ministry of the Savior to the Nephites consumed several days. As we might expect, the Lord revealed in some detail the whole history of the earth from the creation, through the whole of the temporal existence of the earth, until the latter days when the earth would be exalted and assume its rightful place as the habitation of the righteous forevermore.

7.21 Again, we know that the faith of the brother of Jared had been accentuated by his previous experience and learning. He had been the recipient of correct principles handed down from Adam, through Noah to his own family. We are not privy as to how that burgeoning faith leaped across the centuries to reveal the future mortal appearance of the Savior. He knew that the Lord Jesus Christ would eventually take upon himself a body of flesh and blood because he believed all that had been taught regarding the coming Messiah and his purpose in mortality. Once he had experienced the open vision of the Lord's future body, however, there was no man who could persuade the brother of Jared that the eventuality of the resurrection and the atoning sacrifice were not going to take place. The future had become the present and Mahonri Moriancumer was a personal witness of that truth.

7.22 Once the brother of Jared was perfectly aware of the reality of the future birth and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, there was nothing that could hinder him in his expectation that the Savior was, as yet, a being of spirit. Therefore, the brother of Jared saw Jesus as he really was, at that very moment on mount Shelem. The brother of Jared made a record of his spiritual experiences that was to be hidden up until a later time. Ether clearly had access to this record when he compiled his own synopsis.

And it came to pass that the Lord said unto the brother of Jared: Behold, thou shalt not suffer these things which ye have seen and heard to go forth unto the world, until the time cometh that I shall glorify my name in the flesh; wherefore, ye shall treasure up the things which ye have seen and heard, and show it to no man. And behold, when ye shall come unto me, ye shall write them and shall seal them up, that no one can interpret them; for ye shall write them in a language that they cannot be read. And behold, these two stones will I give unto thee, and ye shall seal them up also with the things which ye shall write. For behold, the language which ye shall write I have confounded; wherefore I will cause in my own due time that these stones shall magnify to the eyes of men these things which ye shall write. (Ether 3:21–24)

7.23 A lost and fallen world could not and probably would not comprehend the truthfulness of all that the brother of Jared could have taught them. His understanding transcended the limited capacities of the natural man. The Lord reserved unto himself the right to bestow upon his own servants the same blessings in his own due time according to his wisdom. No doubt Ether was somewhat judicious in his compilation of his final accounting of the Jaredite people, refraining from revealing that which the Lord had proscribed. Once Mosiah translated the plates of Ether, plates that had been a redaction, in part, of the record of the brother of Jared, he observed to do the same, limiting access to that knowledge which was to be kept sealed until after the mortal ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. Moroni, writing after the mortal ministry of the Messiah, was not under any obligation to preserve the divine communication as had been done in ages past.

7.24 The nature of the language of the Jaredites was sufficient to prohibit the translation of the record by the men of the world. Only they had survived the confounding of the tongues at the tower of Babel. In addition, even those who might be equipped to deal with the record would be frustrated in their desires. Lucifer, it can be supposed, was certainly in a position to understand and translate the record if all else failed, but the record was sealed by the power and authority of the eternal priesthood of God. It seems clear that the brother of Jared wrote of his experiences almost immediately after descending from mount Shelem, but he sealed them up just prior to coming into the presence of the Lord, whether through death or translation.

7.25 We know nothing of these two particular stones, save they were probably in addition to the sixteen that the brother of Jared already had in his possession. It seems clear that the properties of these two stones were similar to other sets of stones which have been called Urim and Thummim. In fact, these very stones would be referred to as Urim and Thummim at the beginning of the Dispensation of the Fullness of Time, Oliver Cowdery being promised that he would see those stones for himself. How these Jaredite stones came to be in the possession of the Nephites and ultimately placed into the archives with the records, we do not know. We cannot speak with absolute certainty that the stones used to translate the Book of Mormon were exact same pair given to the brother of Jared. In fact, it seems rather doubtful that they were. Before the people of Zarahemla became aware of the plates of Ether, before they were translated, King Mosiah was already in possession of a Urim and Thummim. The pair that King Mosiah used in translating the record of Ether were already set in the rims of a bow, apparently in the same fashion as the ones used by Joseph Smith during the translation of the Book of Mormon. It is possible that the Jaredite pair had been discovered long before the record of Ether was discovered by the people of Limhi, but there is no account of that

happening in the narrative of the Book of Mormon as we presently have it. The two stones were sealed up with the record that the brother of Jared had written. Whether these were ever in the possession of the prophet Ether many centuries later, we do not know.

7.26 It is clear that there will come a time when the saints of the Most High will not only have access to the fullness of the record of Ether, they will also have access to the complete account of the brother of Jared of which Ether apparently made a synopsis. The Urim and Thummim which were given to the brother of Jared on mount Shelem will be the instruments by which that sacred record will come to light.

