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# Table of Contents

*Editor's Note* .................................................................................................................. 2

*Preface* ................................................................................................................................ 3

**Part 1: The Structuring of Nephite Style**

**Section 1: Mormon the Writer**

*Chapter 1: Mormon Preparing* .................................................................................. 13

*Chapter 2: Mormon and the Nephite Archive* ....................................................... 21
  Records on Plates in the Archive ............................................................................. 25
  Records on Other Media in the Archive ................................................................ 29

*Chapter 3: Mormon’s Use of the Archive* ............................................................ 31
  Mormon’s Use of Outline (Synoptic) Headers ..................................................... 31
  Mormon’s Alternative Sources ............................................................................ 33
  Mormon’s Named Books and Their Sources ....................................................... 37
  Years as an Organizational Framework ............................................................. 45
  Mormon’s Outline ................................................................................................. 50

*Chapter 4: Mormon Making Chapters* .................................................................. 55
  Mormon’s Chapter Beginnings ............................................................................. 58
  Mormon’s Chapter Endings ................................................................................... 61
  Testificatory Amen Endings ................................................................................ 61
  Sermon Endings .................................................................................................... 63
  Chapters and Years ............................................................................................... 64
  The Anomalous Chapter Breaks .......................................................................... 69

*Chapter 5: Mormon Writing* .................................................................................. 73
  Mormon’s Admonition to His Future Audience ................................................. 75
  Mormon’s Interaction with His Text ..................................................................... 76
  Narrator-voice and Author-voice ......................................................................... 76
  Inserting Information for a Future Audience ...................................................... 79
  Mormon’s Use of Repetitive Resumption ............................................................ 81
  Mormon Writing About War .................................................................................. 87
  Mormon Writing About History .......................................................................... 90
  Fitting Names into Narrative Types .................................................................... 92
  Fitting History into Types .................................................................................... 102
  Making History into Prophecy ............................................................................. 103
  Mormon’s Explanation for the Nephite Demise .................................................. 105
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Nephi Chapter IV (15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Nephi Chapter V (16–19:21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Nephi VI (19:22–21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Nephi VII (22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Nephi Chapter IX (23:1–24:22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Nephi VIII (24:23–25:16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Nephi IX (25:17–27:22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Nephi X (27:23–28:27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Nephi XI (29:1–30:10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Nephi XII (30:11–31:14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Nephi XIII (31:15–32:26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Nephi XIV (33:1–34:1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Nephi Chapter I (1–2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Nephi Chapter II (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Nephi Chapter III (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Nephi Chapter IV (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Break between 2 Nephi Chapters IV (5) and V (6–8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Nephi Chapter V (6–8) [Reconstructed Header]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Nephi Chapter VI (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Nephi Chapter VII (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Nephi Chapter VIII (11–15)–2 Nephi Chapter X (23–24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Nephi XI (25–27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nephi’s Introduction to Isaiah in 2 Nephi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nephi’s Prophetic Pesher on Isaiah in 2 Nephi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Nephi Chapter XII (28–30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Nephi Chapter XIII (31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Nephi Chapter XIV (32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Nephi Chapter XV (33)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Section 4: Making Mormon’s Book

Chapter 13: Book of Mosiah

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mosiah Chapter I (1–3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mosiah Chapter II (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mosiah Chapter III (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mosiah Chapter IV (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mosiah Chapter V (7–8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mosiah Chapter VI (9–10) [Has Header]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mosiah Chapter VII (11:1–13:14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mosiah Chapter VIII (13:15–16:15)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mosiah Chapter IX (17–21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mosiah Chapter X (22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mosiah Chapter XI (23–27) [Has Header]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mosiah Chapter XII (28:1–19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mosiah Chapter XIII (28:20–29:47)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chapter 14: Book of Alma

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alma Chapter I (1–3) [Book Header]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alma Chapter II (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alma Chapter III (5) [Has Header]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alma Chapter IV (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter</td>
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<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alma Chapter V (7) [Has Header]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alma Chapter VI (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alma Chapter VII (9) [Has Header]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alma Chapter VIII (10–11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alma Chapter IX (12:1–13:9)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alma Chapter X (13:10–15:19)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alma Chapter XI (16)</td>
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<td>Alma Chapter XII (17–20)</td>
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<td>Alma Chapter XIII (21–22) [Has Header]</td>
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<td>Alma Chapter XIV (23–26)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alma Chapter XV (27–29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alma Chapter XVI (30–35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alma Chapters XVII (36–37), XVIII (38), XIX (39–42) [Each with a Header]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alma Chapter XX (43–44)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alma Chapter XXI (45–49) [Has Header]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alma Chapter XXII (50)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alma Chapter XXIII (51)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alma Chapter XXIV (52–53)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alma Chapter XXV (54–55)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alma Chapter XXVI (56–58)</td>
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<td>Alma Chapter XXVII (59–60)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alma Chapter XXVIII (61)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alma Chapter XXIX (62)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alma Chapter XXX (63)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 15: Book of Helaman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helaman Chapter I (1–2) [Book Header]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helaman Chapter II (3–6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helaman Chapter III (7–10) [Has Header]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helaman Chapter IV (11–12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helaman Chapter V (13–16) [Has Header]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 16: Book of 3 Nephi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Nephi I (1–2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Nephi II (3–5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Nephi III (6–7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Nephi IV (8–10)</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 Nephi V (11–13:24)</td>
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<td>3 Nephi VI (13:25–14)</td>
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<td>3 Nephi VII (15–16)</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 Nephi VIII (17–18)</td>
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<td>3 Nephi IX (19:1–21:21)</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 Nephi X (21:22–23:13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Nephi XI (23:14–26:5)</td>
</tr>
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LABOR DILIGENTLY TO WRITE: THE ANCIENT MAKING OF A MODERN SCRIPTURE

Brant A. Gardner
Editor’s Note

This volume of Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-Day Saint Faith and Scholarship consists of what started as a series of articles by Brant Gardner. These articles, appearing over the latter part of 2019, collectively comprised a book named Labor Diligently to Write: The Ancient Making of a Modern Scripture. The articles have been combined in this volume and edited slightly from the way they were first serialized.
Preface

Brant Gardner changed the way I read the Book of Mormon.

Back in the mid-2000’s I was preparing to teach two courses on the Book of Mormon at Brigham Young University as an adjunct professor. I had taught several New Testament courses in prior semesters, but this was my first time teaching Book of Mormon. As I began to prep for the course I began to get more and more frustrated. Due to my years as a Classics major, I had felt pretty confident in teaching the New Testament. I had spent years studying the ancient world, toiling with Greek and Latin texts, and poring through the books, commentaries, and articles crucial to New Testament studies.

When it came time to teach the Book of Mormon, I was adrift. Where were the monographs? The commentaries? Much of what had been published on the Book of Mormon was either doctrinally oriented or apologetically motivated. Both of these types of publications were useful, but I desperately wanted to have someone take me into the world of the text and open up the Book of Mormon in a similar fashion to what I had enjoyed in studying the New Testament.

As luck would have it, right before I was to begin teaching I was wandering through the old Pioneer Book store in Provo when I noticed a set of books with the title Second Witness: Analytical and Contextual Commentary on the Book of Mormon. They were written by Brant Gardner, a scholar whom at that point I was unfamiliar with. I cautiously took the volume on First Nephi off the shelf, eager to see what an “Analytical and Contextual Commentary on the Book of Mormon” looked like. I was instantly drawn in by the level of attention and depth paid to every verse. As the title suggested, these books were less concerned with matching up Book of Mormon verses to modern LDS doctrine than they were with trying to dig deeper into who Nephi was. What was his agenda? His theological background? His connection to Isaiah? Why did he structure his record the way he did? I was so excited to find these four books (at the time only the first four had been published — I was told by the employee I would have to wait a while to get the last two) that I
immediately purchased all four, figuring that I could easily convince my wife and two small children that going a week or so without food was a small sacrifice to make when compared to Dad’s awesome new books. (I was unsuccessful in that endeavor, but that’s a story for another day.)

For the next few months I pored over Gardner’s commentaries, finding nuggets of gold on every page. I was impressed most of all by how careful of a reader he was — gleaning crucial insights from words or phrases but then also able to contextualize what was happening in an individual verse into the larger picture of the Book of Mormon. It’s safe to say that when I finally bought the last two books in the series and finished reading all six volumes that Gardner’s works had reshaped how I read the Book of Mormon. For the first time I felt I really understood the context of Jacob’s temple sermon, or the theological position of Noah’s priests, or Mormon’s possible typological use of Gadianton Robbers, or the many different social and economic reasons behind the collapse of the Nephites. My students were certainly better-off, as I was able to bring insights into the Book of Mormon that really opened up things for them as well. Suffice it to say, I was certainly a big fan of Brant Gardner from that moment on.

Gardner surprised me again in 2011 when I saw he had published a new book on the translation of the Book of Mormon, as I just sort of figured that anyone who published six massive volumes of a commentary might want to take a break for a while. As with his commentary, I found his new volume extremely rewarding. Because I was coming more and more to appreciate the connections between the Bible and the Book of Mormon but hadn’t been able to work out any semblance of a solution myself, I eagerly devoured his take on how the symbols on the Gold Plates somehow correlated to the King James English of the Book of Mormon. (Literalist, Functional, and Conceptual Equivalence? Brilliant!) I was pleased that Gardner never seemed to skirt around the complicated issues of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, and his solution to the complexities of Gold Plates text vs. English Book of Mormon is well thought out and unique. I could say much the same for Gardner’s subsequent book, The Book of Mormon as History, which takes readers sequentially through the Book of Mormon and deepens much of the contextualization he put forward in his commentary series.

It was with a great deal of anticipation that I opened the pages of Gardner’s newest book, Labor Diligently to Write: The Ancient Making of a Modern Scripture. What would Brant have in store for his readers next? The answer, as I found, was a deep-dive into the authorship and
structure of the Book of Mormon. Gardner’s book can be neatly divided into two halves: Nephi and Mormon as authors/editors, and the Book of Mormon as a carefully developed text. In the first half of the book, Gardner asks and answers many of the issues peripheral to the writing of the Book of Mormon. For example:

- Did Nephi and Mormon outline their text in advance, or was their writing largely extemporaneous?
- Why did Nephi and Mormon begin and end chapters the way that they did?
- Where might Nephi have gained the experience to work metal?
- Why does Mormon sometimes insert small digressions within larger accounts?
- Were some of the names of Book of Mormon characters changed to reflect their role in the story Mormon was crafting?
- What may have been on the lost 116 pages and what was not?

While some of these questions (some of which I wasn’t even aware of prior to reading the book) are more difficult to answer than others, Gardner methodically works his way through the text and offers plausible and understandable explanations.

The second half of the book is the first attempt I have seen to really read the Book of Mormon in light of its original chapter breaks. Readers of the Book of Mormon who are used to studying the text using the shorter system of chapters introduced by Orson Pratt will find their study of the Book of Mormon enriched by looking at how Nephi and Mormon originally organized the text. Reading the Book of Mormon through the lens of the original chapter breaks was certainly eye-opening for me, and upon finishing the book I felt that my understanding of who Nephi and Mormon were and what they were trying to say in their writings was greatly enhanced. The thematic coherence of the original chapters is stressed, with an eye toward why and how Nephi and Mormon began and ended each chapter the way that they did. Why were certain things emphasized? Why were other things omitted? While Pratt’s modern chapter breaks are useful, they are artificial and, as Gardner demonstrates again and again, we miss much by ignoring the way Nephi and Mormon crafted and constructed their stories.
Brant Gardner continues to change the way I read the Book of Mormon. Read this book. I would recommend it to anyone who wants to deepen their own reading and understanding of this divine text.

—Nick Frederick
December 2019
PART 1:
THE STRUCTURING OF NEPHITE STYLE

The Book of Mormon tells the story of the Nephite people. That story began on plates the first writer, Nephi, made by hand. Their story ended on plates the last writer, Mormon, made by hand.¹ Nephi created one record that chronicled the reigns of the kings and a second that covered the ministry.² Mormon wrote in the official Nephite chronicle of the reigns of the kings³ but wrote a second work for a different and more sacred purpose.⁴

Mormon’s writing career was bracketed by plates buried in a hill. The same plates Mormon removed from the hill Shim at the beginning of his writing career (Mormon 1:3, 4:23), he interred in the hill Cumorah at the end (Mormon 6:6). In the intervening years, Mormon’s relationship to those plates shifted from recorder of events to interpreter of events. Mormon buried the Nephite archive in the hill Cumorah to preserve

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¹. Mormon was the last Nephite recorder. By the time Moroni was writing, there was no more Nephite nation. Moroni was never the Nephite recorder; he was custodian of the record his father conceived and wrote, and his writings are an addendum to that record.

². 1 Nephi 9:3–4, 10:1, and 19:3–4.

³. Implied by Ammaron’s transmission of the plates to Mormon (Mormon 1:3–4). The commission was to “engrave on the plates of Nephi all the things that ye have observed concerning this people” (v.4). See also Mormon 2:17.

⁴. Mormon doesn’t give a description of his decision to write on the plates that were ultimately given to Joseph Smith. It is possible that such an account was in an introduction lost with the 116 pages, but that is speculation. What we know is that the Book of Mormon is more than Mormon’s observations about the people, which would have fulfilled the obligation given by Ammaron (Mormon1:4).
it, but he gave Moroni a more important set of plates to preserve. Those were later buried in a hill.5

Joseph Smith recovered the plates Moroni preserved — those Mormon entrusted to Moroni and to which Moroni added his addenda — and translated them into the Book of Mormon. Mormon’s ultimate masterwork has become the cornerstone of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

There are many ways to approach the Book of Mormon, and any number of books assist with those various approaches.6 Books have been written to highlight the important spiritual message of the Book of Mormon. This isn’t one of those books. Books have been written to examine the literary qualities of the writing in the Book of Mormon. This isn’t one of those books. Books have been written to examine the geography and history described in the Book of Mormon. This isn’t one of those books.

This book is about a very specific aspect of two different men. Nephi conceived writing Nephite history. Mormon conceived turning that history into a message to a future generation. Each wrote with purpose and elaborated that purpose by recounting stories. Knowing that each man used a chronology of events as the backbone structuring his intent,

5. Mormon tells us that he buried plates in Cumorah but that they were not those on which the Book of Mormon was written. Perhaps he returned to Cumorah, but that is speculation. All the text tells us for certain is that the Book of Mormon plates were not buried in Cumorah, although others were.

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 6:6)


Numerous approaches can and should be taken in approaching the Book of Mormon. This complex book has been read and scrutinized in many ways: textually, doctrinally, historically, comparatively, literarily, legally, statistically, geographically, philosophically, practically, biographically, intellectually, prayerfully, and spiritually — to name some of the most obvious.
how did they select and then write the stories so Nephite history served their larger intent?

Hunter R. Rawlings III wrote a book entitled *The Structure of Thucydides’ History*. He noted:

The structure of an historical work is not often discussed or even recognized as an important object of study. The historian’s narrative is, after all, determined by the facts or events he narrates. We are far more likely to pay attention to the architecture of a play or novel than to that of an historical work, usually with good reason. The modern historian is himself often quite innocent of reflection or concern with the literary form of his narrative. Although his unconscious selection and arrangement of facts can, when subjected to rigorous analysis and criticism, reveal his approach and perspective and often his prejudices, only rarely does one meet an historian who gives careful attention to the literary presentation of his material.7

Rawlings then says of Thucydides what I echo for Nephi and Mormon: “Thucydides does not mention his own artistry. He lets it speak for itself. This does not make it less effective; quite the contrary, it is for that reason even more powerful. But it does mean that in order to understand Thucydides’ artistry one must study it with great care.”8 This book attempts to lay the foundation for the great care with which we might study how Nephi and Mormon wrote.

One of the subtle impediments to understanding the Book of Mormon is that we don’t have the book Mormon conceived.9 His well-laid plan was disrupted with the loss of 116 manuscript pages that translated the beginning of Mormon’s book up until the reign of king Benjamin. The divine solution to forego re-translating the beginning of the Book of Mormon and replacing it with a different record means that modern readers start reading Nephi’s book, not a Mormon’s. Nearly

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8. Ibid., 4.

9. The book of Moroni was not part of Mormon’s planned text, although it is probable that Moroni’s editing of Ether’s record was. Mormon promised that the Jaredite story would be told (Mosiah 28:19), but there is no indication that he began to work on it. It was therefore left for Moroni to add, perhaps as an appendix.
a thousand years separated them, and the reasons they wrote and the way they embedded those reasons in their texts are different.

For example, we learn from Nephi that the Lamanites are the quintessential Nephite enemies. When Jacob suggests the Lamanites might be better than the Nephites, it wasn’t to suggest the Lamanites were good but rather that the Nephites had become very bad:

Behold, the Lamanites your brethren, whom ye hate because of their filthiness and the cursing which hath come upon their skins, are more righteous than you; for they have not forgotten the commandment of the Lord, which was given unto our father — that they should have save it were one wife, and concubines they should have none, and there should not be whoredoms committed among them. (Jacob 3:5)

Contrast that with a similar — yet very different — passage from Mormon:

And it came to pass that when the sixty and second year of the reign of the judges had ended, all these things had happened and the Lamanites had become, the more part of them, a righteous people, insomuch that their righteousness did exceed that of the Nephites, because of their firmness and their steadiness in the faith. (Helaman 6:1)

In Mormon’s writings, it was possible for Lamanites to become truly righteous. Lamanites are not written with that hope in Nephi or Jacob’s writings. Nephi described the Lamanites as the singular Nephite enemies, but Mormon sees them as much less dangerous than Nephite apostates or Gadianton robbers.

To ameliorate the power of our modern assumptions, I have reversed the typical order of examination — I look at Mormon first and then at Nephi. The Book of Mormon was Mormon’s book, after all, and not Nephi’s. Beginning with the man who created the Book of Mormon may help us understand what he was trying to say even if we do not have the beginning of the book he wrote.

I have divided this book into two parts. In this part, I look at Mormon and Nephi as writers. How did they learn to do what they did? What sources did they use, and what techniques did they employ to further their messages? In this first section, examples are pulled from across their writings to illustrate specific features.
The second part reverses the process. What drove the creation of specific chapters? What message was intended by the stories selected and the way they were told? In that part, I return to the standard reading order. Applying the concepts from this part allows us to see each writer develop the longer arcs of his individual arguments and elucidate his overarching themes.

10. The current Book of Mormon chapters are the result of Orson Pratt’s 1879 changes, which also added versification. While neither the original nor the printer’s manuscripts had sentences or paragraphing, the evidence from the manuscripts indicates that the chapter breaks were part of the dictation. Thus, the chapters as they appeared in 1830 were part of the original plate text. See Royal Skousen, “Critical Methodology and the Text of the Book of Mormon,” Review of Books on the Book of Mormon 6, no.1 (1994): 137.
Section 1: Mormon the Writer

Chapter 1: Mormon Preparing

Ammaron was entrusted with the sacred Nephite archives. Although he recorded Nephite history in the same way so many of his predecessors had, we have nothing that he wrote. As the penultimate official Nephite historian, we know that he wrote and cared for the sacred Nephite records in perilous times.\(^\text{11}\) Rather than his writings, however, we have the record of his efforts to preserve and continue the plates. We learn that: “Ammaron, being constrained by the Holy Ghost, did hide up the records which were sacred — yea, even all the sacred records which had been handed down from generation to generation, which were sacred — even until the three hundred and twentieth year from the coming of Christ” (4 Nephi 1:48). In that year, Ammaron searched for a new recordkeeper and found ten-year-old Mormon. Mormon wrote of his meeting with Ammaron:

> 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;

\(^{11}\) Both Ammaron and Mormon were official Nephite historians writing on the large plates. While Moroni wrote on Mormon's plates, he probably didn't write on the large plates, as they had been buried in Cumorah, and he did not have access to them. He might have gone back to Cumorah for those plates, but there is no evidence that he did. Mormon gave Moroni the plates on which he had written. It would appear that the small plates were also included and intended as an appendix. Moroni certainly had either the plates of Ether or Mosiah's translation of those plates. My opinion is that Moroni used Mosiah's translation rather than creating a new translation.
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. (Mormon 1:2–4).