7.27 It would appear that Ether was forthcoming about the nature of the secret combinations that flourished among the Jaredites, combinations that ultimately brought about the complete destruction of the Jaredite peoples. Moroni, however, does not include this material on to his own redaction of Ether's writings. Speaking of Akish and the Jaredite secret combination, the son of Mormon states:

And it came to pass that they formed a secret combination, even as they of old; which combination is most abominable and wicked above all, in the sight of God; For the Lord worketh not in secret combinations, neither doth he will that man should shed blood, but in all things hath forbidden it, from the beginning of man. And now I, Moroni, do not write the manner of their oaths and combinations, for it hath been made known unto me that they are had among all people, and they are had among the Lamanites. And they have caused the destruction of this people of whom I am now speaking, and also the destruction of the people of Nephi. (Ether 8:18–21)

7.28 In the face of organized carnal security, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ has little or no appeal to the sinner. Without the fear of punishment or reprisal for sins against God and man, the participants in the secret combinations can justify no cry for repentance. No saving ordinances are received, and the spirit of the natural man brings the children of men into depravity, dissolution, and destruction from which there is no redemption likely, given the antipathy which the sinners feel toward the Spirit of the Lord.

7.29 There is an irony in the oaths of the ilk of Akish, Kishkumen, and Gadianton. They cause their adherents to swear by God, the heavens, and the earth, over which they have no control nor with which have they an inheritance. Satan's original thrust was to take control over eternity, by usurping God upon His throne and subjecting all of creation in time and eternity to his dominion. All of the wickedness of men is inspired by the same lust for power and fame, at any cost to his fellow beings. The work of the Father and the Son is just the opposite, that they might prepare the children of men to receive all things that the Father has, both in time and in eternity, that there might be an equality of capacity among the sons and daughters of God.

7.30 Moroni has taken a page out of Alma's book, that there can nothing good derive from an exacting articulation of the oaths and covenants of the secret combinations that existed among the Jaredites or among the children of Lehi. The Lamanite forces that destroyed the Nephites at the hill Cumorah were led and inspired by members of those secret combinations.

7.31 Had the Jaredites not succumbed to the carnal appeal of the secret combinations, they would not have fallen into such hideously appalling spiritual depravity which justified their utter

destruction as a people. Moroni had witnessed the fall of his own nation and observed all that which precipitated their annihilation.

7.32 The last king of the Jaredites was a man by the name of Coriantumr. In the days of his reign, the Lord God called a prophet by the name of Ether to cry repentance to Coriantumr and his people, the same Ether who would be the man who would preserve his record upon the twenty-four gold plates discovered by Limhi's men. No doubt a more complete account of Ether's ministry could be found upon his plates, but Moroni again chose to summarize the record rather than cite it in full. Later on in his redaction of the record however, Moroni becomes deeply interested in those events that would come in the latter days and begins to explain the kinds of things that Ether saw during his own revelations from the Lord.

And now I, Moroni, proceed to finish my record concerning the destruction of the people of whom I have been writing. For behold, they rejected all the words of Ether; for he truly told them of all things, from the beginning of man; and that after the waters had receded from off the face of this land it became a choice land above all other lands, a chosen land of the Lord; wherefore the Lord would have that all men should serve him who dwell upon the face thereof; And that it was the place of the New Jerusalem, which should come down out of heaven, and the holy sanctuary of the Lord. (Ether 13:13:1-3)

7.33 We cannot tell from the preserved record how precise Ether was in explaining the history of this hemisphere. Does he indicate to the Jaredites the reasons why the lands were divided? Does he teach them the complete history of this land and why it has become the chosen land, choice above all others? Does he testify about the locations of the various sites that existed before the flood? Does he mention the Garden of Eden, the residence of our first parents after the earth was created? If Ether does not tell them directly, it is clear that his understanding of the destiny of this part of the Lord's vineyard is clear and complete. Much of Ether's teachings helps us to comprehend why it is that those who dwell upon this land, especially those who live nigh unto the most sacred sites of humanity's history must needs worship the framer of this planet or be swept off the face of the land.

7.34 There is no question that there will come a time when the location of the Garden of Eden will be graced with a city devoted and dedicated completely to the Savior and to the Kingdom of God upon the earth. It will serve as one of two general capitals of the Millennial reign. Early in this dispensation that location was identified as being in Jackson County, Missouri. We need not excessively concern ourselves about how that might be accomplished given the urban development that presently exists there now. The matter will be resolved simply and naturally, just as the affairs of state will be resolved before the magnificent Temple that is to be built in Israel is raised up.

7.35 During his ministry to the gathered Nephites at the Temple in the city of Bountiful, the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ would be quite specific as to how the New Jerusalem would come to be and who would be involved. Remnants of the House of Israel, specifically of the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, will be gathered together as the saints of God, redeemed from the fall and the wickedness of this world. Together they will establish the city of Zion, called the New Jerusalem, upon the American continent, from whence the voice and word of God will issue forth unto all of the nations



of the earth, that they might obey the commandments of him whose right it is to reign. The Gentiles who accept the covenants of Christ will be invited to participate as well.