Mormon mentions only that he “began to be learned somewhat.” We may infer that his education included learning to read and write, else he could never have become the Nephite recordkeeper. We may also infer that Mormon was one of the elites of Nephite society, as it is probable that education in reading and writing was most common among elites, if not reserved for elites.12

Perhaps there was some formal training for Nephite scribes that would include instructions on what was to be included on the large plates of Nephi. There is no indication that Ammaron provided Mormon with anything more than the command to retrieve the plates. Regardless of what kind of scribal training Mormon might have received, circumstances dictated that before Mormon could become a writer, he became a fighter. Mormon wrote: “And it came to pass that I, being eleven years old, was carried by my father into the land southward, even to the land of Zarahemla” (Mormon 1:6).13 He does not tell us why, but he does immediately begin to discuss a war that began in that year (Mormon 1:8). As the war “began to be among them [Lamanites and Nephites] in the borders of Zarahemla, by the waters of Sidon,” (Mormon 1:10), it is a reasonable assumption that Mormon’s father’s relocation to that area


13. The first time we can place Mormon’s age into the Nephite year counts is in the 326th year, when Mormon was 16 (Mormon 2:2). That gives his year of birth as 310 Nephite years from the birth of Christ. Randall Spackman makes an excellent case that the Nephite year was lunar based rather than our solar year. That means that Nephite years will not match precisely with modern dating. See Randall P. Spackman, “The Jewish/Nephite Lunar Calendar,” Journal of Book of Mormon Studies 7, no. 1 (1998): 48–59.
was related to the conflict. If his father was a military man, Mormon probably learned about being a military leader at his father’s knee.

At the age of 15 he was “visited of the Lord, and tasted and knew of the goodness of Jesus” (Mormon 1:15). That visitation would have solidified Mormon’s faith — a faith that would be tested in the years to come. Perhaps part of that testing was that his desire to share that faith was constrained:

And I did endeavor to preach unto this people, but my mouth was shut, and I was forbidden that I should preach unto them; for behold they had wilfully rebelled against their God; and the beloved disciples were taken away out of the land, because of their iniquity.

But I did remain among them, but I was forbidden to preach unto them, because of the hardness of their hearts; and because of the hardness of their hearts the land was cursed for their sake. (Mormon 1:16–17)

Perhaps Mormon was fated to have a military career even without the prohibition to preach.14 Regardless, his military career began in “that same year [when] there began to be a war again between the Nephites and the Lamanites. And notwithstanding I being young, was large in stature; therefore the people of Nephi appointed me that I should be their leader, or the leader of their armies. Therefore it came to pass that in my sixteenth year I did go forth at the head of an army of the Nephites, against the Lamanites” (Mormon 2:1–2).

Having been forbidden to cry repentance, Mormon cried war. His cries were laments for a people who had lost Yahweh’s protection. His military career continued throughout his life, ending only after the destruction of the Nephite nation at the hill Cumorah. By the time he was writing his own book of Mormon in what we now know as the larger Book of Mormon, he was more interested in telling his military story than in documenting his career as the Nephite historian.

Mormon described himself as the Nephite recordkeeper only as an aside in a discussion of military actions:

14. It is probable that Mormon was part of a military caste or some other designation for a social elite with that particular profession. His call as a military leader at the age of 16 suggests there was some social assumption behind that selection. John A. Tvedtnes, “Book of Mormon Tribal Affiliation and Military Castes,” in Warfare in the Book of Mormon, eds. Stephen D. Ricks and William J. Hamblin (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1990), 317.
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)

From the way Mormon wrote this, it is possible to conclude that he first retrieved the plates of Nephi in the 345th year when the Nephites had been pushed north to the city of Jashon. However, that would make Mormon 34 years old. Ammaron had told Mormon to retrieve the plates of Nephi when he was 24. Had Mormon ignored that commandment for ten years?

I suggest that it is best to read this passage as an aside in which Mormon supplied information he realized he had skipped when it was chronologically appropriate. The difficulties in editing engraved writing easily explain why Mormon could not later insert this material at the earlier point. The reason he missed describing retrieving the records was that he had begun to discuss Nephite military actions, and the narrative flow both before and after these verses concerns the long conflict between the Nephites and the Lamanites.

When Mormon comes to this part of the history, he notes that Jashon is near the hill Shim, and that triggers the aside designed to fill in the history he had skipped. That is the reason that he says, “I had

15. Mormon was born during the 310th year, although Mormon never specifically gives us his birth year. We can deduce this date from when Ammaron hid the plates and called Mormon to a future role as the Nephite scribe. Ammaron hid the plates in the 320th year (4 Nephi 1:48) and Mormon was ten years old “about the time that Ammaron hid up the records unto the Lord” (Mormon 1:2).

16. Mormon often interrupted his narrative to insert material. See the discussion in the section “Mormon’s Interaction with His Text,” Chapter 5.
gone according to the word of Ammaron.” With this understanding, we can see Mormon fulfilling Ammaron’s commandment that he retrieve the plates of Nephi when he was 24, even though Mormon inserts that retrospective incident into his account of the 345th year.17

The next question that requires clarification is what Mormon took from the hill Shim when he was 24. Ammaron had hidden up “all the sacred records which had been handed down from generation to generation” (4 Nephi 1:48). Did Mormon take all the records Ammaron had placed in the hill?

Mormon says that he took the plates of Nephi (Mormon 2:17). Ammaron had instructed him that: “ye shall take the plates of Nephi unto yourself, and the remainder shall ye leave in the place where they are” (Mormon 1:4). So Mormon took the plates of Nephi but left the “remainder.” Mormon gives us no indication of when he conceived of the project to create The Book of Mormon, but he could not have created that work without the full archive of records. In my reading of what Mormon took from the hill Shim when he was 24, Mormon did not have what he needed to begin his project until he recovered the complete archive from the hill Shim in the year 375 (when Mormon was 65).18

17. This chronology is easy to mistake without careful examination of the dating. For example, I clearly did not make a sufficiently careful examination of the timeline and got both Mormon’s age and the plates he took wrong when I looked at these verses in Brant A. Gardner, Second Witness: Analytical and Contextual Commentary on the Book of Mormon (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2007), 5:65–66. Most commentaries are interested in the person or theology and don’t pay attention to this question of the dating.

The exception was an article by Leland H. Monson, “Mormon, Part 1,” Improvement Era (September 1945): 550: “It was in 345 A.D., when Mormon was 34 years of age and was serving as commander-in-chief of all the Nephite forces, that he went a second time to the hill Shim and took therefrom the large plates of Nephi.”

18. Mormon 4:23. This contrasts with Marilyn Arnold’s suggestion that Mormon had begun reading the whole of the plates of Nephi during a ten-year time of peace after retrieving the records the first time. Marilyn Arnold, “Mormon,” in Book of Mormon Reference Companion, ed. Dennis L. Largey (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2003), 547–48: “Nevertheless, when Mormon was in his middle thirties (AD 346), the Nephites rallied under his inspired leadership and met with success on the battlefield. A treaty was signed (AD 350), and ten years of relative peace ensued. The Lord, in an attempt to bless the Nephites, instructed Mormon to urge them to repent and promised they would be spared. This ten-year hiatus in fighting may have given Mormon the opportunity he needed to study the Nephite records, perhaps even to begin the work of abridgment.“ Arnold is correct that
When Mormon finally had all the plates, he likely spent some time reading and mentally organizing his thoughts for his abridgement. The Book of Mormon was probably conceived, and much of it written, in the city of Jordan. After taking the records from the hill Shim, Mormon and his people were driven to the city of Jordan (in the 375th year, Mormon 4:23), a position they were able to defend and maintain for about five years. Nevertheless, it was not a time of peaceful reflection. In addition to writing, Mormon was probably actively involved in the city’s defense.

The Nephites withstood a Lamanite invasion in the 379th year (Mormon 5:5), but when the Lamanites came again in the 380th year, “those whose flight was swifter than the Lamanites’ did escape, and those whose flight did not exceed the Lamanites’ were swept down and destroyed” (Mormon 5:7). The next known resting place of the Nephites is Cumorah, where the Nephites had gathered by the Nephite year 384 (Mormon 6:5). Mormon doesn’t tell us where the people were between the years 380 and 384. He does note that he “wrote an epistle unto the king of the Lamanites, and desired of him that he would grant unto us that we might gather together our people unto the land of Cumorah, by a hill which was called Cumorah, and there we could give them battle” (Mormon 6:2). It is possible that they traveled toward Cumorah after the defeat in the city of Jordan, and that the year 384 marks the end of a gathering that had taken time.

Using this reconstruction of Mormon’s timeline, he had about five years in the city of Jordan and fewer than four years in the land of Cumorah to write. He was certainly writing his book of Mormon (not The Book of Mormon) while at Cumorah, since he includes descriptions of the events at Cumorah. He could have been working on both simultaneously or simply finishing his eponymous book after having completed the rest. Thus, Mormon had fewer than ten years available to conceive his project, read the plates of Nephi, organize his thoughts, and finish a record he could give as a nearly finished project to his son, Moroni (Mormon 6:6).19

Mormon would have had the time, but it would have been possible only if he had all of the requisite records, which I don’t believe he had until 25 years later.

The Book of Mormon appears to have been something new in Nephite literature. While he built upon the Nephite historical tradition, Mormon created a text that departed dramatically from that tradition. It was no longer a record of the past but a promise for the future. It was not written so that a people might consult their history but to restore a future population to its rightful place in history. Mormon’s concluding plea highlights the purpose of his entire text:

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.

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)

Mormon’s masterpiece is unique in its conception and construction. History was transformed into a sacred tapestry of instruction in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

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20. We have only a partial indication of the nature of Nephite literature and nothing in the kinds of records that can be reconstructed point to this type of treatment of history. Even the brass plates would not have inspired this kind of editing of Nephite history. While Old Testament writers might have done something similar, their writings do not as clearly edit longer texts in ways that Mormon could have seen.
Chapter 2: Mormon and the Nephite Archive

Nephite written history began with Nephi, perhaps soon after the family arrived in the New World (1 Nephi 19:1). As far as we can tell, the Nephite historical tradition continued in an essentially unbroken line until Mormon, who was the last official historian. Nephite historians not only wrote, but preserved. Jacob specifically notes: “we know that the things which we write upon plates must remain; [b]ut whatsoever things we write upon anything save it be upon plates must perish and vanish away” (Jacob 4:1–2). The Old World tradition also preserved records, but something about the New World suggested the need for an imperishable medium.

The plates upon which Nephite historians wrote directly link Nephi to Mormon. Nephi declared: “I make an abridgment of the record of my father, upon plates which I have made with mine own hands” (1 Nephi 1:17). Likewise, Mormon stated: “I do make the record on plates which I have made with mine own hands” (3 Nephi 5:11). Moroni may have been the last Nephite writing, but he wrote after the end of the Nephite nation. Moroni was never the Nephite historian, as Mormon had been. The idea of the unbroken line is an assumption of some continuity through the destruction of the Nephite polity just before Christ came and the apparent restructuring of Nephi government in the post-Christ time period. It is also possible there was a hiatus corresponding to that time, when there was no overarching Nephite government for the various tribes.

22. This statement is evidenced by the familiar story of Laban as the Old-World keeper of records that Nephi and his brothers were commanded to procure. (See 1 Nephi 3–5.)

23. Eldin Ricks, “The Small Plates of Nephi and the Words of Mormon,” in The Book of Mormon: Jacob Through Words of Mormon, To Learn with Joy, eds. Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate, Jr. (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1990), 212, makes a strange assertion: “[Mormon] first formed a separate metal volume. I judge that he did so in some degree of secrecy as he employed no craftsmen to make it, but constructed it, he says, “with mine own hands” (3 Nephi 5:11).”

I cannot see secrecy implied in Mormon’s creation of the plates. He made them, as did Nephi, and as I suspect did other Nephite recordkeepers. It was probably part
probably learned some metalworking from his father, and it appears that Nephite scribal training included the necessary training in metallurgy for a scribe to create his own plates. Moroni corroborates this when he ended his father’s record: “I would write it also if I had room upon the plates, but I have not; and ore I have none” (Mormon 8:5). Moroni intimates that he had the necessary skill to create more plates, had he the necessary ore. Nephite historians not only preserved history but often personally created the plates upon which it was preserved.

Nephi created two sets of plates. He began with what might be described as a royal record, and then added a second record when the Lord required it of him. Rather unhelpfully, he referred to both records with the same designation:

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. (1 Nephi 9:2)

When Nephi speaks of “these plates” he is speaking of those we call the small plates of Nephi. When he speaks of the “plates upon which I make a full account of my people,” he is speaking of what we call the large plates of Nephi. He frustratingly named them both the plates of Nephi. It is unclear whether Nephi intended his naming to be a name or a description. Whatever his intention, the plates of Nephi could refer to either set.

of the training for the position. Given that the creation of the plates had to have occurred as Mormon was leading a fleeing people, the chances for secrecy were significantly diminished, especially since Mormon was considered a military and perhaps political leader.

24. Although it is possible (and likely) that there were literate women, we have no indication of a woman acting as the official Nephite archivist, hence the male pronoun here.

25. The inherent difficulty in creating plates strongly suggests that when a recordkeeper created plates, they created a large number of blank plates, which they might not have personally filled. We see this specifically in the small plates, which Nephi created but were not completely full until Amaleki had to cease writing because they were full (Omni 1: 30).

26. 1 Nephi 9:2 is the only time when that name is specifically attached to the small plates. The writers on the small plates simply refer to “these plates.” That difference occurs because Nephi had possession of both sets of plates. The small
The designation “small plates” comes from Jacob 1:1: “Nephi gave me, Jacob, a commandment concerning the small plates, upon which these things are engraven.” They were physically the same plates upon which Nephi wrote the books we know as 1 Nephi and 2 Nephi. The small plates contain the records of Nephi, Jacob, Enos, Jarom, and Omni (including those who also wrote in the book of Omni — Amaron, Chemish, Abinadom, and the last writer on the small plates, Amaleki).

Nephi created the small plates by the Lord’s direct command without understanding their purpose (1 Nephi 9:5). They were a secondary record Nephi established with a different charter than the other plates of Nephi (which we know as the large plates of Nephi). According to Nephi, the small plates were to cover “the more part of the ministry” (1 Nephi 9:4). Nephi later repeated that mandate (1 Nephi 19:3) and noted that “I do not write anything upon plates save it be that I think it be sacred” (1 Nephi 19:6).

Jacob gives us a more detailed picture of the nature of this secondary record:

And he [Nephi] 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 plates and the large plates had separate transmission lines, and those writing on the small plates knew only that set, hence referred only to “these plates.”

27. The small plates were included in the set of plates Joseph received. No one mentioned differently sized plates, so we may assume a “Nephite standard size” for individual plates. The small plates where thus small in quantity rather than size.

28. Nephi has been referencing the small plates and the requirement that they cover the “more plain and precious parts” of the ministry (1 Nephi 19:3). It is probable that Nephi intends his readers to understand that when he said he did not write “anything upon plates save it be that I think it be sacred” that he meant the small plates rather than any other set of plates. While it is possible he also assumed the history of his people was part of sacred history, it is unlikely he felt the large plates contained sacred writings in the same way as his charter for the small plates.
heads of them 29 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 1:2–4)

Nephi gave the small plates to his brother and commanded that they should be preserved and handed down through Jacob’s descendants, a different line of transmission from that of the large plates, which were passed down through political lines.

John W. Welch looked at the way Nephi’s essential charter for the small plates was perpetuated through all the books found on those plates. He concluded:

The textual evidence is persuasive that the command of Nephi was consciously followed by Jacob and his descendants as they wrote the books of Jacob, Enos, Jarom and Omni. Although these writers are most often thought of simply for their terseness and lack of substance, modern readers should not overlook the fact that their brevity was dictated in large part by the small size of the plates, and by the specific limitations of Nephi’s command. Modern readers should also not underrate the consistent and subtle way in which the record shows that this command was dutifully obeyed to the end of this line of Jacob’s lineage. 30

Just as we derive small plates from Jacob’s description, so too does Jacob provide the naming convention for the large plates: “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” (Jacob 3:13). Jacob notes that the larger plates contain the accounts of Nephite wars, contentions, and the reigns of the Nephi kings. 31

Jacob’s description of the large plates as the location for information on wars, contentions, and the reigns of kings follows Nephi’s definition of what was to be on the large plates: “Upon the other plates [large

29. It is not clear what Jacob means by engraving the “heads” of these things. Jacob likely meant a synopsis of the most important aspects rather than a full treatment. Royal Skousen, Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon, Part Two: 2 Nephi 11 – Mosiah 16 (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2005), 937 notes that this usage of “heads” is listed in the Oxford English Dictionary.


31. The contrast between smaller and larger was related to quantity, not physical dimensions. See the section “Records on Plates in the Archive,” Chapter 2.
plates] should be engraven an account of the reign of the kings, and the
wars and contentions of my people” (1 Nephi 9:4). In Nephi’s second
description of the two records, he reiterates that the large plates gave
“a greater account of the wars and contentions and destructions of my
people” (1 Nephi 19:4). Nephi made it clear that the large plates were
to catalog the wars and contentions, and the paired terms wars and
contentions are a leitmotif throughout all the books Mormon abridged
from the large plates.32

**Records on Plates in the Archive**

When Mormon declared that he “made this record out of the plates
of Nephi” (Mormon 6:6), it might appear that there was only a single
physical set of plates from which Mormon extracted all his information.
This is undoubtedly incorrect. Not only might we suspect that each
named book was on a separate set of bound plates, but it is also probable
that some named books might have existed on multiple sets of plates.

According to Joseph Smith, the first book on the lost pages was
called the book of Lehi.33 It is difficult to understand how any reasonable
history of the Nephites over the 400 years covered by the book of Lehi
might have fit onto a single physical set of plates. Mormon indicated
that he found the small plates only while looking for the next set of
records that would continue the story of king Benjamin (Words of
Mormon 1:3). Had the book of Mosiah existed solely on a single set of
plates, there would have been no need to search. When the 24-four-
year-old Mormon took plates from the hill Shim, he took those which
pertained to his current time. The rest of the archive remained in the hill
Shim (Mormon 1:4). We understand that he took the current Nephite
record, not the entire archive. The use of plates of Nephi as both a name
and a description makes it difficult to know to which record any given
author is referring. When we see Mormon use the term plates of Nephi,
we should understand that he is referencing the large collection of plates
in the archive. Thus, his source was the plates of Nephi, the continuous

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32. The Book of Mormon uses the paired phrase “wars and contentions” as a set. A search for wars and contentions in the LDS View software returns 37 instances, exclusively in the Book of Mormon, and occurring in books from both the small and large plates (as well as one instance from the book of Ether). It is not clear what distinction might be intended between contentions and wars, though my suspicion is that contentions are internal and wars external.

record begun by Nephi but continued by subsequent scribes, rather than any specific single set of plates.

The problem of multiple ways in which the *plates of Nephi* might be used with different meanings is amplified by an ambiguity in Jacob: “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 3:14). Jacob is clearly telling us the *book of Jacob* and the *plates of Jacob* are equivalent terms and that the *book of Jacob* (or *plates of Jacob*) were written upon the very plates Nephi had called the *plates of Nephi.*

This duality of naming suggests a solution to another naming conundrum. Joseph wrote in the preface to the 1830 Book of Mormon that “I would inform you that I translated, by the gift and power of God, and caused to be written, one hundred and sixteen pages, the which I took from the book of Lehi, which was an account abridged from the plates of Lehi, by the hand of Mormon” I suggest we see Jacob’s model as the solution. At least, early in the Nephite record keeping, there was no clear distinction between *book-of-Lehi* and *plates-of Lehi,* or *book-of-Jacob* and *plates-of-Jacob,* since the books were written on plates. The book of Lehi was simply the first on the large plates of Nephi and was named just as the books of Mosiah and Alma were named books on the large plate.

A second and related issue is found in the aftermath of the loss of the 116 pages. In Doctrine and Covenants 10:44, the Lord notes that “they have only got a part, or an abridgment of the account of Nephi.” How is it that the 116 pages contained the *book of Lehi,* the *plates of Lehi,* and also an abridgment of the *account of Nephi*? Seeing the *book of Lehi* and *plates of Lehi* as equivalent terms allows us to understand why both terms are used. Since the account of Nephi as leader of his people would

34. It is not clear whether this naming issue is the result of the translation process or was original to the plates. While it is possibly due to the translator, the general fluidity of named records suggests it is due to the original.

35. Smith, “Preface,” 1, (see the earlier note on the numbering issue).

36. In this, I differ from David E. Sloan, “The Book of Lehi and the Plates of Lehi,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 6, no.2 (1997): 271. Sloan concludes “the terms “Book of Lehi,” “plates of Lehi,” and “account of Nephi” are distinct phrases with distinct meanings.” Sloan writes: “If the large plates of Nephi began with Lehi’s record, this portion of the large plates could accurately be called the plates of Lehi.” (Ibid., 270). He justifies this assumption by referring to Jacob’s statement about the plates of Jacob. However, Jacob’s model does not suggest an internal division, but rather an equivalence. Refer to the discussion of the sources for 3 and 4 Nephi later in this book for more information about the problems of understanding plates and books with relation to their writer.
have been a significant story in the *book of Lehi*, we may understand that this verse refers to the account of Nephi as recorded in the *book of Lehi* (which might also be called the *plates of Lehi*).

When Ammaron placed the Nephite archive in the hill Shim, it consisted of “all the sacred records which had been handed down from generation to generation, which were sacred” (4 Nephi 1:48). While this doesn’t explicitly name the various records that he included, we can surmise the nature of the archive from both the history of what was considered sacred as well as the information we can glean from Mormon.

First in the category of sacred records would have been the brass plates. Nephi and his brothers endured much to acquire them from Laban before the family journeyed to the New World. Nephi recorded:

> 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)

They were included in the set of sacred relics passed from Benjamin to Mosiah 2:

> And it came to pass that after king Benjamin had made an end of these sayings to his son, that he gave him charge concerning all the affairs of the kingdom.

> And moreover, he also gave him charge concerning the records which were engraven on the plates of brass; and also the plates of Nephi; and also, the sword of Laban, and the ball or director, which led our fathers through the wilderness,

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37. All textual references are to the *plates of brass*, not the *brass plates.* I consider that a distinction without a difference, related to the translation process rather than an important textual distinction.
which was prepared by the hand of the Lord that thereby they
might be led, every one according to the heed and diligence
which they gave unto him. (Mosiah 1:15–16)

The brass plates were still transmitted along with the plates of Nephi
prior to the birth of Christ: “And Nephi, the son of Helaman, had departed
out of the land of Zarahemla, giving charge unto his son Nephi, who was
his eldest son, concerning the plates of brass, and all the records which
had been kept, and all those things which had been kept sacred from the
departure of Lehi out of Jerusalem” (3 Nephi 1:2). It is reasonable to assume
they continued to be part of the Nephite archive Mormon retrieved from
the hill Shim. Although the plates of brass were of supreme importance for
Nephi, Mormon does not appear to have used them.38

Along with the large plates of Nephi, the small plates of Nephi were
obviously in the archive. Mormon found them among the other records and
added them to his plates, upon which he wrote the Book of Mormon. Mormon
found them among the records while looking for something else (Words of
Mormon 1:3), suggesting that he did not previously know about them.

The plates of Ether were not a Nephite record but were kept with the
Nephite archive. Zeniff’s people sent a search party to find Zarahemla and
instead found remains of a Jaredite civilization. One of the treasures they
brought back was a set of 24 gold plates. These were delivered to king Mosiah2
who used the interpreters to translate them (Mosiah 28:13). When Mosiah2
created the reign of the judges, he passed the sacred records to Alma2:

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

38. Abinadi quotes from the brass plates, but Mormon quotes Abinadi rather
than the brass plates. Similarly, the Savior references writings that would have been
on the brass plates, but Mormon records what the Savior said and did not use
the brass plates as a source. Not only does Mormon not use the brass plates as a source
record, he does not quote scripture — which the Nephites understood as writings
from the brass plates.

Hardy, Understanding the Book of Mormon, 122, notes that while Mormon
does include embedded documents, he does not insert “extended passages from
scripture.” Mormon doesn’t even include short passages from scripture — those
present in books he edited came from copying what someone else had quoted.
And now, as I said unto you, that after king Mosiah had done these things, he took the plates of brass, and all the things which he had kept, and conferred them upon Alma, who was the son of Alma; yea, all the records, and also the interpreters, and conferred them upon him, and commanded him that he should keep and preserve them” (Mosiah 28:11, 20).

The plates of Ether were included in the sacred records along with the brass plates and the plates of Nephi. I suggest there is an additional record we can infer was part of this Nephite archive. Mosiah 2 translated the plates through a seer stone. There is no indication that anyone else was able to read the plates. Hence, while the plates of Ether were certainly included as a sacred artifact, it is also logical to assume that Mosiah 2’s translation was included with the sacred records.

**Records on Other Media in the Archive**

The story of Alma and Amulek in Ammonihah has an interesting phrase that provides some information about some of the records available to Nephites: “they also brought forth their records which contained the holy scriptures, and cast them into the fire also, that they might be burned and destroyed by fire” (Alma 14:8). That the records could be burned suggests that in addition to plates, the Nephites had records on perishable materials. The small plates of Nephi apparently end when there are no more individual plates upon which to write (Omni 1:30). The most logical assumption would be that only the royal line could keep metal records and that copies were made on more accessible and perishable materials. If the Book of Mormon events took place in Mesoamerica,

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39. Moroni edits Ether’s record. Although he states that he took his account “from the twenty and four plates which were found by the people of Limhi” (Ether 1:2), I believe he used Mosiah’s translation rather than creating one from scratch. Although Moroni had ample time, he did not know that at the beginning. When he has finished with the book of Ether, he eventually begins the book of Moroni, in which he states: “but I have not as yet perished” (Moroni 1:1). However, his apparent pleasant surprise at remaining alive suggests that he might not have felt he had that much time when he began Ether, and hence used Mosiah1’s translation. After all, it had already, previously, been translated by a prophet.

40. Perhaps it was engraved on plates, but there is no evidence at all to help us determine the medium upon which Mosiah’s translation was preserved.

41. A sufficiently hot fire could also destroy metal plates, but it is reasonable that this verse refers to a more easily destroyed medium.
there is clear evidence that a type of paper was available.\textsuperscript{42} Certainly, writing on perishable material would have been much more widespread than the records kept on plates.

The more interesting part of the statement is that they “brought forth their records \textit{which contained} the holy scriptures.” That might be a circumlocution simply stating that the scriptures were on the flammable records, but it does raise the interesting possibility of other types of records kept alongside the holy scriptures. If the Nephites continued the practice (similar to what we see in the New Testament) of referring only to the older records as scripture, then there were copies of brass-plate scriptures on perishable media which also held other writings. Perhaps some of those writings might have been parallel to the early documents of the New Testament, where the writings were clearly important, but had not yet gained the cachet of \textit{scripture}.\textsuperscript{43}

The availability of some perishable documents raises a question about the source of the letters copied into the end of the book of Alma. There are two possibilities. One is that Helaman\textsubscript{1} copied the perishable letters onto the imperishable plates. The second is that the letters were kept in the original, and Mormon consulted them separately from the material on the large plates. There is no way to be certain which of the two options accurately describes how the content of the letters was present in the Nephite archive. The difficulties of preserving letters through war’s field conditions suggests they might have required copying to preserve them.\textsuperscript{44}

\textsuperscript{42} Lynn V. Foster, \textit{Handbook to the Life in the Ancient Maya World} (2002; repr., New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 318. Foster notes that while it is unknown when paper began to be used, there is evidence that it was being made 2,000 years ago.


\textsuperscript{44} It is also possible, given the way Mormon creates dialogue, that the letters were either entirely a literary convention, or there was some record that letters were exchanged, and the specifics were a literary convention.
Chapter 3: Mormon’s Use of the Archive

Understanding how Mormon used the Nephite archive is an exercise in deduction. One exception is found in Words of Mormon, where Mormon inadvertently describes an important aspect of his work: “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” (W of M. 1:3).

From this we learn that Mormon would take a source from the archives and work with it. When he finished with that source, he went for the next source. That he had to search through the archives strongly suggests that when they were hurriedly taken from the hill Shim and then deposited in a new location, whatever orderly arrangement they might have had previously fell prey to the need for speed. There was clearly no easy index that allowed Mormon to find what he was looking for.

Mormon used the archive in at least two ways. The obvious use was for the source material from which he selected the contents of the Book of Mormon. The second is Mormon’s adoption and adaptation of features on the plates to his own literary creation.

Mormon’s Use of Outline (Synoptic) Headers

Each book Mormon edited begins with a synopsis of the book that is separate from both the title and the beginning of the first chapter (except the book of Mosiah). In the original manuscript, the only remaining synoptic header comes at the beginning of the book of Helaman. It

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45. When the book of Lehi was lost, so too was the beginning of the book of Mosiah. There surely was a synoptic header at the beginning of the book of Mosiah, but it was lost when the original opening chapter was lost. I will examine what might have been lost later in this book.
has a long line drawn to separate the header from the beginning of the first chapter.\textsuperscript{46} Oliver and other scribes copied the text of the original manuscript to create a second copy, commonly called the printer’s manuscript. When the header for Helaman was copied onto the printer’s manuscript, a line was also drawn to separate the header from the text.

On the printer’s manuscript there is a line between the header and the beginning of the chapter, suggesting there was a line on the original manuscript that was being copied.\textsuperscript{47} A line clearly separates 3 Nephi’s header from the beginning of the chapter in the printer’s manuscript, but the book title is not clearly separated from the header.\textsuperscript{48} There are clear outline headers for 1 Nephi, 2 Nephi, and Jacob, but there is no indication of where the header should end and the text begin. Thus, John Gilbert (the compositor for Grandin Publishers) initially created the divisions based uniquely on the content, not a visual indicator.\textsuperscript{49}

Nephi was the author of both the small and large plates. Our text beginning with 1 Nephi and continuing through the end of Omni comes directly from the small plates without any editorial hand. Therefore, when we see outline headers for 1 Nephi and 2 Nephi, we may assume that Nephi created them. There is also a synoptic header for Jacob but beginning with Enos the practice of the synoptic header fell into disuse on the small plates.

Mormon created outline headers. It is probable he did so because there were outline headers on the large plates (assuming that Nephi created them on the small plates because it was part of the style he had already incorporated for the large plates). While Mormon probably saw a header for each named book he edited, the specific headers he included were his own text, not copies of what was on the large plates. Mormon’s headers are specific to the selections he made from the large plates. Therefore, Mormon copied the concept of the headers, but not the text of the headers.

For example, the header for Helaman is descriptive of that book’s content, specifically content referencing the coming of Christ that does not appear in the book of Helaman:

\textsuperscript{46} Royal Skousen, ed., \textit{The Original Manuscript of the Book of Mormon} (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1998), 1:487.


\textsuperscript{49} Ibid. 1: 20–21, 110–11, 208–09.
An account of the Nephites. Their wars and contentions, and their dissensions. And also the prophecies of many holy prophets, before the coming of Christ, according to the records of Helaman, who was the son of Helaman, and also according to the records of his sons, even down to the coming of Christ. And also many of the Lamanites are converted. An account of their conversion. An account of the righteousness of the Lamanites, and the wickedness and abominations of the Nephites, according to the record of Helaman and his sons, even down to the coming of Christ, which is called the book of Helaman, and so forth.

This header certainly suggests a knowledge of the contents that would be included in Helaman but also a knowledge of the events recorded in 3 Nephi.50 When Mormon created his masterwork, he repurposed the idea of the outline headers without copying the content of the headers as they might have been on the large plates of Nephi. Interestingly, Mormon’s outline headers deal only with the information taken from the large plates. Any information from an alternative source was not included in the header.

**Mormon’s Alternative Sources**

As Mormon wrote, he consulted his sources from the Nephite archive.51 Thomas W. Mackay noted: “That Mormon scrupulously names his sources is a stunning feat.”52 His main source was the large plates of Nephi, but

50. The information taken from Alma’s personal record is not included in the synoptic header for the book of Alma. Similarly, the header for the book of Helaman synopsizes the information from the large plates, but not Nephi’s personal record that is entered under a separate header, nor for the prophecy of Samuel the Lamanite.

51. Holzapfel, “Mormon, the Man and the Message,” 119:

Mormon used a range of introductory and inserted notations to guide his readers: such as the names of authors for records, speeches, and epistles that are quoted or abridged — imbedded source indicators; genealogical or other authenticating information about the authors; and brief or extended summaries of contents, including subheadings for complex inserts or documents. Mormon’s contribution as editor like in the fact that he assiduously presents source documents and texts while retaining a unity of narrative flow in his historical account.

there are other records he consulted. When he used a different source, he indicated the change with a synoptic header for a chapter, similar to those he used for books. Most often, these specifically declare the new source for the chapter’s material, but at times the source is only implied by the content of the header.

Understanding the relationship of headers and chapters requires that we examine the chapters as they existed for the 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon. Those chapters replicated some indication that Joseph saw as he translated which had him indicate to his scribe that a new chapter was to begin. The chapters, as well as the versification, in our modern editions were first created for the 1879 edition. In order to discuss the original chapters but retain the ability to look up verses in the modern editions, I follow the convention of using Roman numerals for the 1830 chapters and Arabic numerals for the modern chapters. Thus 1 Nephi I (1–5) indicates that the 1830 chapter I covered what we now number chapters 1–5.

The most obvious marking of a new source record comes before Mosiah VI (9–10): “The Record of Zeniff — An account of his people, from the time they left the land of Zarahemla until the time that they were delivered out of the hands of the Lamanites.” Chapter VI (9–10) is a copy from Zeniff’s record onto Mormon’s plates. Beginning in chapter VII (11–13:24), Mormon continues to use that source, but changes to intermixing his own narrative of Abinadi’s story with quotations from Abinadi’s discourse that must have come from Zeniff’s record.

We know when Mormon ceases to use the record of Zeniff as a source because he writes a synoptic header for chapter XI (23–27) which reads: “An account of Alma and the people of the Lord, who were driven into the wilderness by the people of King Noah.” That chapter no longer uses the record of Zeniff, but changes to a record Alma’s people kept.


I believe it was Dr. Sidney B. Sperry who first called to my attention the fact that there is a concentration of chapter superscriptions in the Book of Alma. The fact is that in the entire volume of 239 chapters, in our modern editions, there are twenty-one introductory explanations before chapters. Ten of them are in the Book of Alma with its sixty-three chapters.

While Sperry and Washburn noticed the chapter headers, they apparently did not associate then with a change in source, or, indeed, any other specific function.


55. The record of Zeniff is also a dynastic record, including the text Mormon copied from Zeniff, but also served as the source of Mormon’s information on Noah and Limhi.
The book of Alma began with Alma₂ as both the chief judge and the Nephite recordkeeper. When Alma₂ abdicated the chief judgeship, he retained the function of Nephite recordkeeper, at least for the book of Alma (the new dynastic book). When Alma₂ began his proselytizing tour, he kept a second record. In that record, we have the accounts of Alma₂’s sermons and missionary journey to Ammonihah and later to Antionum (a city of the Zoramites). Mormon used Alma₂’s personal record up through and including the chapters containing his final charge to his sons (chapters XVII–XIX (36–42)).

Mormon marked the beginning of his use of Alma₂’s personal record in the header to Alma chapter III (5): “The words which Alma, the High Priest according to the holy order of God, delivered to the people in their cities and villages throughout the land.” That header doesn’t state the source, but verse 2 clarifies that it is from Alma₂’s record. It is explicit in chapter V (7): “The words of Alma which he delivered to the people in Gideon, according to his own record.”

The header for chapter XII (17–20) declares that it is: “An account of the sons of Mosiah, who rejected their rights to the kingdom for the word of God, and went up to the land of Nephi to preach to the Lamanites; their sufferings and deliverance — according to the record of Alma.” This information comes from Alma₂’s record, but the original source was a separate “account of the sons of Mosiah.” Alma₂ had access to that record and copied — or abridged — it onto his own record. Mormon still marked the ultimate change in the source of the information. It is an important distinction as Alma₂ could not have known this information without the record (or records) of the sons of Mosiah.

The information from Ammon’s record is recorded in chapter XII (17–20). I believe that it was also found on Alma₂’s record. The very next chapter, XIII (21–22) begins with a new header: “An account of the preaching of Aaron, and Muloki, and their brethren, to the Lamanites.” This information recounts the experiences of the brothers who were not with Ammon, and therefore could not have originally been part of Ammon’s account.

Mormon doesn’t list a separate source for chapter XIV (23–26), where he tells the story of the conversion of those who would be called

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56. “And it came to pass that in the same year that the people of Nephi had peace restored unto them, that Nephihah, the second chief judge, died, having filled the judgment-seat with perfect uprightness before God. Nevertheless, he had refused Alma to take possession of those records and those things which were esteemed by Alma and his fathers to be most sacred; therefore Alma had conferred them upon his son, Helaman” (Alma 50:37–38).
the Anti-Nephi-Lehies. Nevertheless, the brothers had apparently been united by this time, and this information came from an account that could include all of them. The final statement of chapter XIII is “And now I, after having said this, return again to the account of Ammon and Aaron, Omner and Himni, and their brethren” (Alma 22:35). Who is “I” in this verse? Mormon is still citing from Alma₂’s personal account. It appears that the story of the brothers had been copied onto Alma₂’s personal record, and thus the “I” in Alma 22:35 was Alma₂. The prominence of Ammon suggests that it was his journal that Alma₂ copied.

Chapter XVII (36–37) contains “the Commandments of Alma to his son Helaman.” Chapter XVIII (38) contains “the Commandments of Alma to his son Shiblon.” Chapter XIX (39–42) contains “the Commandments of Alma to his son Corianton.” Certainly, each of these chapters came from Alma₂’s personal record, and our chapters appear to copy them as Alma₂ recorded them. As an interesting possible exception to this copying, Mormon may have altered the names of the sons for his own purposes (see the section “Fitting Names into Narrative Types”).

When Mormon began using a new source, he created a new chapter. He did not mark times when that same source was used for more than one chapter. Sometimes he notes that he is finished with a source and is returning to the large plates. For example, after he finished copying from Alma₂’s personal record, we can see Mormon returning to the large plates in chapter XX (43–44). After two verses that provide the necessary transition between the text from Alma₂’s personal record and the political history from the large plates, Mormon specifically stated: “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 43:3).

I suggest that when we see Mormon saying, “and now I return to an account,” that this was not a figurative change in subject but an indication of an actual physical event.⁵⁷ There is a change in source material, which was likely a physical process. Mormon had to move one set of plates from a position of easy reference to another location and then put the current source in place. For Mormon, it was literally a physical return to the large plates. That he returned to the large plates is signaled by the phrase “an account of the wars,” which intentionally echoes part of the

⁵⁷. The phrase indicates a change of source in this context. It also appears to indicate a change of source in Alma 22:1, though the “return” to a different account is not the large plates. In that same chapter, however, the phrase indicates Mormon’s “return” from an aside to the original record (Alma 22:35).
charter for the large plates.\textsuperscript{58} From this point on, the book of Alma dwells extensively on war, consistent with the type of information that would have been on the large plates.

Mormon does not, however, always tell his readers if he is returning to the large plates. Most notably, Mormon used Alma’s personal record in Alma X (13:10–15) and uses it again in Alma XII (17–20) which begins with a header. Chapter XI (16) is not taken from Alma’s personal record but rather from the large plates. There is no header and no statement of returning. The source is indicated by the content that parallels other material taken from the large plates: a beginning marking the year and the more historical rather than religious content.

The header to Helaman V (13–16) gives notice of a separate source: “The prophecy of Samuel, the Lamanite, to the Nephites.” As with Zeniff’s dynastic record that recorded the reigns of Noah and Limhi, Mormon uses the new source but does not quote it in its entirety. Rather than the first-person narrative in Zeniff’s record, Mormon’s narration is all in third person. Mormon also apparently returns to his large plate source inside chapter V. Mormon ends working with that source at Helaman 16:8. At that point, Mormon notes: “And thus ended the eighty and sixth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi. And thus ended also the eighty and seventh year of the reign of the judges, the more part of the people remaining in their pride and wickedness, and the lesser part walking more circumspectly before God” (Helaman 16:9–10). That marks the shift back to the large plate material. Changing sources marked the beginning of a chapter but did not trigger the end of a chapter if the source change was a return to the large plates.

**Mormon’s Named Books and Their Sources**

The most recognizable organizational structure in Mormon’s creation of The Book of Mormon is the division of the text into books that bear a person’s name. Evidence from the original manuscript indicates that these book divisions were part of the dictated text, and therefore represent organizational structures that existed on Mormon’s plates. Although we do not have the complete original manuscript, there are places in what we do have where we can see how the transition to a new book was handled during dictation. At the transition from the book of Alma to the book of Helaman, Oliver Cowdery continued to write on the same page. However, he drew a horizontal line covering

\textsuperscript{58} 1 Nephi 9:3–4, 10:1, and 19:3–4.
most of the page following the end of Alma and just prior to beginning Helaman. Below this solid ink line is a slightly indented title “The Book of Helaman.” The next line has a roughly centered “Chapter I” and the following line begins the chapter synopsis. 59

The solid line appears before the information that there is a new book beginning. 60 It appears there was some indication on the plates that a break was coming, which Joseph indicated to Oliver. 61 Oliver used a line to indicate the break, but it is doubtful Joseph told him to draw a line. It is more likely that Joseph indicated the break in some way, and Oliver elected to use a line.