7.36 The coming of the New Jerusalem from out of Heaven may be taken as being both literal and metaphorical. Certainly all that would need to be known in order to embark on such an enterprise would be revealed to the prophets, seers, and revelators of the Lord God of Israel. The design of the various buildings, the general layout of the city, and the identity of those who would be called upon to perform the labor would be forthcoming through that medium. In addition, we know that the city of Enoch is to return from its long exile as a translated community and people. This Zion will literally come down out of heaven and resume its place upon surface of this planet. Its geographical location will be in relatively close proximity to that of the New Jerusalem and may very well be considered part of the whole of Zion in the process of time.

7.37 At the point that Moroni was becoming extremely forthcoming about Ether's prophecies, the Lord restrains the prophet from writing more.

And I was about to write more, but I am forbidden; but great and marvelous were the prophecies of Ether; but they esteemed him as naught, and cast him out; and he hid himself in the cavity of a rock by day, and by night he went forth viewing the things which should come upon the people. And as he dwelt in the cavity of a rock he made the remainder of his record, viewing the destructions which came upon the people, by night. (Ether 13:13–14)

7.38 We are not given the reason why Moroni was commanded by the Lord to write no more of those things which the Lord had revealed unto Ether. Nephi was proscribed from writing more concerning the history of the world, particularly of the latter days, because the Apostle John would be tasked with that responsibility. Ether would spend at least four years dwelling in this cave, or one similar to it.

7.39 In some respects, Ether became a disengaged witness in the utter destruction of the Jaredites. There would come a point when he would no longer preach to Coriantumr and his people; there would come a time when their fate was sealed. Ether would watch the conduct of the Jaredites by day and write of them by night. Needless to say, we only have a small portion of that journal preserved for us in the book that bears his name.

7.40 After the final battle at the hill Ramah from which of all of the combatants only Coriantumr would survive, the Lord instructs Ether as to what he should do next.

And it came to pass that Coriantumr fell to the earth, and became as if he had no life. And the Lord spake unto Ether, and said unto him: Go forth. And he went forth, and beheld that the words of the Lord had all been fulfilled; and he finished his record; (and the hundredth part I have not written) and he hid them in a manner that the people of Limhi did find them. Now the last words which are written by Ether are these: Whether the Lord will that I be translated, or that I suffer the will of the Lord in the flesh, it mattereth not, if it so be that I am saved in the kingdom of God. Amen. (Ether 15:32–34)

7.41 Again, we cannot tell where Ether had been hiding and providing for himself during the last week of the existence of the Jaredite people. The Lord commanded him however, to survey the camps of the two armies and the various battle fields that he might verify that no one had survived

the war, except for Coriantumr. This must have been a grim task indeed, particularly for one imbued with the Spirit of the Lord. Ether affixes his solemn witness that all that the Lord had prophesied through His servants would happen, had happened.

7.42 The current edition of the book of Ether comprises 31 pages of printed text. Assuming that Moroni is using no hyperbole here, we might expect a volume from the 24 gold plates in excess of 3000 pages, if it were fully rendered into English. This fact says something of the written language of the Jaredites.

7.43 We do not know which of the two options Ether experienced. It is interesting, however, that Moroni cites those particular words. I suspect that he sensed in Ether a kindred spirit, one who spent a considerable period of time on his own, in exile, avoiding contact with any other human being. Perhaps Moroni wondered how his own mission as guardian of the depository would affect his immediate future.

## 8.0 Summary

8.1 From all of the foregoing it is easy to perceive that the source material for the text of the Book of Mormon was quite complex, a tapestry of narrative threads woven together by art and circumstance. The nature of the evidence is compelling and points to only one conclusion. The Book of Mormon is precisely what it has always claimed to be. In its inception, it was to be a religious account of the ancient inhabitants of what is now called the western hemisphere or the Americas. These were, for the most part, remnants of the covenant people established by Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob who had been scattered to a far flung region of the world where they would not be discovered for nearly two thousand years. The most prominent of these exiles brought records with them and patterned their own personal and collective histories after them. Eventually, all that had been produced over a one-thousand-year span of time would be summarized by the prophet/historian Mormon and his son Moroni in the fourth century after the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in the flesh. Any other explanation of the existence of this volume of scripture has to face down the reality of the facts, facts that have been clearly articulated within the covers of the book itself. Ignorant and perverse men have attempted to discredit the word of the Lord through His servants the prophets for millennia. Those of a similar mind and heart have attempted to do the same with the Book of Mormon and have utterly failed. Inasmuch much as the Book of Mormon cannot be overthrown by either devils or men, it stands as a unassailable witness of the reality of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God, the Savior of mankind. It testified of the truths that may be found within the covers of the Bible, the Old and New Testaments, that they too constitute the mind and will of the God of Heaven. It bears solemn witness of the love of God for all of His children, whenever and wherever they might live, that we are not alone in the universe, and all those who wish to transcend this Telestial state of existence may do so through the principles and ordinances of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. There is no need to look beyond this singular and definitive mark, as simple as it might seem. It is in its simplicity and clarity that any man, woman, or child may attain to the divine potential that lies within them.