If we had the Book of Mormon that Mormon created, it would have had the following divisions (names are given as they appear in the 1830 edition, including capitalization):

- The book of Lehi62
- The book of Mosiah
- The book of Alma, the Son of Alma
- The book of Helaman
- The book of Nephi, the Son of Nephi, which was the Son of Helaman
- The book of Nephi, which is the Son of Nephi, One of the Disciples of Jesus Christ
- The book of Mormon
- Appendices: Words of Mormon, Small Plates, Moroni’s editing of Ether63

60. While there are no other book markers preserved in the original manuscript for Mormon’s text, there are two more examples in the 1 Nephi to Omni section. The extant manuscript preserves the change from 1 Nephi to 2 Nephi and a damaged page where Jacob changes to Enos. Neither of those two book breaks employs the horizontal line divider. This evidence tells us that there was something in the small plates of Nephi that indicated a book change as well as in Mormon’s text. However, with so little information, we cannot suggest that the line used on the one instance extant from the large plates of Nephi indicates a different type of book marker, or simply that Oliver’s convention changed over time.
62. Smith, “Preface,” 1: “I would inform you that I translated, by the gift and power of God, and caused to be written, one hundred and sixteen pages, the which I took from the Book of Lehi, which was an account abridged from the plates of Lehi, by the hand of Mormon.” Note that the facsimile reprint shows this page as 1, but the next page as iv. The First Book of Nephi begins on page 5.
63. I have labeled these as appendices because there is evidence that Mormon intended to include them, but they were not integral to his own work. Words of
The use of numbers to differentiate between the two books of Nephi is a later addition to the text and was not part of Mormon’s plates. Our books from 1 Nephi to Omni were translated from the small plates which Mormon included but did not edit. Words of Mormon 1:3–5 tells us he added them intentionally, but they were not part of what Mormon conceived for his masterwork. Similarly, Mormon declared that an account of Ether’s record would “be written hereafter” (Mosiah 28:19), although there is no indication that he did any work on it. It was left to Moroni to fulfill that declaration.

Where did the names of the books come from? Were they part of the large plates of Nephi, or did Mormon invent them? As with most questions about the original composition of the Book of Mormon, the answer must be deduced from clues Mormon left in the text. When John L. Sorenson analyzed the nature of the Nephite record, he suggested:

Nephi could not have anticipated how many metal plates this secular history would eventually require, so blank sheets of hammered metal must have been added periodically to his original set to accommodate the writings of later generations of historians; but the name of the record, “the plates of Nephi,” was retained for the enlarged set in honor of the founder of the tradition.

There is reason to believe that when successive portions of the master record were added, they were labeled “the book of so-and-so” even though they were integral parts of “the plates of Nephi.” While named after the principal individual who began each section, they sometimes also included records kept by that person’s descendants (e.g., Alma 63:17, “the account of Alma, and Helaman his son, and also Shiblon, who was his son”).

Mormon is its own evidence, being an introduction to the small plates. It explains that they were interesting, and Mormon wanted them to be known, but Mormon did not write on them, nor do any editing of the material. Thus, they were to be included, but as an appendix. They became more than that after the loss of the 116 pages. Moroni’s editing of Ether fulfills Mormon’s promise in Mosiah 28:19, but there is no indication that Mormon intended to do anything more with the plates of Ether than what he had already integrated into his text.

64. John L. Sorenson, “Mormon’s Sources,” Journal of the Book of Mormon and Other Restoration Scripture 20, no.2 (2011): 5. Sorenson continues: “It seems reasonable that each of the component books represented a number of metal plates manufactured at the onset of the named scribe’s tenure; these would have
Sorenson’s suggestion is a commonly held assumption: the books were named for the “principal individual who began each section.” That, however, is an insufficient reason to explain why a new book with a new name was created.

Mormon’s first three books (Lehi, Mosiah, and Alma) provide the essential pattern. Note that this analysis deals with the books on the large plates of Nephi from which Mormon took his account. A different process lies behind the books on the small plates, consistent with their different transmission line.65

Each book is associated with multiple writers. The book of Lehi covered nearly four hundred years, requiring many different scribes (Lehi was not one of them).66 Similarly, the book of Mosiah contains writings of Benjamin and Mosiah2 (and presumably Mosiah1 in the lost chapter or chapters). The book of Alma contains information scribed by both Alma1 and his son, Helaman1.

The book names clearly do not change to indicate a new writer. Rather, a book name changes to represent a change in the political dynasty. Given Nephi’s charter to record the deeds of the kings, such

been filled up by him and his descendants, after which a new major writer would craft new plates and begin another installment of the ongoing historical record.” I would disagree with that statement. Certainly, scribes created a number of plates, but there was no reason to worry about the number of the plates. With ties to the government, new plates could be created as needed, and one must suppose that even had they been bound with metal rings, those rings might be opened to add or remove plates as might be needed. It is doubtful, for example, that there were blank plates at the end of one record that remained blank because the next scribe created a new set of empty plates.

65. The large plates followed the kings, and specifically dealt with the reigns of the kings. Hence, the naming convention following something in the political line is appropriate. The small plates were given to Nephi’s brother, Jacob, and followed Jacob’s descendants, who were not in the political arena. Hence, they wrote books under their own name, until Omni, which collects multiple authors.

66. Here I disagree with Ricks, “The Small Plates of Nephi and the Words of Mormon,” 211: “The book of Lehi title evidently originated with Lehi’s journal, or sacred personal record, that Nephi transcribed at the beginning of his large plates of Nephi (1 Nephi 19:1).”

Nephi certainly named the book for his father, and clearly entered information about his father and their journey to the New World, just as he did in his eponymous book on the small plates. However, the naming convention had to have a different meaning that simply following the title of Lehi’s record, since it persisted for about four hundred years. The analysis of how Nephi incorporated Lehi’s record is covered in the section discussing Nephi.
a naming system fits with the more political nature of the large plates. When there was a direct continuation from ruler to ruler (typically father to son, although at times brother to brother), then the new writers continued in the book named for the man associated with the beginning of the dynasty. The name changes when there is a disruption in the ruling line and a new dynasty begins.

The book of Lehi is not extant, but there is nothing in the small plates text that replaced it that suggests that there was a king who was not a lineal descendant of Nephi. Nephi’s father, Lehi, was never a Nephite. The people of Nephi were created only after Lehi’s death and the departure of Nephi and his followers from Nephi’s brothers. It appears that Nephi considered his father to be the beginning of the dynasty and therefore named the lineage for him. Perhaps Nephi saw this as a way of reinforcing the ties the records and the Nephites had to the Old World, which would have been a prestigious connection.

The Lehite dynasty ruled in the city of Nephi until a Lamanite invasion caused the Lord to warn Mosiah 1 to flee. When the Nephites entered the new land of Zarahemla and established a new overarching government for Nephites and Zarahemlaites, a new dynastic record began. The end of the book of Mosiah records another major political upheaval. The reign of the kings was dissolved, and a new form of government by judges was instituted. As the first chief judge, Alma 2 began a new record under a new name.

The nature of the books becomes more complicated in the book of Alma. Although created according to expectation, Alma 2 complicates the transmission line when he abdicates his position as chief judge to concentrate on a more religious mission (Alma 4:16–18). At that time, the newly appointed chief judge, Nephihah, declined to accept the records (Alma 50:38). If Nephihah had his own dynastic record, we have no evidence for it in what Mormon edited. What we know is that the book of Alma left the political realm, although Alma 2 continued to write in it according to the large plate charter. When his son, Helaman 1, wrote on the plates, they continued to be outside of the line of political inheritance.

The book of Helaman does not begin with Helaman 1 but rather with Helaman 2. Helaman 2 is appointed to be chief judge (Helaman 2:2), and therefore the plates reenter the political line with a new dynastic name. Helaman 2 received the plates from his father, Helaman 1, as recorded in Alma 63:11. Although the transfer of the plates had already occurred,
the book of Helaman is probably not named as a separate book until Helaman_{2} is seated as the chief judge.^{67}

The nature of the book divisions becomes further complicated with the final two books Mormon edited (3 Nephi and 4 Nephi). Mormon clearly indicates the termination of his source for the book of Helaman: “and thus ended the book of Helaman, according to the record of Helaman and his sons” (Helaman 16:25). What we expect is that early in the book of 3 Nephi we should have an indication that the writer is ruler and starting a new dynasty. We don’t get that. What we get are some unusual statements about the text.

The first unusual aspect of 3 Nephi is the synoptic book header. These have typically told us something about the contents of the book. The book header for 3 Nephi is: “And Helaman was the son of Helaman, who was the son of Alma, who was the son of Alma, being a descendant of Nephi who was the son of Lehi, who came out of Jerusalem in the first year of the reign of Zedekiah, the king of Judah.” The header is unusual in its content, which may be due to the compositor’s decision to create a book header similar to other books. In this case, it is possible that what we have typeset as a header was intended to be a continuation of the title. Rather than a title and header, it is possible the name should be: “The book of Nephi, the son of Nephi, who was the son of Helaman. And Helaman was the son of Helaman, who was the son of Alma, who was the son of Alma, being a descendant of Nephi who was the son of Lehi, who came out of Jerusalem in the first year of the reign of Zedekiah, the king of Judah.”^{68}

I suggest this unusual title serves two purposes. First, it signals a shift in the way Mormon is sourcing his material. A book name change has signaled a change in dynasty, but this book does not. Secondly, the long title emphasizes both genealogy and continuation. As I will discuss in the section “Fitting Names into Narrative Types,” the unusual replication of names with Nephi, son of Nephi, son of Helaman, son of Helaman, son of Alma, son of Alma, has a narrative function to indicate the religious continuity among political turmoil. This title reinforces that and makes the linking clear by associating the later Nephites with the original “Nephi who was the son of Lehi.” These unusual features suggest there was no book of Nephi, son of Nephi, son of Helaman on the

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67. Mormon modified what was recorded at the end of the book of Alma and the beginning of the book of Helaman to highlight a significant year marker. See Chapter 15.

68. I owe this insight to Mark A. Wright, personal email in my possession.
large plates. This is a book Mormon has created to isolate and emphasize the appearance and teachings of the Savior in the New World.

Mormon had ended the book of Helaman with two inserted sources not part of the book of Helaman as written on the plates of Nephi. The political situation became murky with the advent of Gadianton influence and dominance in Nephite politics, and the inserted “prophecy of Nephi” (Helaman 7, beginning of III) section clearly shows Nephi2 outside the political leadership. Nephi3 not only continues to be outside of the ruling clan, but he also witnesses the complete dissolution of Nephite government as the Nephites dissolve into separate tribes (3 Nephi 7:2–3).

The Nephite record must have continued because Nephi3 had been given charge of the records. Mormon gives us the solution when he notes that he is taking the information in 3 Nephi from a different source: “But behold there are records which do contain all the proceedings of this people; and a shorter but true account was given by Nephi” (3 Nephi 5:9). Given dominance of the Gadiantons that resulted in Nephi2’s prophecy recorded in Helaman, there is little chance that official historical records would have been particularly sympathetic to either Nephi2 or Nephi3. To get the non-Gadianton version of history, Mormon used different sources — a separate record he calls “the prophecy of Nephi,” in Helaman and the “shorter but true” account of Nephi3 for 3 Nephi. The name of this book of Nephi comes from the separate record, and not the large plates. Those plates might have had a different new dynastic name, but Mormon doesn’t give us any information about that record at all.

The book of 4 Nephi is even more enigmatic. Because it follows 3 Nephi, it has been posited that there was another Nephi for whom that book was written. Clyde James Williams wrote the paragraph on Nephi4 in the Book of Mormon Reference Companion:

The son of Nephi3, one of the twelve disciples of Jesus Christ. Nephi4 inscribed the record of his people on the plates of Nephi (4 Nephi 1:19; circa AD 34). He lived during the era of peace and unity that followed the ministry of Jesus Christ among the Nephites (4 Nephi 1:15–17). After Nephi’s death, Amos1, his son, kept the record.69

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69. Clyde James Williams, s.v. “Nephi4,” in Book of Mormon Reference Companion, ed. Dennis L. Largey (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2003), 589. Note that the Book of Mormon Reference companion uses superscripts to differentiate people with the same name. I standardized the superscript to the convention I use in this book.
That is the sum of what might be known for Nephi. I suggest that it is incorrect. There was no Nephi. First, we need to understand the listed genealogy. Because it is separated into two books, we should examine it carefully. First, we have the basic descending lineage that is quite complete: Alma begets Alma, who begets Helaman, who begets Helaman, who begets Nephi, who begets Nephi. At the beginning of 4 Nephi we have: “The Book of Nephi, Who is the Son of Nephi — One of the Disciples of Jesus Christ.” That might indicate that we have yet another Nephi (Nephi, son of Nephi, son of Nephi), but there is no indication of his birth and no indication that his father passed away and gave him the records. It would be the only time we had three related men with the same name. While possible, it would not only be unusual, it would break the very clear pattern up to this point.

We do learn that this particular Nephi was one of the disciples of Jesus Christ. That was clearly true of Nephi: “And it came to pass that when Jesus had spoken these words unto Nephi, and to those who had been called, (now the number of them who had been called, and received power and authority to baptize, was twelve)” (3 Nephi 12:1). It is difficult to see Nephi separate from the called twelve, given his apparent priority in this verse. The book of 4 Nephi also begins within a few years of Christ’s appearance in Bountiful. Nephi was certainly alive at that point, and having been the recordkeeper, was likely to have continued to be the recordkeeper.

The biggest complication in considering that it is the same Nephi in both books is that there would be only four recordkeepers from the time of Christ until Ammaron gave up the records in the Nephite year 320 (from Christ’s birth). Frankly, the addition of another Nephi doesn’t help with that timeline.

It is possible that the number of recordkeepers is intentional. Mormon is recounting four centuries and gives us a recordkeeper for each of the four centuries, until Mormon becomes the final recordkeeper. Thus, Nephi is the recordkeeper for the first hundred years, Amos for the second, and Amos for the third. In the fourth hundred years we have Ammaron, who in turn gives the final recordkeeper, Mormon, the plates and the responsibility. This is a symbolic correlation only, as the lifespans of these men could not fit within their assigned centuries. Still, a man named Nephi covers the beginning, and there are only three

J. N. Washburn, *The Contents, Structure, and Authorship of the Book of Mormon*, 49, used letters to identify the different men of the same name. He noted: “But Nephi X also had a son Nephi, the leading character in 4 Nephi. He would, of course, be Nephi Y.”
more men named prior to Mormon's receiving the plates. It appears that Mormon is working more symbolically than literally in 4 Nephi (born out in the minimal history included in the book).

I also suggest that 4 Nephi is where Mormon returns to the plates of Nephi as a general source. The header for the book notes that it is "[a]n account of the people of Nephi, according to his record." Who are the "people of Nephi?" The term Nephite had been used as a political designation since Jacob's time (Jacob 1:14). After the dissolution of the Nephite nation (3 Nephi 7:1–4), there was no government but only tribes. At some point after Christ came, the people re-established a government. I suggest that Nephi, was the leader and that "people of Nephi" could refer to those who followed Nephi as the head of the new government. Hence the phrase "according to his record." A new ruler would have a new book on the plates of Nephi — and the name for the new dynasty was Nephi. I suggest this hypothesis is confirmed when Mormon records: "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" (4 Nephi 1:21). Further confirmation would be the return to a heavy use of dates in the record, although many of them are unrelated to any event.

**Years as an Organizational Framework**

The small plates have a general chronological organization but not one which required strict adherence to a single timeline. For example, the end of 1 Nephi 9 leaves the historical narrative to insert comments about the plates upon which Nephi is writing almost 30 years later. The fundamental organization is chronological only in that the text tends to move through events as they occurred. However, neither Nephi nor the other small-plates writers insert the specific years very often. Thus, the organization follows the timely order of events, but it rarely tied events to a larger structure or a specific year in which they occurred. Time is even less of an organizational principle in 2 Nephi because 2 Nephi itself departs from primarily historical narrative to primarily timeless religious principles. When the small plates do specify time, they do so by marking years from the Lehite departure from Jerusalem.

When we return to text taken from the large plates, we find the book of Mosiah follows the same conventions about time as we see in the small plate books. The book of Mosiah periodically mentions the number of years that had passed from the ethnocentric beginning point
of the departure from Jerusalem. This method allows the modern reader to place the events in a general timeframe, while the described events occur in narrative order.

This method of marking time works in general, but because it occurs sporadically, there are times when it is difficult to work out when certain events took place. This is particularly true in the book of Mosiah, when Mormon tells two different stories which overlap in time. He tells both about the Nephites in Zarahemla and a small group which returned to the land of Nephi. The stories of Zeniff, Noah, Limhi, Abinadi, and Alma all take place in a different location but at the same time as other described events in Zarahemla. There are too few dates listed to be precise about many elements of these stories.

Had those stories occurred perhaps fewer than 50 years later, it might not have been quite so difficult. Beginning with the book of Alma, a different method of using years to structure texts was introduced. We are never told why. We see only the result of the change. The book of Alma changes both the ethnocentric base from which years were counted as well as the way years are used to record history.

The very first verse of the first chapter in the book of Alma presents both changes: “Now it came to pass that in the first year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi…” (Alma 1:1). From this point through the end of the book of 4 Nephi, the passage of years is a narrative structure that frames events and therefore the way the text represents those events. We even find Mormon including years without accompanying text, such as in 4 Nephi 1:6, which declares: “And thus did the thirty and eighth year pass away, and also the thirty and ninth, and forty and first, and the forty and second, yea, even until forty and nine years had passed away, and also the fifty and first, and the fifty and second; yea, and even until fifty and nine years had passed away.”

Grant Hardy noticed: “Almost every year is mentioned individually, even if Mormon does not give them equal coverage. Sometimes nothing of note seems to have happened and a year is passed by in a sentence or less. Often, however, the dates come in pairs as Mormon indicates both the beginning and ending of a particular year. These references can be separated by only a few verses, but frequently they are several chapters apart (e.g. 83 B.C., the eighteenth year of the reign of the judges, begins at Alma 35:13 and ends at 44:24).”

John L. Sorenson describes this organizational feature:

70. Hardy, Understanding the Book of Mormon, 103.
The fundamental format of the plates of Nephi was that of annals. Annals are yearly summaries of salient events. This format is clearly reflected at many points in the Book of Mormon, for example in Helaman 6:15: “And it came to pass that in the sixty and sixth year of the reign of the judges, behold, Cezoram was murdered by an unknown hand as he sat upon the judgment-seat. And it came to pass that in the same year, that his son, who had been appointed by the people in his stead, was also murdered. And thus ended the sixty and sixth year.” That is how Mormon chose to summarize the record for that year.

Generally these annalistic entries were succinct. As an example, Mormon’s record for the twenty-six years documented in Helaman, chapters 2 through 6, averages fewer than seven verses per year.71

Hardy and Sorenson correctly note the pattern but do not clarify that earlier books do not follow the annalistic pattern. The way time is used changes between the book of Mosiah and the book of Alma — both books Mormon edited. Therefore, it is unlikely that this is Mormon’s convention but rather a reflection of a difference in his sources.

There are insufficient data to suggest a cultural influence, but it is important to note that this method of recording annalistic history was part of the cultures of Mesoamerica, which I consider the most plausible location of the Book of Mormon events. Perhaps the change to the way time was recorded was influenced by the introduction of the long count among the Maya. That took a calendar that repeated dates in cycles and tied it to a beginning point. It allowed for a more absolute construction of time.

Whether or not that influenced the change in Alma, we do see the parallel use of annalistic histories for both the Aztec and Maya peoples. Although both known examples postdate the Book of Mormon, they show that a historical document anchored in the passage of years existed in the region where most scholars believe the events in the Book of Mormon took place. Two texts have been preserved in their respective native language, although written in western script. One was written by Central Mexican Aztec historians, and one comes from the Cakchiquel Maya.

The Annals of Cuauhtitlan is a historical document originally written in Nahuatl, the Aztec language. The extant copy is a transcription from an earlier document. The orthography provides the earliest possible date

for the copy as 1590.\textsuperscript{72} The entire document is organized around years, and just as we saw in 4 Nephi 1:6, there are several years listed where no event accompanies the year. In the following excerpt from the history of the fall of Tollan (an important city state from around AD 900), the years are noted according to the Mesoamerican method of designating years. In the following, 2 Flint, 3 House, 4 Rabbit, etc. are years as represented in the Mesoamerican system:

[The fall of Tollan: AD 896–1070]

2 Flint. 3 House. 4 Rabbit. 5 Reed. 6 Flint. 7 House. 8 Rabbit. 9 Reed.

10 Flint. 11 House. 12 Rabbit. 13 Reed. 1 Flint. 2 House. 3 Rabbit.

4 Reed. 5 Flint. 6 House. 7 Rabbit. 8 Reed. 9 Flint. 10 House.

11 Rabbit. 12 Reed. 13 Flint. 1 House. 2 Rabbit. 3 Reed. 4 Flint.

5 House. 6 Rabbit. 7 Reed. 8 Flint. 9 House.

10 Rabbit [A.D. 930]. Ayauhcoyotzin, ruler of Cuauhtitlan, died in that year. He had ruled for 55 years. Matlacxochitzin, ruler of Tollan, also died then, and Nauhyotzin was inaugurated, succeeding him as Tollan’s ruler.

11 Reed [931]. The Cuauhtitlan ruler Necuamexochitzin was inaugurated in that year. His palace was in Tepotzotlan Miccacalco. The reason it was called Miccacalco [At the House of the Dead] is that lightning struck there, killing noblemen and ladies, and so they changed residence. Nothing was left standing but the Chichimec rulers’ straw-house. They did not dare go back to their palace.

12 Flint. 13 House. 1 Rabbit. 2 Reed. 3 Flint. 4 House. 5 Rabbit.

6 Reed. 7 Flint. 8 House. 9 Rabbit. 10 Reed. 11 Flint.

12 House [945]. It was the year the Cuauhtitlan ruler called Necuamexochitzin died. He had ruled for 15 years. Also at that time the Tollan ruler, Nauhyotzin, died, and Matlaccoatzin was inaugurated, succeeding him.

\textsuperscript{72} John Bierhorst, trans., History and Mythology of the Aztecs: The Codex Chimalpopoca (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1992), 12.
13 Rabbit [946]. In that year Mecellotzin was inaugurated as ruler of Cuauhtitlan. His palace was built in a place called Tianquizzolco Cuauhtlaapan.73

The second document is from farther south, from the Maya rather than the Aztec. Written in the Cakchiquel Maya language, the Annals of the Cakchiquels shows a similar structure, but in this case listed by days rather than years:

A little less than two years after the death of the Tukuchés, the Zutuhils were killed in Zahcab on the day 1 Ah-mak [July 10, 1495]. The Zutuhils were killed and annihilated, and their chiefs Nahtihay and Ahquibihay surrendered. Only the lord Voo Caok, the Ahtziquinahay, did not surrender, but his heart was full of evil intentions toward the Cakchiquels.

On the day 5 Ah [July 27, 1495] ended the second year after the revolution.

On the day 2 Ah [August 30, 1496] ended the third year after the revolution.

On the day 3 Queh [September 13, 1496, or May 31, 1497] there was a revolt in the Quiché. The Tukuchés went to take part in it there in the Quiché.

On the day 12 Ah [October 4, 1497] ended the fourth year after the revolution.

During the fifth year those of Mixcu died, subjects of the king Cablahuh Tihax, who wished to assume power. On the day 7 Camey [December 16, 1497] the warriors fell on the city of those of Mixcu and annihilated them.

Then the Yaquis of Xivicu died who had joined the king Voo Caok, lord of the Akahals, when the Akahal people revolted, wishing to take command of that place.74

The obvious difference between the Nephite annals and the examples from the Annals of Cuauhtitlan or the Annals of the Cakchiquels is that the latter two had extremely abbreviated entries. Mormon clearly had

73. Ibid., 37. The Mesoamerican calendar rotated a set of named days through numbers. The nature of the cyclical repetition was such that a certain number and day could only occur once every 260 days.

more to work with. Nevertheless, all three (Annals of Cuauhtitlan, Annals of the Cakchiquels, and Mormon’s abridgement of the large plates) mark years in which no events are listed. Both the Annals of the Cakchiquels and Mormon’s abridgement often note the ending of a year. Note that in the Annals of the Cakchiquels there is a count from a specific event rather than a single fixed origin point for dating (“the second year after the revolution” and “the third year after the revolution”).

The very strict annalistic structure of the large plates may also serve as a textual diagnostic for when Mormon is using the large plates as his source. It cannot be an exclusive diagnostic because Alma records some years in his non-large-plate personal record. However, when we know we are using a separate source that marks a few years, and then a new chapter begins with the annalistic year counts, we may be sure that Mormon is taking that information from the large plates.

That this was a plate-based convention is suggested by the way Mormon treats years when he is no longer abridging. When he writes his own history, he returns to a more sporadic notification of the years, if he notes them at all. For example, Words of Mormon simply indicates: “And it is many hundred years after the coming of Christ that I deliver these records into the hands of my son” (Words of Mormon 1:2).

**Mormon’s Outline**

It is likely that Mormon worked from at least an outline as he wrote. Textual hints support this supposition. An important confirmation that Mormon understood what was to come in his text is found in his promises of future content. To make such promises, Mormon must have known that he already planned to include them later.

John A. Tvedtnes writes of seven times Mormon promised future content:

1. Mormon spoke in Mosiah 21:35 of Limhi’s people, saying that “an account of their baptism shall be given hereafter.” Almost a hundred verses followed before he told in Mosiah 25:17–18 about that ordinance being performed.
2. The preaching mission of the sons of Mosiah was related in Alma 17–25, eighteen chapters after Mormon had said in Mosiah 28:9 and 19–20 that he would later tell about it.
3. In Alma 35:13, Mormon promised to describe the Nephite-Lamanite war that began in the eighteenth year. But, since he proposed first to copy Alma’s teachings to his sons, he postponed the story of the war until Alma 43, where in verse
three he introduced the topic with the words, “And now I return to an account of the wars.”

4. Writing in Mosiah 28:11–19, Mormon said that he would later give the story of the Jaredites. He made this statement at the point where he mentioned that King Mosiah had translated the record of that people. Apparently the problems he faced in his role as commander of the Nephite armies in his people’s battles against the Lamanites kept him from abridging the Jaredite record. But his son, Moroni, fulfilled the promise by giving us the Book of Ether. So Moroni preserved the Book of Mormon editorial pattern of not failing to cover what was promised, even though it took a generation.75

5. Third Nephi 18:36–37 contains Mormon’s statement that Jesus had given his twelve disciples “power to give the Holy Ghost.” He added, “I will show unto you hereafter that this record is true.” In the next chapter, verse thirteen, he described how the Holy Ghost fell on the twelve after their baptism. Then at 4 Nephi 1:1, he wrote that those baptized by the twelve “did also receive the Holy Ghost.” Further consistency was shown in Moroni’s later quotation of Christ’s words to the twelve, which Mormon had left out in 3 Nephi 18 where they logically might have been given: “Ye shall have power that to him upon whom ye shall lay your hands, ye shall give the Holy Ghost” (Moroni 2:2). He then added, “On as many as they laid their hands, fell the Holy Ghost” (v. 3). The reporting of the matter involved two prophets and four distinct passages of scripture, but eventually nothing was left out of the story.

6. What is in our present scripture under the title the Words of Mormon serves as an editorial bridge between the book of Omni on the small plates and the book of Mosiah in Mormon’s abridgment of the large plates. In verse two of Words of Mormon, Mormon said he hoped that his son Moroni would write “concerning Christ.” That hope was realized about 350

75. I differ with Tvedtnes’s interpretation of Mormon’s intention to include Ether. I see no indication that Mormon intended that he himself include it. I see Mormon as having known he would assign Moroni to complete the editing of Ether. John A. Tvedtnes, “Mormon’s Editorial Promises,” in Rediscovering the Book of Mormon, eds. John L. Sorenson and Melvin J. Thorne (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1991), 29–31.
pages later when Moroni told important matters concerning the Savior in Ether 3:17–20 and in 12:7, 16–22, and 38–41. At the very end of the whole volume (Mormon 9 and Moroni 2, 6, 7, 10), the son included his own testimony of Christ.

7. In Helaman 2:12–14, Mormon said that he would speak more of Gadianton and his secret band “hereafter.” Indeed, he did. The problems caused by the robbers and much about their characteristics were detailed in Helaman 6; 3 Nephi 1:27–29; 2:11–18; 3:1–4:29; and beyond in 4 Nephi and Mormon.76

Tvedtnes skipped Mosiah 28:9 which promised the account of the preaching of the sons of Mosiah, which Mormon covered in Alma 17–27. Grant Hardy explains that Mormon used narrative foreshadowing, such as:

“I will show unto you that they were brought into bondage, and none could deliver them but the Lord their God” (Mosiah 23:23).

“But behold, we shall see that his promise which he made was rash” (Alma 51:10).

“Now behold, I will show unto you that they did not establish a king over the land” (3 Nephi 7:1).77

Each of these editorial promises was fulfilled (though the promise to include the record of Ether was fulfilled by Moroni, not Mormon). Each required the editorial knowledge of what was to come.

Knowing what was to come indicates that prior to writing, Mormon had already decided what was going to be included. When he began writing, he wrote in the order that we read the text. The “I will show you” statements only make sense as inclusions that referenced what he knew he would later write.

Having access to all the Nephite records meant it was theoretically possible for him to begin with the earliest of the large plates and simply abridge to the end. He didn’t do that. What he did can be seen in Mosiah 17: 4, which speaks of Alma: “But he fled from before them and hid

76. Ibid. Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon*, 97, also notes editorial promises as a feature of Mormon’s editing.

77. Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon*, 98. We may add 3 Nephi 10:18 “And it came to pass that in the ending of the thirty and fourth year, behold, I will show unto you that the people of Nephi who were spared, and also those who had been called Lamanites, who had been spared, did have great favors shown unto them, and great blessings poured out upon their heads, insomuch that soon after the ascension of Christ into heaven he did truly manifest himself unto them.”
himself that they found him not. And he being concealed for many days did write all the words which Abinadi had spoken” (Mosiah 17:4).

This is the final verse of an aside Mormon inserted into his record of Abinadi before Noah. Verses 2 and 3 simply tell that Alma believed Abinadi and was cast out. It is possible the information written in verses 2 and 3 could have come from the official court records. However, knowing what Alma did after he had been cast out could not have been in the court records. The only way Mormon would know was to have read Alma’s personal account. Mormon includes that account later in Mosiah 23 and 24. However, including this little snippet of information in Mosiah 17 required that Mormon had already found and read Alma’s personal record of those events. Mormon did not integrate information as he found it but first searched through all the records to find the stories that would best communicate the messages he wanted to tell. Mormon did not just record history, he transformed the records of history into subtle lessons.
Chapter 4: Mormon Making Chapters

Modern readers are so accustomed to books with chapters that we do not find it strange to see chapters in the Book of Mormon. In many ancient writings, the physical limitations of the writing medium limited the text, and there was no need for chapters. It is possible that in the Old World, chapters may have evolved only after a writing medium that could contain more text than a scroll became available. One researcher has suggested that between 3,000 to 5,000 words would fit on a scroll and that number of words also describes the size of a typical chapter. As for dating the origin of chapters, we begin to see Egyptian documents with chapters in the second millennium BC.

The evidence we have from the dictation of the Book of Mormon underscores that chapters were original to the plates — both for the small and large plates. Royal Skousen’s examination of the original manuscript suggests that, just as with breaks between books, there was something Joseph saw as he translated that caused him to indicate to his scribe that there would be a break, later marked as a chapter.

Mormon learned the concept of creating chapters either from his possible scribal education or at least from seeing chapters on the large


plates. From a writer’s viewpoint, the problem with chapters is when they should end. Mormon created a large enough number of chapters that we can examine them to deduce the logic he used to decide when to end a chapter and begin another.

As I noted in the section on “Mormon’s Alternative Sources,” our modern copies of the Book of Mormon do not always reflect the chapters that Mormon created. In 1879, Orson Pratt created a new edition of the Book of Mormon that has become the foundation for all subsequent Latter-day Saint editions. David J. Whittaker explained:

But, for all his study of the text of the Book of Mormon, for all his published defenses of it, and for all of his official assignments (including that of Church historian from 1874 until his death in 1881), his most lasting contribution was probably as editor of the 1879 edition of the Book of Mormon. Three decades earlier he had been responsible for helping prepare the important 1849 edition. But in the 1879 edition, he made the most extensive format changes to that point. He made smaller chapters, dividing the larger books; numbered verses; and added extensive references, including biblical citations, cross-references, and his own explanatory footnotes. These format changes, probably his greatest legacy to the modern Church, evidence his desire to make the scriptures more accessible to other Book of Mormon students.

The result of Pratt’s changes to chapters is a much larger number of modern chapters than in the 1830 edition. The change is most noticeable in Alma, which had thirty chapters in the 1830 edition but

81. Mackay, “Mormon as Editor: A Study in Colophons, Headers, and Source Indicators,” 93: “The 1830 chapters mark Mormon’s (and Nephi’s, Moroni’s, etc.) subdivisions of the ancient books.” Mackay continues: “[They] are regularly logical narrative or speech divisions.” Mackay’s observation is correct only as a generality. The logic of Mormon’s chapter breaks does not follow a modern “logical narrative or speech division.”


83. There are several sources that have looked at the way modern chapters line up with the 1830 chapters. Each has additional information. Mackay, “Mormon as Editor: A Study in Colophons, Headers, and Source Indicators; “Comparison of Chapter Divisions: 1830 and 1981 Editions,” Charting the Book of Mormon, https://byustudies.byu.edu/charts/170-comparison-chapter-divisions-1830-and-1981-editions; Nathan Richardson, “The Original Chapter Breaks in the Book of Mormon,”
now has sixty-three. Some of the changes were obviously made to have the chapters quoting Isaiah in 2 Nephi, and those following the Sermon on the Mount in 3 Nephi, line up with the chapters and verses as they appear in our Bibles.

The reasons for making the changes in other chapters are less obvious, but they are sufficiently pervasive that other than the books that were originally single chapters (Enos, Jarom, Omni, Words of Mormon, 4 Nephi), the only book that maintained the original chapter divisions is Moroni. In most cases, Pratt kept the original chapter boundaries from the 1830 edition, dividing them into smaller chapters within. However, there are nine locations where Pratt removed an original chapter boundary so text from two different chapters became part of the same newly created chapter.84

The 1879 edition was created after the schism which divided the Utah church from the one that remained in Illinois. Non-Utah-based churches who accepted the Book of Mormon continued using the original chapters, requiring a verse-translation apparatus if scholars from the different branches read works citing the Book of Mormon from a different tradition. For example, in a well-known verse, Alma exclaims: “O that I were an angel, and could have the wish of mine heart, that I might go forth and speak with the trump of God, with a voice to shake the earth, and cry repentance unto every people!” In the Latter-day Saint editions of the Book of Mormon (post 1879), this is Alma 29:1. In the Restored Covenant Edition from the Community of Christ (following the original chapters but with versification added), it is Alma 15:52.

When attempting to understand how Mormon created his text, it is therefore essential to deal with the original 1830 chapters, as those represent Mormon’s decisions rather than the post-1879 chapters which reflect Orson Pratt’s. As noted in the section on “Mormon’s Alternative Sources,” when discussing the way Book of Mormon writers organized their text, I will use Roman numerals to indicate the chapters as they are represented in the 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon. Chapter references for the corresponding post-1979 Latter-day Saint editions are listed in parentheses after the Roman numeral. Thus, Mosiah I (1–3)


84. Note: original chapters are indicated in Roman numerals, and current chapters in Arabic numerals. 1 Nephi V ended at 19:21; Mosiah VII ended at 13:24; Mosiah XII ended at 28:19; Alma IX ended at 13:9; 3 Nephi V ended at 13:24; 3 Nephi IX ended at 21:21; 3 Nephi X ended at 23:13; 3 Nephi XI ended at 26:5; 3 Nephi XII ended at 27:22.
indicates that the original first chapter of Mosiah in the 1830 edition comprised all the text from current Mosiah chapters 1 through 3. When citing verses, I will use the current LDS chapter and verse system.

**Mormon’s Chapter Beginnings**

It is characteristic of Mormon’s style to begin a chapter with narrative rather than quotation. His writing contains both. Sometimes he took material from his sources and created the narration of the source events. Sometimes he copied from his sources. While Mormon might end a chapter with quoted material, he rarely begins a chapter with quoted material.

There are some apparent exceptions to beginning a chapter with narrative rather than a quotation. There are chapters which begin with quoted material, or a quotation from a writer/speaker. Rather than demonstrate exceptions to Mormon’s style, however, they will serve to highlight his essential consistency. The chapters that begin with quoted material are: Mosiah IV (6), Alma V (7), VII (9), X (13:10–15), XVII (36–37), XVIII (38), XIX (39–42), 3 Nephi X (21:22–27:22), and XIII (27:23–29).

In each of these exceptions, the first verse of the chapter is a quotation, not a narration. However, Mosiah IV (6) and all the exceptions in Alma (save chapter X) have chapter headers which serve as the linking narrative. The more precise function of the headers is to indicate a new source, but they are part of the narrative connections that Mormon included so that his readers would understand the flow of the text. They function as the beginning of the chapter. In modern editions, they have been moved to a location prior to the indication of the chapter, and this makes less obvious their narrative function. This leaves us with only three exceptions to the rule that Mormon begins with narration.

Alma IX (12–13:9) quotes Alma₂, and Alma₂ ended a section of his sermon with *amen*. As we will see when discussing chapter endings, a testificatory *amen* was the highest priority on the list of elements that create a chapter break. In this case, Mormon is still quoting from the same discourse, and begins chapter X (13:10–15:19) with the continuation of Alma₂’s discourse. While Mormon may have placed the chapter break intentionally, I actually suspect the chapter break existed in Alma₂’s own record, and Mormon copied the chapter break along with the rest of the text. The chapters in 3 Nephi are also places where Mormon is copying heavily. These chapter breaks don’t fit any category that Mormon used, and I suggest that the anomaly is again due to the copying process. I will discuss these chapter breaks in the section entitled “The Anomalous Chapter Breaks.”
There is a reason why Mormon begins his chapters with narration — he is telling a story. That story has a theological purpose, but it is a chronological story. Mormon must tie all the pieces of the story together, and he does so to make sure his readers do not get lost. Interestingly, there are times when he adds narration into the middle of what appears to be a continuous sermon. At the end of Mosiah VII (11–13:24), we have Abinadi speaking before the priests in Noah’s court. At the beginning of VIII (13:25–16), Abinadi is still speaking. Nevertheless, Mormon begins that chapter with “And it came to pass that after Abinadi had made and end of these sayings, that he said unto them.” Perhaps Mormon did not copy some of the available text. The chapter break and the beginning narration might be a subtle signal that some material was not included.

Similarly, the Savior is speaking at the end of 3 Nephi V (11–13:24). At the beginning of VI (13:25–14), Mormon writes, “And now it came to pass that when Jesus had spoken these words, he looked upon the twelve whom he had chosen and saith unto them.” Even though the same person is speaking during the same occasion, there is something that was noted in Mormon’s source that indicated a closure of a sermon and some action that came later. Mormon does not tell us how long the time between might have been, but there is an ending and a beginning, even though the same person is speaking. Mormon tracks the missing time and perhaps actions that would have been in the original by creating his linking narrative.

Finally, there are some important specifics in the way Mormon begins chapters. The most common beginning sentence starts “now it came to pass.” Beginning with Alma I (1–3), the initial sentence of the chapter will not only have “now it came to pass,” but also the declaration of the year in which the following text occurred. For example, Alma II (4:1) begins: “and it came to pass in the commencement of the firth year.”

85. It is highly probable that the chapter break between sections of Abinadi’s defense before the priests was the fact that triggered Orson Pratt’s alteration of the chapters to remove this chapter break. Pratt recognized it as an issue but resolved it by removing it rather than understanding it.

86. Note that even though this appears to come in the middle of a sermon, Mormon still inserts his own narrative that basically says Abinadi continued to speak.

87. Note that the format is the same as for the previous example. Even though Mormon is copying, he begins with a narrative in the next chapter.

88. The basic phrase “it came to pass” occurs with rather obvious frequency. However, the combination with “now” is often used at the beginning of chapters, and internally to the chapters, and the beginnings of new thoughts. “Now” often fulfills that function even in exposition when it is not linked to the narrative phrase “it came to pass.” See Chapter 10 for more information.
Exceptions to the beginning phrase “now it came to pass” do occur. In most of those, we have only “now” and the “it came to pass” is missing (Mosiah IV (6), XIII (28:20–29), and Alma IX (12–13:9)89). There are two cases where we have “and it came to pass” without the “now” (Mosiah VIII (13:25–16), Alma XXX (63)).90

From the context of the chapter beginnings with “now” without “and it came to pass,” I suggest that Mormon is using the two phrases in particular ways. “Now” is a narrative ligature that connects the previous chapter to the subsequent. While “and it came to pass” is also a ligature, it serves a time-based function not present with “now.” “And it came to pass” indicates the passage of time between chapters, and “now” indicates something Mormon considered to be a continuation of the action of the previous chapter, when Mormon is using “now” during the narration of the story. When “now” appears in exposition, such as speeches, it introduces something new. The two uses are similar. In both cases, “now” is introducing something new, but in narration, it is part of the temporal linking of the story, and therefore indicates things happening about the same time rather than in a separate sequence.

The exception to these posited rules for Mormon’s chapter beginnings is 3 Nephi XIV (30). That chapter ends 3 Nephi and is Mormon’s direct address to his future audience. It neither occurs within the narrative sequence, nor in the time sequence. It is Mormon speaking in his own time. Therefore, neither the “now” nor the “and it came to pass” were appropriate.

The consistency of the way Mormon begins chapters allows us to suggest that when we see any chapter in Mormon’s edited material that does not begin with “now,” or “now it came to pass,” that we may recognize that chapter as a direct quotation from his source. There are two exceptions. The first is 3 Nephi XIV (30), and the second is Mosiah I (1). Our current Mosiah 1:1 is: “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.” Although we do have a “now” at the beginning, the conditions that surround Mormon’s chapters that begin with “now,” but not “and it came to pass” do not apply here. It is not a continuation.

89. I have left off some occasions where “now” occurs without “and it came to pass” because they are part of copied text and therefore do not represent Mormon’s usage.
90. With only two examples, I am unable to determine a context that might create the alteration. There is nothing obvious. It is possible this is simply an option Mormon did not choose very often or perhaps an inadvertent loss of the word in the translation process.
of an event, but a summary of information. It is not the type of sentence Mormon used to begin chapters.

We can find the phrase “continual peace” at the beginning of a chapter. However, as we see in Mosiah V (7:1), it is accompanied by the expected “and it came to pass.” At the end of Mosiah IV, Mormon wrote: “And there was no contention among all his people for the space of three years (Mosiah 6:7). There is nothing about the current first verse of Mosiah that suggests that it began a chapter. Indeed, the absence of “and it came to pass” would make it an anomalous beginning without the kind of explanation that allow the other exceptions to be fit into the overall pattern.

Of course, the problem isn’t with Mormon’s text but with the fact that we lost his text. The 116 pages of the book of Lehi apparently also included at least one chapter of Mosiah. The missing “and it came to pass” that would be expected at the beginning of a chapter suggests that we also lost the beginning of the chapter we know as Mosiah 1.

Mormon’s Chapter Endings

Mormon had only three reasons to begin a chapter: to shift to a new storyline, to change the source text (which also changed the storyline), or because something triggered the end of the previous chapter, even if the storyline had not been completed. Most of Mormon’s chapters began because a triggering event caused him to close the previous chapter.

Testificatory Amen Endings

The presence of the word *amen* is a strong but not exclusive trigger for a chapter ending. When the text quotes a prayer, the *amen* is included as part of the text of the prayer and was considered a description rather than an oath.91 Thus 3 Nephi 11:25 and 3 Nephi 13:13 both include *amen*, but as part of a description of prayer. Alma 31:18 ends the description of the Zoramite prayer with amen, but it does not trigger a chapter break.


The Hebrew word, meaning “truly,” is transliterated into Greek in the New Testament, and thence to the English Bible. It is found many times in the Book of Mormon. The Hebrew infinitive conveys the notions “to confirm, support, uphold, be faithful, firm.” In antiquity the expression carried the weight of an oath. By saying “amen” the people solemnly pledged faithfulness and assented to curses upon themselves if found guilty (Deuteronomy 27:14–26). And by saying “amen” the people also sealed their praises of God (1 Chr. 16:36; Psalms 106:48; Romans 11:36; 1 Peter 4:11).
The word amen itself was not the trigger to end a chapter, but rather the function of the word. When amen served in the function of an oath, or testament, of the person giving a sermon, or the author testifying to what he had written, it triggered the end of a chapter, even if the story being told in that chapter had not yet ended. This includes both when Mormon copied a sermon which ended in a testificatory amen as well as when he testified of his own insertion into the text.

It is probable that this was a tendency inherited from the large plate tradition, as we find it in Nephi. 1 Nephi II (6–9) ends with amen. Similarly, amen ends 1 Nephi III (10–14) and 1 Nephi VII (22), which is the end of the book of 1 Nephi. In 2 Nephi, amen ends chapters III (3), IV (4), VI (9), VII (10), XIII (31), and XV (33), which is the end of the book of 2 Nephi. Finding that kind of consistency in Nephi’s writing suggests that he also used that means of creating a chapter when he wrote the large plates. Therefore, it was a feature that would likely have been modeled on the large plates Mormon consulted.

The first extant amen ending in Mormon’s edited text occurs in Mosiah I (1–3). It comes at the end of a part of Benjamin’s discourse that Mormon copied. A similar copied amen at the end of a sermon is found at the end of Mosiah III (5). Mosiah VI (9–10) is the end of the direct quotation from the record of Zeniff, and Zeniff terminates his personal account with “And now I, being old, did confer the kingdom upon one of my sons; therefore, I say no more. And may the Lord bless my people. Amen (Mosiah 10:22).” Mosiah VIII (13:25–16) quotes Abinadi, and the amen ending is part of Abinadi’s speech.

In Alma, the amen comes at the end of copied speeches, where the original speaker ended by declaring amen: Alma IV (6), V (7), XIV (23–26), XV (27–29), and XIX (42–43). In Helaman, Mormon concludes his own inserted testimony with amen in IV (11–12). Similarly, 3 Nephi II (3–5) ends with Mormon’s testimony, punctuated by amen.

Mormon ends his record at the end of his eponymous book with Mormon III (6–7). Appropriately, he ends with amen. Moroni continued the trend, ending the book of Mormon IV (8–9) with amen. Interestingly, in his editing of the book of Ether, Moroni only uses amen when he inserts his own testimony into the abridged record. This occurs at the end of Ether I (1–4), II (5), V (12), and at the end of VI (13–15), which ends the book of Ether.

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92. In Jacob, amen ends chapter IV (6). The book of Enos ends with amen. There are no more amen endings on the small plates.
The conceptual force of “amen” and a closing testament was strong enough that Mormon often had to move narrative material that ended the story of the sermon or testimony to the beginning of the next chapter. Alma chapter VI (8) illustrates this transition:

And now, may the peace of God rest upon you, and upon your houses and lands, and upon your flocks and herds, and all that you possess, your women and your children, according to your faith and good works, from this time forth and forever. And thus I have spoken. Amen. (Alma 7:27)

Chapter VI (8)

And now it came to pass that Alma returned from the land of Gideon, after having taught the people of Gideon many things which cannot be written, having established the order of the church, according as he had before done in the land of Zarahemla, yea, he returned to his own house at Zarahemla to rest himself from the labors which he had performed.

And thus ended the ninth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi.

And it came to pass in the commencement of the tenth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi, that Alma departed from thence and took his journey over into the land of Melek, on the west of the river Sidon, on the west by the borders of the wilderness. (Alma 8:1–3)

The division between chapters V (7) and VI (8) occurred because there was a sermon that ended with amen at the end of V (7). When Mormon began chapter VI (8) he started with the aftermath of the sermon; Alma returned from Gideon. A modern writer would have appended the verses from chapter VI (8):1–2 to the end of chapter V (7). Mormon’s editorial principle of ending a chapter when there was a testificatory “amen” prevented him from keeping the whole historical event in the same chapter.

Although a testificatory amen was the strongest trigger to end a chapter, there are some important exceptions that will be examined in the “Anomalous Chapter Endings” section.

Sermon Endings

A significant feature of Mormon’s writing style was the inclusion of large sections of material apparently copied directly from his sources. The largest quotation was from Alma’s personal record, as noted in the
section on outline headers and chapters. Mormon quoted letters, which may or may not have been included on the large plates. Most often, however, he quoted sermons. Most of his quoted material provided theological instruction, and Mormon preferred to copy that information rather than restate it.

These sermons are presented in a context, and it is usually Mormon who supplies the text that provides the historical context. There were certainly large plate texts that described history, but Mormon rarely quotes from those. He prefers to write the summarized historical context himself. As he is writing, there are therefore two very different types of things he does. One is to produce, and the other is to copy.

While he might consult the large plates when producing text, it is also possible that once he read and understood the story, he simply retold it. However, when he copied, he was physically interacting with the plates. Perhaps for that reason, when a sermon ended and Mormon returned to narration, he typically ended the chapter after the quotation. The next chapter began with narration. This occurs even when there is narration that is required to end the story that led to the inserted sermon before the next topic begins.

Mosiah chapter II (4) ends at the end of a section of king Benjamin’s discourse. Chapter III (5) opens with Mormon’s narrative description of what the people did as the aftermath to that part of the sermon. In a thematically conceived chapter, this material might have been in the same chapter, but Mormon ends chapter II because there is an end to the copied sermon. Physically, he stops interacting with the large plates and begins to write without direct reference to the plates.

It is important to note that while Mormon ends chapters at the end of sermons, he also includes sermons in the body of chapters without ending the chapter. This was not an automatic trigger as was the testificatory amen. Rather, Mormon ended with the sermon when the basic story came to an end. The sermon closed the story, and the short aftermath was located at the beginning of the next chapter.

**Chapters and Years**

When Mormon began writing the book of Alma, he had a new conceptual structure to help him organize the events he would describe. It is not surprising that editing a source text that was organized by years would also influence the organization of the edited text. It may even be assumed

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that the principle means of textual organization on the large plates was by year (beginning with the book of Alma). That organizational structure influenced the way Mormon created his chapters, but not exclusively, and not with precision. It appears that Mormon had a hierarchy of features that might create chapter divisions. Changes in sources, sermons ending with *amen*, and sermons themselves appear to be the most important. When one of these was not present, Mormon used years as chapter boundaries.

What becomes interesting about Mormon’s use of years as boundaries is that they follow a pattern that differs from simply marking a different year. Mark A. Wright noticed that Mormon was very sensitive to units of five years. An interesting feature of this sensitivity is that it influenced chapter endings and beginnings but was adapted to the particulars of the history Mormon related. Depending upon the story being told, at times the chapter ended after the fifth-year boundary with the next year beginning with the sixth: sometimes it ended after the fourth-year and began the next chapter on the fifth.

Among the Maya, a five-year period was called a *hotun*, or “five-stone/year” (*tun* means stone but is also used for one of the types of years). It was a parallel to the term *katun*, or “twenty-stone/year,” which the Maya considered much as we would a decade. The Maya (and most Mesoamerican cultures) used a vigesimal system, or base twenty (counting fingers and toes rather than fingers only). Thus, twenty in that system carried the conceptual symmetry that we see in ten or multiples of ten.

The *hotun* (five-year set) is particularly important for historical records, for the Maya would erect a stela on *hotun* anniversaries which summarized events from the period just ended. It is very tempting

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The Maya monuments, and especially those of the stela type, seem to have been used, perhaps primarily, to mark the passage of time, stelae being erected at intervals of every hotun (1,800 days) or multiples thereof
to suggest that the Maya hotun stelae provided the conceptual model which influenced Mormon’s attention to five-year, or hotun periods, in his text. I am not suggesting a direct influence, but one that might have come as the result of other peoples’ adapting similar sensibilities given the similarities in both the numerical and calendrical systems in Mesoamerica.

In what follows I will borrow the term hotun to indicate a five-year period. While I do think there is a connection, I do not intend to suggest that the Nephites would have called it a hotun; I use it only as a convenient designation. I might have borrowed the Latin lustrum, which had a similar reference to a five-year period, but that is also an unfamiliar term, and has much less relevance to the Book of Mormon.

The transition between Mormon’s chapter V (7) and VI (8) was generated by a testificatory amen (Alma 7:27). Mormon adds the narrative that ends the story from chapter V (7) to the beginning of chapter VI (8). However, he also wants to note a hotun, so we are also given a year-ending and year-beginning.

And thus ended the ninth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi.

And it came to pass in the commencement of the tenth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi, that Alma departed from thence and took his journey over into the land of Melek, on the west of the river Sidon, on the west by the borders of the wilderness. (Alma 8:2–3)

This second story begins expressly in the tenth year. There is an overlap between the history behind the story and the use of years to delineate the story. While this principle appears in Mormon’s making of chapters, it is not one of the overriding concerns. It is more typical that Mormon pays attention to hotun periods and will use them as chapter divisions/beginnings when there are no other higher priority markers.

The division from Alma I (1–3) to Alma II (4) comes at a five-year division:

And thus endeth the fifth year of the reign of the judges.
(Alma 3:27)

Chapter Break

as every lahunutun (3600 days) or katun (7200 days) throughout the Old Empire, approximately 200 to 600 A.D.
Now it came to pass in the sixth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi, there were no contentions nor wars in the land of Zarahemla. (Alma 4:1)

Not only is the chapter break occurring at the end of the fifth year and the beginning of the sixth, but Mormon begins his chapter with the sixth year, even though nothing happens in that year. A similar change occurs between Alma X (13:10–15) and Alma XI (16):

And thus ended the tenth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi. (Alma 15:19)

**Chapter Break**

And it came to pass in the eleventh year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi, on the fifth day of the second month, there having been much peace in the land of Zarahemla, there having been no wars nor contentions for a certain number of years, even until the fifth day of the second month in the eleventh year, there was a cry of war heard throughout the land. (Alma 16:1)

Alma XV (27–29) ends the 11–15-year *hotun*. Chapter XVI (30–35) begins with the sixteenth year. Like the division between chapters I (1–3) and II (4), chapter XVII (36–37) it is an empty year:

And thus the people did have no disturbance in all the sixteenth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi.

And it came to pass that in the commencement of the seventeenth year of the reign of the judges, there was continual peace.

But it came to pass in the latter end of the seventeenth year, there came a man into the land of Zarahemla, and he was Anti-Christ, for he began to preach unto the people against the prophecies which had been spoken by the prophets, concerning the coming of Christ. (Alma 30:4–6)

The change from Alma XI (16) to Alma XII (17–20) presents an interesting case. Alma XI (16) ends in the fourteenth year (Alma 16:21), but Alma XII (17–20) doesn’t mark the beginning with a year. Rather, it is account of the sons of Mosiah. Mormon marked the change in the source, but also made certain to close the previous record at the end of the fourteenth year.

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96. Also paralleling Alma I (1–3) to Alma II (4), Alma XV (27–29) ended with a testificatory amen, therefore, chapter XVI (30–35) begins with the ending events of the fifteenth year.
We do not find the fifteenth year mentioned until the middle of the chapter (Alma 28:7, 9). The sixteenth year is at the beginning of chapter XVI. In this case, the fifteenth year was important enough for its own chapters, but it is set off by marking the preceding and following years.

The end of the book of Alma sees a similar, but not precise, pattern: Alma XXII (50) begins in the twentieth year, Alma XXIII (51) in the twenty-fifth, Alma XXIV (52) in the twenty-sixth, Alma XXV (54) in the twenty-ninth, and both Alma XXVI (56) and XXVII (59) both cover the thirtieth year. Thus, Mormon used the *hotun* concept loosely, sometimes breaking before the beginning of a five-year period and sometimes at the end.

The final chapter of Alma begins in the thirty-sixth year and ends in the thirty-ninth. Helaman I begins in the fortieth year. It is highly likely that this is intentional, as we don’t have Helaman as the ruler — the reason for the book name change — until the forty-second year (Helaman 2:1–2). I believe that the beginning of the book of Helaman was backdated to begin at a more auspicious *katun* of the reign of judges.

Mark A. Wright has also noticed an interesting explicit marking of time found in 3 Nephi. Just as the Nephites reset their ethnocentric calendrical beginning year with the reign of the judges, they will reset it again from the time the sign of Christ’s birth was given in the New World. Mormon describes the change in Alma I (2):4–8:

> And thus did pass away the ninety and sixth year; and also the ninety and seventh year; and also the ninety and eighth year; and also the ninety and ninth year;
> And also an hundred years had passed away since the days of Mosiah, who was king over the people of the Nephites.
> And six hundred and nine years had passed away since Lehi left Jerusalem.
> And nine years had passed away from the time when the sign was given, which was spoken of by the prophets, that Christ should come into the world.
> Now the Nephites began to reckon their time from this period when the sign was given, or from the coming of Christ; therefore, nine years had passed away. (3 Nephi 2:4–8)


98. Two periods of twenty years, or four hotuns. Four is a symbolically powerful number in Mesoamerica.
Wright notes that the Nephite count ran explicitly to an even one hundred years of the reign of the judges and was only then backdated for the new beginning.\(^9\) The Nephites marked a new beginning, but not when the beginning occurred but rather only after finishing a more symbolic set of numbers (one hundred years = five *katuns* or twenty *hotuns*).

When Mormon makes sure that his count from the older system reaches one hundred before he begins the revision, even though the event happened earlier, we learn that Mormon is paying attention not only to years, but specific sets of years. Because they mark shorter periods, we see *hotun* sets more often than larger numbers. However, we also see *katun* sets (twenty years) and *baktun* sets (four hundred years). Mormon does not force these numbers onto his narrative, but sometimes bends time and narration to have the numbers and text align in significance.

### The Anomalous Chapter Breaks

In addition to the times where there is a discernable reason for ending a chapter, there are some cases where the chapter breaks appear to contradict the typical rules for chapter endings. For example, the end of our modern chapter 33 of Alma ends with a quoted sermon and the copied *amen*. Because this occurs at the end of a modern chapter, it is easy to miss that there was no chapter break at this point in the pre-1879 Book of Mormon. The original chapter XVI included our chapters 30–35, placing this *amen* in the middle of a chapter without creating a chapter break.

I suggest that the explanation for the anomalous chapter breaks is probably that Mormon is copying someone else’s text and replicating the way they created chapters. Thus, while the chapter breaks are anomalous for Mormon, he was not the one creating the chapter breaks.

In the case of the testificatory *amen* that did not create a chapter break in the original chapter XVI, that chapter is heavily copied from Alma₂’s personal record. Mormon is copying two sermons which followed each other — Alma₂ and then Amulek. There is only a sentence between them: “And now it came to pass that after Alma had spoken these words unto them he sat down upon the ground, and Amulek arose and began to teach them, saying:” (Alma 34:1).

I suggest it is possible that Mormon missed the chapter break because he was still in the mode of copying from his text. Although this connecting text might have come from Mormon, Alma₂’s original had to have a very

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similar text. Mormon was still copying, changing only the word *I* from the original to *Alma* in the copy. Because he was copying and not returning to his own narrative, Mormon either didn’t notice the *amen*, or simply continued copying, leaving the *amen* as it was in *Alma*₂’s record.

A second example occurs when the original chapters VII (11:1–13:24) and VIII (13:25–6) of Mosiah split in the middle of Abinadi’s sermon. The division makes so little sense to a modern reader that Orson Pratt combined the two sections of Abinadi’s speech so that it was all within the same chapter.¹⁰⁰ Orson’s logic makes much more sense to modern readers, but what caused Mormon to create a chapter ending at a place that so obviously (to a modern reader) doesn’t need it? The original chapter ending for Mosiah VII comes at a pause in Abinadi’s speech (Mosiah 13:24). When chapter VIII begins, we have Abinadi speaking again, with only the brief “And it came to pass that after Abinadi had made an end of these sayings that he said unto them” (Mos. 13:25).

The part of Abinadi’s sermon that ended in Mosiah 13:24 (and thus ended the original Mosiah VII) completed Abinadi’s quotation of the decalogue. It was a quotation within a quotation, and the conclusion of the quoted material from the brass plates appears to have been the cause. In this case, we don’t have enough information to know if Mormon copied the break from his source or created it because he felt that a break was required after the quoted material. Another similar chapter break may suggest that Mormon copied the break rather than creating it.

An intriguing chapter ending occurs at the end of 3 Nephi VI (11). The chapter ends because there is a quotation that has been completed (the Savior quoted Matthew 7:23–27). Chapter breaks do occur at the end of a quotation; however, 3 Nephi VII continues Jesus’s sermon. Considering that this quotation is of a text that was unknown to the Nephites, how was the determination made that there was an ending here?

I suggest that it was because there was something in the sermon that allowed the original recorder, Nephi₃, to understand that there was a break, and that we are seeing Nephi₃’s chapter break which Mormon copied, similar to my suggestion that Mormon copied a chapter break in *Alma*₂’s record.

¹⁰⁰. A similar modification of the chapter breaks in stories often occurs in Lynn A. Rosenvall and David L. Rosenvall, *A New Approach to Studying The Book of Mormon, Another Testament of Jesus Christ* (Pleasant Grove, UT: The Olive Leaf Foundation), 2017. The Rosenvalls provide at text “organized by events, emphasizing narrators, speakers, locations, dates and quoted passages” (title page). The structuring of the text by events often crosses chapter boundaries, implicitly underscoring my suggestion that the concept of finishing a story was not part of Mormon’s criteria for ending one chapter and beginning another.
I see a similar implied ending that Nephi created and which Mormon copied in the division between 3 Nephi chapter IX (19–21:21) and X (21:22–23:13):

And I will execute vengeance and fury upon them, even as upon the heathen, such as they have not heard.

[Original chapter break]

But if they will repent and hearken unto my words, and harden not their hearts, I will establish my church among them, and they shall come in unto the covenant and be numbered among this the remnant of Jacob, unto whom I have given this land for their inheritance. (3 Nephi 21:21–22)

When verse 22 begins with “But,” it clearly links that statement to the previous. There is a continuous thought, and read in the modern chapter, this is a continuous sermon. What is not as obvious is that verse 21 marks the end of the insertion of Micah 5: 8–15. However, it is not a simple copy, as verses 3 Nephi 21:19–20 are inserted into the Micah text.

There is certainly much to be said about the use of Micah and other post-600 BC scriptures in the Book of Mormon, but at this point my focus is on the chapter break. In this case, 3 Nephi 21:21 corresponds to Micah 5:15, and Micah 5:15 is the last verse in the chapter. Verse 22 in 3 Nephi begins with inserted discussion, which will work into the Savior quoting from Isaiah. Thus, the original chapter break between chapters IX and X occurs as a source break. A quotation from Micah ends, and discourse picks up. That concept follows the model that Mormon was using. The problem is that Mormon does this when he is making a shift between sources. In this case, Mormon is presenting one of the Savior’s discourses, and the entire discourse is being copied.

I suggest again that Mormon copied a chapter break that was on the large plates. The logic that Mormon used was probably one that was taught to those who would be official scribes, and we have in this case an example where that principle would have been used to create a break on the plates. It is unclear how the original writer understood that this was a subject change. For Mormon, he was copying from his source, and copied faithfully — including the chapter break.

The chapter break between the original 3 Nephi XII (26:6–27:22) and XIII (27:23–29) is even more difficult to understand:

Therefore, if ye do these things blessed are ye, for ye shall be lifted up at the last day.
[Original Chapter Break]

Write the things which ye have seen and heard, save it be those which are forbidden. (3 Nephi 27:22–23)

No change from quotation to discourse occurs at this point. There is a change in topic, where the previous chapter dealt with appropriate gospel actions, and the subsequent chapter begins with the command to write what has been taught. Nevertheless, for Mormon this was all a quotation from his original source and there is nothing in the way he typically copied material that suggests that he created this chapter break. Even more than the break between original chapters IX and X noted above, this break strongly suggests that it existed on the plates, and as Mormon copied, he replicated the chapter break as it had been on the large plates.
Chapter 5: Mormon Writing

When Moroni described what his father had written, he called it “an abridgment of the record of the people of Nephi” (Title Page). Mormon himself similarly referred to what he had written: “after I had made an abridgment from the plates of Nephi...” (Words of Mormon 1:3). Nevertheless, Mormon doesn’t appear to use the term in the way we might expect.101 A modern reader expects that an abridgment makes a shorter but faithful version of a longer text. This is not what Mormon did. When Mormon wrote his eponymous book within his larger work, he said that “I write a small abridgment, daring not to give a full account of the things which I have seen” (Mormon 5:9). Mormon was writing his eponymous book in real time and not interacting with the plates of Nephi as a source. He didn’t need to, as he was the one who had both experienced and written that history. For Mormon, an abridgement was anything shorter than what the full account might have been. The numerous times we hear that Mormon cannot write but the hundredth part of Nephite history confirms his idea that he was abridging by giving a less voluminous account.102

101. I understand Joseph Smith as the source of the English vocabulary of the Book of Mormon. What we are seeing with the word abridgement is a definition that Joseph used and which did not accurately convey the type of record Mormon created. I used Mormon as the writer here for simplicity. Arguments about the nature of the translation process are beyond the scope of my interests in this book, although my personal views undoubtedly color my perception. For an elucidation of my position, see Brant A. Gardner, The Gift and Power: Translating the Book of Mormon, (Draper, UT: Greg Kofford Books, 2011).

102. Mormon declares he cannot write the hundredth part: Words of Mormon 1:5; Helaman 3:14; 3 Nephi 5:8; 3 Nephi 26:6. The phrase also occurs in Jacob 3:13 and Ether 15:33. Although not using the same phrase, 1 Nephi 14:28 expresses the same idea: “I have written but a small part of the things which I saw.” Cheryl Brown, “I Speak Somewhat Concerning That Which I Have Written,” in The Book of Mormon: Jacob Through Words of Mormon, To Learn with Joy, eds. Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate, Jr. (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1990), 56:
Although the Book of Mormon was certainly a shorter record than the whole set of large plates, it was not a synopsis of what had been recorded on those plates. Perhaps we have no adequate word for what Mormon did, although David B. Honey reports a suggested phrase:

[T]he historical paradigm initially selected by the Book of Mormon authors to follow, [is] a paradigm or approach to the use of history that is as honorable as and more ancient than the question-asking and puzzle-solving disciplines of modern scientific historiography but one with a different aim and methodology. This paradigm is that of “exemplar historiography.”

The purpose of this paradigm is to advocate a particular point or to teach a lesson. “The function of this type of history,” according to Traian Stoianovich, “is to select the relevant example (paradigma, exemplum), in the didactic sense of being illustrative of what the society, through the historian, desires to inculcate and what it wants to warn against.”

Viewing the Book of Mormon as an exemplar historiography comes close to the essence of what Mormon saw as his task. Mormon had the entire Nephite archive available to him, and although he used the large plates of Nephi as the core structure of his account, Mormon both selected and molded accounts from several sources to serve his didactic purposes.

Grant Hardy described this aspect of Mormon’s writing:

Generally Mormon is a practitioner of narrative theology; that is, he relies on stories to convince readers of the power of God, the consequences of sin, the reality of prophecy, and so forth. He certainly has a hand in fashioning his narratives for didactic and aesthetic purposes, but he cannot distort the history too much since the cogency of his argument depends on the accuracy of his facts: we should believe certain things because they are demonstrated by actual events of the past.

To appreciate how the Book of Mormon was compiled as the Lord directed the prophet-writers, we must first appreciate the fact that not everything available to the writers was included in the book. Again and again the reader is reminded of the immense amount of material the prophets had to work from and the small amount of space they had to work with.

104. Hardy, Understanding the Book of Mormon, 119.
Mormon’s Admonition to His Future Audience

Because the lesson Mormon desired to teach his future readers is embedded in exemplar history, his readers are required to extract his message from the stories he included. Nevertheless, Mormon was not so subtle as to bury that intent too deeply. At times, he points out the moral lessons with “thus we see” statements, where Mormon makes certain that the exemplar is made obvious:

And thus we see the end of him who perverteth the ways of the Lord; and thus we see that the devil will not support his children at the last day, but doth speedily drag them down to hell. (Alma 30:60)

And now, ye see by this that our first parents were cut off both temporally and spiritually from the presence of the Lord; and thus we see they became subjects to follow after their own will. (Alma 42:7)

Thus we see how quick the children of men do forget the Lord their God, yea, how quick to do iniquity, and to be led away by the evil one. (Alma 46:8)

And thus we see how merciful and just are all the dealings of the Lord, to the fulfilling of all his words unto the children of men; yea, we can behold that his words are verified, even at this time, which he spake unto Lehi, saying:

Blessed art thou and thy children; and they shall be blessed, inasmuch as they shall keep my commandments they shall prosper in the land. But remember, inasmuch as they will not keep my commandments they shall be cut off from the presence of the Lord. (Alma 50:19–20)

And thus we see that the Nephites did begin to dwindle in unbelief, and grow in wickedness and abominations, while the Lamanites began to grow exceedingly in the knowledge of their God; yea, they did begin to keep his statutes and commandments, and to walk in truth and uprightness before him.

And thus we see that the Spirit of the Lord began to withdraw from the Nephites, because of the wickedness and the hardness of their hearts.

And thus we see that the Lord began to pour out his Spirit upon the Lamanites, because of their easiness and willingness to believe in his words. (Helaman 6:34–36)
More examples exist. Mormon intended to teach that our own actions lead to either the promise or the curse, and he included multiple exemplars of both consequences and underscored them with his own conclusion — in case we missed what he saw as obvious.

**Mormon’s Interaction with His Text**

Mormon was not content to simply record history. Mormon’s history was written for a future audience, and Mormon shaped his message by the way he wrote, at times directly inserting himself into his recounting of history.

**Narrator-voice and Author-voice**

Mormon is the main narrator in the books he edited. Although he includes some texts from other writers where they were the narrators (such as Alma₂’s personal record), Mormon is responsible for the majority of the linking narrative in the events covered in the books from Mosiah to 4 Nephi. When writing his linking narrative, Mormon writes in the past. Even when quoting from sources that are written in the present tense (such as Alma₂’s sermons), Mormon describes the surrounding events in the past tense. I call this type of writing *narrator-voice*. That is, the narrator is writing about the past, and the descriptive writing is about the past.

Mormon also shifts out of narrator-voice and includes text that is more responsive to his task of writing to a future audience than about a past history. I call this *author-voice* because these occasions give us a glimpse of Mormon as he was writing. In these instances, the text speaks to a future audience, typically with Mormon discussing his intents and methods of writing.

The simplest of these author-voice insertions comes when Mormon highlights the moral he wants his readers to extract from the historical episode he has included. These were discussed in the section examining “Mormon’s Admonition to his Future Audience.” Sometimes, his insertion is not to highlight the lesson to be learned, but to foreshadow the lesson to come:

> For behold, *I will show unto you* that they were brought into bondage, and none could deliver them but the Lord their God, yea, even the God of Abraham and Isaac and of Jacob. (Mosiah 23:23)

> And the multitude heard not the words which he spake, therefore they did not bear record; but the disciples bare record that he gave them power to give the Holy Ghost. And *I will show unto you* hereafter that this record is true. (3 Nephi 18:37)
Mormon not only addresses his future audience, but emphasizes that the whole of his text has an intentional outline allowing him to know what will be written.

A unique instance of an author-voice insertion comes in Mormon’s editing of the story of Ammon and king Lamoni. The queen had summoned Ammon to the side of the king, who was in a spiritual sleep. The spirit overcame both the queen and Ammon, and as Ammon lay helpless on the floor, others arrived:

Now, one of them, whose brother had been slain with the sword of Ammon, being exceedingly angry with Ammon, drew his sword and went forth that he might let it fall upon Ammon, to slay him; and as he lifted the sword to smite him, behold, he fell dead.

Now we see that Ammon could not be slain, for the Lord had said unto Mosiah, his father: I will spare him, and it shall be unto him according to thy faith — therefore, Mosiah trusted him unto the Lord. (Alma 19:22–23)

In verse 23, Mormon steps out of narrator-voice to explain the miracle that saved Ammon’s life. Mormon had not described this assurance to Mosiah when it must have been given, but simply references it.

A special case of Mormon’s authorial insertion comes when he not only inserts himself, but designates himself with a double identification: “I, Mormon.” We first encounter the declaration “I, Mormon” in Words of Mormon, verses 1, 9, and 11.105 The immediate declaration inherent in “I, Mormon” is that he has stepped out of narrator-voice and into author-voice. This is wholly understandable for Words of Mormon because the first half of the chapter explains why he added the small plates to his own record.

The phrase “I, Mormon” appears in a particular context, a context that includes a number of concepts that are expressed in the section where he adds “I, Mormon,” but not necessarily in a fixed order. That context is Mormon’s meta-discussion of his writing process. In Words of Mormon, he speaks of finding the small plates and desiring to preserve them. None of this information is in narrative-time. In fact, it is quite clearly interruptive of the narrative flow in its current location.

A second factor that is repeated in the “I, Mormon” statements is a declaration that he cannot write a “hundredth part” of the history.

105. They would not have been the first time he wrote them, only the first time we see them due to the placement of Words of Mormon. See the section “Words of Mormon,” Chapter 6.
Thus, Words of Mormon 1:5 states: “I cannot write the hundredth part of the things of my people.”

The next “I, Mormon” phrase is found in 3 Nephi 26:12, where it occurs in each of the two sentences in that verse. In this case, “I, Mormon” statements come at the conclusion of the author-voice insertion. The insertion begins at 3 Nephi 26:6 with:

> And now there cannot be written in this book even a hundredth part of the things which Jesus did truly teach unto the people;
> But behold the plates of Nephi do contain the more part of the things which he taught the people.
> And these things have I written, which are a lesser part of the things which he taught the people; and I have written them to the intent that they may be brought again unto this people, from the Gentiles, according to the words which Jesus hath spoken. (3 Nephi 26:6–8)

These verses are part of the inserted information wherein Mormon declares himself (3 Nephi 26:12). His self-declaration comes at the end of the insertion in which he notes that he cannot write the hundredth part and also mentions the physical plates of Nephi from which he is taking his record.

In 3 Nephi 5:8 Mormon notes that “this book cannot contain even a hundredth part of what was done among so many people in the space of twenty and five years.” Verses 10 and 11 specifically discuss the plate records. Importantly, 3 Nephi 5:12 says “and behold, I am called Mormon.” That isn’t precisely an “I, Mormon” statement, but is clearly the intent. In 4 Nephi, the “I, Mormon” phrase occurs in 1:23. Mormon discusses the plates in 4 Nephi 1:19–21 (but this occurrence lacks the declaration that he cannot write the hundredth part).

I should note that this changes when we read Mormon’s eponymous book. The “I, Mormon” statements in that book are autobiographical; they represent the author of the narrative. In that book there is no distinction between author and narrator.

Because this unique set of ideas recurs frequently, it appears to tell us just a little about Mormon’s mindset as he wrote. He clearly understood when he left narrator-voice and wrote in author-voice. For the times when he decided that he needed to discuss his writing process, he typically made sure that we understood who it was who created the Book of Mormon. For modern readers whose entire first half of our Book of Mormon has been replaced with text that Mormon didn’t write, it is perhaps a fitting reminder that his was the mortal mind behind all the
text we have, even to the inclusion of the small plates that became the replacement for Mormon’s text when it was lost.

**Inserting Information for a Future Audience**

As discussed in the section “Mormon’s Outline,” Mormon had an outline and followed it. Most of the text involves either Mormon’s narrative retelling of Nephite history or copied material from other sources. There are times when Mormon inserts information which was not present in the text he was working with. This inserted information takes two general forms. One occurs when the inserted text is part of Mormon’s intended message and is typically a moralizing statement to make certain that his audience understands the reason Mormon has chosen a particular story (or perhaps told it in a certain way).

The second is seen when Mormon inserts material that he believes is important, but which interrupts the copied text or otherwise signals a break in the text and is discussed in the next section on “Mormon’s Use of Repetitive Resumption.”

The latter half of the book of Alma is filled with war. Mormon essentially tells his future readers why this emphasis on these particular battles were important to Mormon’s thesis:

> And in these prosperous circumstances were the people of Nephi in the commencement of the twenty and first year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi.

> And they did prosper exceedingly, and they became exceedingly rich; yea, and they did multiply and wax strong in the land.

> And thus we see how merciful and just are all the dealings of the Lord, to the fulfilling of all his words unto the children of men; yea, we can behold that his words are verified, even at this time, which he spake unto Lehi, saying:

> Blessed art thou and thy children; and they shall be blessed, inasmuch as they shall keep my commandments they shall prosper in the land. But remember, inasmuch as they will not keep my commandments they shall be cut off from the presence of the Lord.

> And we see that these promises have been verified to the people of Nephi; for it has been their quarrelings and their contentions, yea, their murderings, and their plunderings, their idolatry, their whoredoms, and their abominations,
which were among themselves, which brought upon them their wars and their destructions.

And those who were faithful in keeping the commandments of the Lord were delivered at all times, whilst thousands of their wicked brethren have been consigned to bondage, or to perish by the sword, or to dwindle in unbelief, and mingle with the Lamanites.

But behold there never was a happier time among the people of Nephi, since the days of Nephi, than in the days of Moroni, yea, even at this time, in the twenty and first year of the reign of the judges. (Alma 50:17–23)

Mormon is not narrating Nephite history in these verses, he is using it to demonstrate the fulfillment of Lehi’s promise for the land. He specifically invokes Lehi and then emphasizes the contrast between the prosperity of the Nephites and the conditions that “brought upon them their wars and their destructions.” While many readers of Captain Moroni’s exploits in Alma see in them a glorification of that military chief captain, Mormon saw him restoring proper Nephite obedience before the Lord, having removed the contrary elements. Thus, “there never was a happier time among the people of Nephi, since the days of Nephi, than in the days of Moroni.” Mormon was correct that many readers might miss this message, so he made it explicit.

Mormon’s military descriptions have a specific purpose in his envisioned project; they carry a larger message about the literal fulfilment of Lehi’s promise. After a great slaughter of Nephites in Helaman, Mormon tells his audience:

Now this great loss of the Nephites, and the great slaughter which was among them, would not have happened had it not been for their wickedness and their abomination which was among them; yea, and it was among those also who professed to belong to the church of God.

And it was because of the pride of their hearts, because of their exceeding riches, yea, it was because of their oppression to the poor, withholding their food from the hungry, withholding their clothing from the naked, and smiting their humble brethren upon the cheek, making a mock of that which was sacred, denying the spirit of prophecy and of revelation, murdering, plundering, lying, stealing, committing adultery, rising up in great contentions, and deserting away into the land of Nephi, among the Lamanites—
And because of this their great wickedness, and their boastings in their own strength, they were left in their own strength; therefore they did not prosper, but were afflicted and smitten, and driven before the Lamanites, until they had lost possession of almost all their lands. (Helaman 4:11–13)

There was a promise given to Lehi that had two prongs. Nephi recorded the Lord’s promise to his father: “Inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments ye shall prosper in the land; but inasmuch as ye will not keep my commandments ye shall be cut off from my presence” (2 Nephi 1:20). At times, Mormon emphasizes the positive aspect of the promise. In this case, he emphasizes the negative side. In addition to pointing out that they invoked the curse through their rebellion, he emphasized that it was due to their own actions.

These moralistic summaries of the events Mormon wrote are part of the flow of the text. There is no real interruption of the narrative. Mormon clearly saw these statements as merely emphasizing the reason for which events had been selected and recorded in his record. When he finishes describing the intended moral, he moves directly on to the next event. Because there is no interruption, it is difficult to know whether these summaries were spontaneous or part of the intended text.

Mormon’s Use of Repetitive Resumption

There are times when Mormon understood that he had created a disruptive insertion in the text. These are defined by a technique that describes the way he returns to the originally planned text. As David Bokovoy explained: “Repetitive resumption refers to an editor’s return to an original narrative following a deliberate interlude. Old Testament writers accomplished this by repeating a key word or phrase that immediately preceded the textual interruption.”106 It is an Old-World literary technique that is not exclusive to the Old Testament.

106. David E. Bokovoy, “Repetitive Resumption in the Book of Mormon,” Insights 27, no. 1 (2007): 2. See also David E. Bokovoy and John A. Tvedtnes, Testaments: Links Between the Book of Mormon and the Hebrew Bible (Tooele, UT: Heritage Distribution, 2003), 117–31. Bokovoy and Tvedtnes describe repetitive resumption and provide a number of examples. I note that I disagree with some of their examples. There is clearly repetition, but little evidence of an inserted text that is not part of the flow of the narrative. I would see these as more of a stylistic repetition than a marking of inserted text (following Abusch’s definition cited right after the earlier quotation from Bokovoy).
Tzvi Abusch not only noticed the technique in Mesopotamian incantations but used it to discern when newer sections which had been interpolated into an earlier text. His critical analysis of the text itself was borne out by the discoveries of other copies of those incantations without the inserted text.\textsuperscript{107} For Abusch, there were two requirements to qualify as a repetitive resumption. The first is that there be a repetition of a phrase (the repetition itself). The second is that the material in between the repetitions not be directly related to the preceding text. In other words, in between the repeated phrases there is a text inserted which is not a natural continuation of the text up to the original phrase that is later repeated.

In Alma 8, Mormon is using Alma\textsubscript{2}’s personal record as his source. As he begins the story of Alma\textsubscript{2} and Amulek in Ammonihah, he inserts some information into the text that he sees as relevant, but which was not on Alma\textsubscript{2}’s record:

So that when he had finished his work at Melek he departed thence, and traveled three days’ journey on the north of the land of Melek; \textit{and he came to a city which was called Ammonihah}.

Now it was the custom of the people of Nephi to call their lands, and their cities, and their villages, yea, even all their small villages, after the name of him who first possessed them; and thus it was with the land of Ammonihah.

And it came to pass that when Alma had come to the city of Ammonihah he began to preach the word of God unto them. (Alma 8:6–8)

The repetition of coming to the city of Ammonihah brackets the insertion of the tangentially related text about how villages and cities received their names.

In Alma 30, Mormon is still working with Alma\textsubscript{2}’s personal record. In the story of Korihor we find repetitive resumption used twice. The first is near the beginning of the story, and the second at the end.

But it came to pass in the latter end of the seventeenth year, there came a man into the land of Zarahemla, \textit{and he was Anti-Christ, for he began to preach unto the people} against the prophecies which had been spoken by the prophets, concerning the coming of Christ.

Now there was no law against a man’s belief; for it was strictly contrary to the commands of God that there should be a law which should bring men on to unequal grounds.

For thus saith the scripture: Choose ye this day, whom ye will serve.

Now if a man desired to serve God, it was his privilege; or rather, if he believed in God it was his privilege to serve him; but if he did not believe in him there was no law to punish him.

But if he murdered he was punished unto death; and if he robbed he was also punished; and if he stole he was also punished; and if he committed adultery he was also punished; yea, for all this wickedness they were punished.

For there was a law that men should be judged according to their crimes. Nevertheless, there was no law against a man’s belief; therefore, a man was punished only for the crimes which he had done; therefore all men were on equal grounds.

And this Anti-Christ, whose name was Korihor, (and the law could have no hold upon him) began to preach unto the people that there should be no Christ. And after this manner did he preach: (Alma 30:6–12)

Alma₂ wrote the story of Korihor, but Mormon inserted the information about the relationship of Korihor to the law. While the insertion is tangentially related to the story, it is nevertheless an interruption that explains an issue that was not discussed in Alma₂’s text.

At the end of the story of Korihor, the inserted information is less disruptive, and can only be conclusively attributed to Mormon by the bracketing repetition of the departure information in the return sentence:

And it came to pass that the curse was not taken off of Korihor; but he was cast out, and went about from house to house begging for his food.

Now the knowledge of what had happened unto Korihor was immediately published throughout all the land; yea, the proclamation was sent forth by the chief judge to all the people in the land, declaring unto those who had believed in the words of Korihor that they must speedily repent, lest the same judgments would come unto them.
And it came to pass that they were all convinced of the wickedness of Korihor; therefore they were all converted again unto the Lord; and this put an end to the iniquity after the manner of Korihor.

And Korihor did go about from house to house, begging food for his support. (Alma 30:56–58)

It is likely that Mormon understood the aftermath of the Korihor incident from Alma₂’s record, but Mormon wanted to move his narrative quickly into the story of the Zoramites. He probably condensed material from Alma₂ to present the quick summary, and then moved back to his intended story. In this case, Mormon uses Korihor as the link to the story of the Zoramites. In the very next verse he notes:

And it came to pass that as he [Korihor] went forth among the people, yea, among a people who had separated themselves from the Nephites and called themselves Zoramites, being led by a man whose name was Zoram — and as he went forth amongst them, behold, he was run upon and trodden down, even until he was dead. (Alma 30:59)

The phrase “Korihor did go about from house to house, begging food for his support” is the essential tie that allows Korihor to “go about” into the land of the Zoramites. Mormon sets the stage for the Zoramites as villains by them having tread upon him “even until he was dead.” The phrase about going about from house to house not only indicated a return to the planned narrative, but it was a repetition that was also structurally required to move the text to the next story.

In the following example, Mormon inserts text marked by repetitive resumption.

And it came to pass when they had arrived in the borders of the land of the Lamanites, that they separated themselves and departed one from another, trusting in the Lord that they should meet again at the close of their harvest; for they supposed that great was the work which they had undertaken.

And assuredly it was great, for they had undertaken to preach the word of God to a wild and a hardened and a ferocious people; a people who delighted in murdering the Nephites, and robbing and plundering them; and their hearts were set upon riches, or upon gold and silver, and precious stones; yet they sought to obtain these things by murdering and plundering, that they might not labor for them with their own hands.
Thus they were a very indolent people, many of whom did worship idols, and the curse of God had fallen upon them because of the traditions of their fathers; notwithstanding the promises of the Lord were extended unto them on the conditions of repentance.

Therefore, this was the cause for which the sons of Mosiah had undertaken the work, that perhaps they might bring them unto repentance; that perhaps they might bring them to know of the plan of redemption.

Therefore they separated themselves one from another, and went forth among them, every man alone, according to the word and power of God which was given unto him. (Alma 17:13–17)

Mormon at times used repetitive resumption when he was interrupting himself. In the following case, an aside was triggered by what he had just written, and the departure and return points are marked by repetitive resumption:

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

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

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

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

And they have been kept and preserved by the hand of the Lord, that he should discover to every creature who should possess the land the iniquities and abominations of his people;

And whosoever has these things is called seer, after the manner of old times.
Now after Mosiah had finished translating these records, behold, it gave an account of the people who were destroyed, from the time that they were destroyed back to the building of the great tower, at the time the Lord confounded the language of the people and they were scattered abroad upon the face of all the earth, yea, and even from that time back until the creation of Adam.

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

And this account shall be written hereafter; for behold, it is expedient that all people should know the things which are written in this account.

[Original end of XII. The next verse was the beginning of a chapter in 1830, but in 1879 was shifted to become the final verse of chapter 28]

And now, as I said unto you, that after king Mosiah had done these things, he took the plates of brass, and all the things which he had kept, and conferred them upon Alma, who was the son of Alma; yea, all the records, and also the interpreters, and conferred them upon him, and commanded him that he should keep and preserve them, and also keep a record of the people, handing them down from one generation to another, even as they had been handed down from the time that Lehi left Jerusalem. (Mosiah 28:11–20)

The original intent was to end the chapter with the gathering of the records and sacred relics and giving them to Alma, which is repeated in the opening sentence of the original chapter XII. However, as Mormon wrote about the records, he mentioned the plates of Ether, and that triggered his insertion of information about the translation of those plates. This example can be seen both as a standard use of repetitive resumption and as an intended use of the chapter break as the interruption (which did not occur because of the spontaneous addition of the information about the translation of the plates of Ether).

Finally, there are cases of repetitive resumption that are anomalous. There are two that are clearly repetitions, but without an inserted text:

And king Mosiah did cause his people that they should till the earth. And he also, himself, did till the earth, that thereby he might
not become burdensome to his people, that he might do according to that which his father had done in all things. And there was no contention among all his people for the space of three years.

[Chapter 7]

And now, it came to pass that after king Mosiah had had continual peace for the space of three years, he was desirous to know concerning the people who went up to dwell in the land of Lehi-Nephi, or in the city of Lehi-Nephi; for his people had heard nothing from them from the time they left the land of Zarahemla; therefore, they wearied him with their teasings. (Mosiah 6:7–7:1)

And now all the study of Ammon and his people, and king Limhi and his people, was to deliver themselves out of the hands of the Lamanites and from bondage.

[Chapter 22]

And now it came to pass that Ammon and king Limhi began to consult with the people how they should deliver themselves out of bondage; and even they did cause that all the people should gather themselves together; and this they did that they might have the voice of the people concerning the matter. (Mosiah 21:36–22:1)

Each of these examples fit the requirement of the repeated phrase, but they are both missing any inserted text. I suggest that the important aspect of both is that they both occur around a chapter break (both in the modern edition and in the 1830 edition, representing a chapter Mormon created). I suggest that Mormon considered the chapter break as the interruption, and possibly because there was some time between writing the end of one chapter and the beginning of the next. There is no reason for the repetition if the repeated information had occurred in the same writing session.

There are two very important examples of repetitive resumption which I have not yet discussed. They become relevant to the themes of how Mormon manipulates history and names and are included in those discussions.

**Mormon Writing About War**

Mormon selected the stories he told both by inclusion and exclusion. It is obvious that Mormon included information about war, but he did so unevenly. In Alma chapters 2 and 3 Mormon describes the Amlicite rebellion. He gives multiple details of the war, including a description of
how the Amlicites had voluntarily marked themselves. After finishing with the battle itself, Mormon declares:

Now we will return again to the Amlicites, for they also had a mark set upon them; yea, they set the mark upon themselves, yea, even a mark of red upon their foreheads.

Thus the word of God is fulfilled, for these are the words which he said to Nephi: Behold, the Lamanites have I cursed, and I will set a mark on them that they and their seed may be separated from thee and thy seed, from this time henceforth and forever, except they repent of their wickedness and turn to me that I may have mercy upon them.

And again: I will set a mark upon him that mingleth his seed with thy brethren, that they may be cursed also.

And again: I will set a mark upon him that fighteth against thee and thy seed.

And again, I say he that departeth from thee shall no more be called thy seed; and I will bless thee, and whomsoever shall be called thy seed, henceforth and forever; and these were the promises of the Lord unto Nephi and to his seed.

Now the Amlicites knew not that they were fulfilling the words of God when they began to mark themselves in their foreheads; nevertheless they had come out in open rebellion against God; therefore it was expedient that the curse should fall upon them.

Now I would that ye should see that they brought upon themselves the curse; and even so doth every man that is cursed bring upon himself his own condemnation. (Alma 3:13–19)

Mormon is quite explicit about the lesson that he wants his readers to learn from the story of the Amlicite rebellion. Contrast this with the battle that followed immediately after the Amlicite defeat.

Now it came to pass that not many days after the battle which was fought in the land of Zarahemla, by the Lamanites and the Amlicites, that there was another army of the Lamanites came in upon the people of Nephi, in the same place where the first army met the Amlicites.

And it came to pass that there was an army sent to drive them out of their land.
Now Alma himself being afflicted with a wound did not go up to battle at this time against the Lamanites;

But he sent up a numerous army against them; and they went up and slew many of the Lamanites, and drove the remainder of them out of the borders of their land.

And then they returned again and began to establish peace in the land, being troubled no more for a time with their enemies.

Now all these things were done, yea, all these wars and contentions were commenced and ended in the fifth year of the reign of the judges. (Alma 3:20–25)

Mormon recorded two significant battles that resulted in “tens of thousands of souls sent to the eternal world” (Alma 3:26) but gives details only for the Amlicite rebellion. For Mormon, the details of war are only mentioned when they serve as exemplars of his greater purpose. If there is no new point to be made, the war is noted, but only briefly.

This difference of emphasis is even more dramatic in Mormon’s relation of the two wars that involved the people of Ammon and the land of Jershon. Soon after the people of Ammon relocated to Jershon, the Lamanites attacked. In the fifteenth year of the reign of the judges, there was a terrible battle with the Lamanites:

And now it came to pass that after the people of Ammon were established in the land of Jershon, and a church also established in the land of Jershon, and the armies of the Nephites were set round about the land of Jershon, yea, in all the borders round about the land of Zarahemla; behold the armies of the Lamanites had followed their brethren into the wilderness.

And thus there was a tremendous battle; yea, even such an one as never had been known among all the people in the land from the time Lehi left Jerusalem; yea, and tens of thousands of the Lamanites were slain and scattered abroad.

Yea, and also there was a tremendous slaughter among the people of Nephi; nevertheless, the Lamanites were driven and scattered, and the people of Nephi returned again to their land.

And now this was a time that there was a great mourning and lamentation heard throughout all the land, among all the people of Nephi—
Yea, the cry of widows mourning for their husbands, and also of fathers mourning for their sons, and the daughter for the brother, yea, the brother for the father; and thus the cry of mourning was heard among all of them, mourning for their kindred who had been slain.

And now surely this was a sorrowful day; yea, a time of solemnity, and a time of much fasting and prayer.

And thus endeth the fifteenth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi; (Alma 28:1–7)

A war which produced a “tremendous battle; yea, even such an one as never had been known among all the people in the land from the time Lehi left Jerusalem” is not described. There are no heroes. There are no tactics. There are no battle scenes. There is only the report of the battle and its terrible aftermath. Mormon certainly includes scenes of war, but not for the sake of the description of alone. As an editor, Mormon saw that the wars merited a fuller description when there were lessons that could be drawn from that description. When Mormon details wars and battles, he isn’t seeking only to describe the scene, but to describe the behaviors of the peoples involved. The Amlicites rebelled and chose to separate themselves from God. They invoked the curse without even understanding that they had done so.

Mormon will tell of the Amalickiahite rebellion beginning in Alma 46, but the story isn’t only about Amalickiah but also Moroni — two men set as opposites and representing the two poles of the promise, both the choice of unrighteousness and the righteous response. When Mormon provides extensive descriptions of the war in which Captain Moroni was involved, his purpose was more to set Moroni as an exemplar than to examine military strategy. Helaman’s stripling warriors are in the story not because of their battle prowess, but because of the lessons to be learned about their parents, their own choices, and the protection purchased by the faithfulness of parents and sons. Mormon’s wars are not about war, but about people and their choices.

Mormon Writing About History

Mormon dealt with history, but he had no intention of being an historian. Like many Old Testament writers, Mormon saw history as

108. In this I appear to contradict Grant Hardy’s reading of Mormon: “Perhaps the most striking difference between Nephi and Mormon is how much the latter sees himself as a historian, with a responsibility to tell the story of his civilization
the loom upon which the image of God’s intent would appear as the warp and weft of time filled in the picture. Mormon was very clear about why he wrote as he concluded his work. He spoke to the Lamanites as a remnant of the house of Israel, and declared:

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. (Mormon 7:8–9)

Moroni summarized his father’s intent more succinctly in the Title Page: “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.” Mormon’s testament of Christ was intended to support the prophesied book which we know as the Bible, which he considered the other testament of Christ.

History clearly plays its part in helping Mormon achieve his purpose, and that purpose is not pointed toward the past, but toward the future. It is a tapestry created from the events of the past, designed to illustrate the future of God’s plan for the house of Israel.109

Mormon used the backbone of Nephite history to frame the story he intended to tell, but he was the artist applying the clay (the stories of his people’s past) to the structure.110 David B. Honey described Mormon’s task: “The fact that the work has been edited out of various other records comprehensively and accurately.” Hardy, Understanding the Book of Mormon, 91. I suspect that our differences lie mostly in emphasis rather than actual substance.

109. Honey, “The Secular as Sacred: The Historiography of the Title Page,” 97: “The next guideline defines just which type off events best portray the influence of the Lord: those events are most crucial for inclusion, whether from past Hebrew or contemporary Nephite history, that lead to ‘the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God, manifesting himself unto all nations.’”

110. Grant Hardy, “Mormon as Editor,” in Rediscovering the Book of Mormon, eds. John L. Sorenson and Melvin J. Thorne (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1991), 25, notes that Mormon shows that “the bad things that happen are truly terrible, while the good things are wondrous indeed.” However, there is mention of a third set of people in the
leads us to conclude that the redactor, Mormon, must have been guided by certain editorial principles by which he decided which records were important to copy, excerpt, or summarize and which data were judged either essential, superfluous, or unnecessary to include.” 111 Mormon’s stated purpose tells us that his selection criteria were not historical, only that they were framed by history. History provided the sequencing of events and the events themselves. However, which events were told, how they were applied to the historical framework, and in some cases, how Mormon transformed them, all combine to create the work that Mormon intended would cause us to “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” (Mormon 7:8).

**Fitting Names into Narrative Types**

One of the most important instances of repetitive resumption explains an otherwise anomalous text. In Alma 11 (latter half of VIII), Mormon provides a discussion of the weights and values among the Nephites. This explanation should not exist in a contemporary document written for a contemporary audience — what one assumes to be general knowledge need not be explicitly described. That principle highlights the anomaly of this long explanation. Using the concept of repetitive resumption, we can determine that Mormon intentionally inserted this information in a text that otherwise did not discuss it.

Alma describes going to Ammonihah, finding Amulek, and then their debate with Zeezrom. The full story crosses from Alma chapter 10 to 11 in our modern editions of the Book of Mormon, but the whole story was contained in the single original chapter VIII.

> Now the object of these lawyers was to get gain; and they got gain according to their employ.

**[Chapter 11, not an original chapter break]**

Now it was in the law of Mosiah that every man who was a judge of the law, or those who were appointed to be judges, should receive wages according to the time which they labored to judge those who were brought before them to be judged.

environs whose fate is not discussed. Hardy suggests that the “answer is that these people did not fit into the pattern of ‘the righteous prosper, the wicked suffer.’” 111. Honey, “The Secular as Sacred: The Historiography of the Title Page,” 95.
Now if a man owed another, and he would not pay that which he did owe, he was complained of to the judge; and the judge executed authority, and sent forth officers that the man should be brought before him; and he judged the man according to the law and the evidences which were brought against him, and thus the man was compelled to pay that which he owed, or be stripped, or be cast out from among the people as a thief and a robber.

And the judge received for his wages according to his time—a senine of gold for a day, or a senum of silver, which is equal to a senine of gold; and this is according to the law which was given....

[Continues through verse 19]

Now, it was for the sole purpose to get gain, because they received their wages according to their employ, therefore, they did stir up the people to riotings, and all manner of disturbances and wickedness, that they might have more employ, that they might get money according to the suits which were brought before them; therefore they did stir up the people against Alma and Amulek. (Alma 10:32–11:20. Formatted to emphasize the repeated phrase as opposed to the inserted, indented, material.)

The repetition of the phrase about getting gain tells us when Mormon returns to the original text (which he is taking from Alma₂’s personal record). When Alma₂ wrote about this incident, his expected audience already had the cultural knowledge necessary to understand the names of the relative values. When Mormon wrote, he knew his audience would be at least distant in time, if not space. Therefore, Mormon inserted the definitions.

This long insertion served two purposes. The first was to aid Mormon’s readers in understanding the value of the bribe being offered. The second, and the reason that it is as extended as it is, is that the names of the different values

112. Bokovoy and Tvedtnes, Testaments: Links Between the Book of Mormon and the Hebrew Bible, 123. Bokovoy and Tvedtnes cite this example without analyzing the function of the insertion.

113. It is possible that the system was similarly unfamiliar to Mormon, and was somewhere noted on the large plates. The function of the insertion, however, is to establish the way in which Mormon uses those facts rather than the description of the system itself. The completeness of the description, however, does argue that it was somewhere described on the large plates and Mormon extracted the full system rather than only those parts he would use in his narrative.
would be borrowed in Mormon’s text to have a meaning beyond a simple name. Gordon C. Thomasson first noted this phenomenon. He explains:

Metonymy or metonymic naming involves “naming by association,” a metaphoric process of linking two concepts or persons together in such a way as to tell us more about the latter by means of what we already know about the former. For example, to call a potential scandal a “Watergate” is to suggest volumes in a single word. Similarly, if we call an individual a Judas, a Benedict Arnold, or a Quisling, rather than giving his or her proper name, we can in one word convey an immense amount of information about how we at least feel toward that person.114

Thomasson then specifically applies this concept to Mormon’s inserted list of values:

In Alma 11 we find a seeming digression from the topic of the text in the complex discussion of Nephite weights and units of measure and equivalents. Conspicuous, now, among the names of the units of value given is that of an ezrom (Alma 11:6, 12). It is a quantity of silver. Immediately after the discussion of money we find the person who is called Zeezrom. This appears to be a compound of the word Ze, which we can translate “This is an” as a prefix, and the word ezrom. Zeezrom is distinguished by having offered 10.5 ezrom of silver to Alma and Amulek if they would deny their testimonies … His name would translate “this is a unit of silver.” Besides linking him with his actions, the name links him into a typological complex with those who would sell their signs and tokens for money and to Judas’s selling/betraying Christ for thirty pieces of silver. If this is not metonymic naming I am anxious to learn what it might be. Lest the likelihood of Zeezrom being a metonym be underrated, I subsequently noted that the largest Nephite weights and units of measure, the antion of gold (Alma 11:19), appears in later chapters of the text of Alma, first in referring to a chief ruler of Ammonihah — one Antionah (a big man in status and self-esteem, Alma 12:20) — and later to the big-money town or pride-in-wealth city of Antionum (Alma 31:3),

Gardner, Labor Diligently to Write • 95

home of the nouveau riche bourgeois Zoramites (note they take upon themselves the name of an ex-servant, Zoram).115

Mormon inserts a list of values so that we modern readers might understand something of the value of the bribe, but also that we would have the context in which to understand the intended connotations of names that Mormon used in his text. Based on our modern understandings, in Thomasson’s words: “we often take names far too lightly. As a result we miss much of what a truly polysemous text (having multiple meanings or significations) such as the Book of Mormon may communicate.”116 Mormon at times used names for his own purposes, and the name he used for an individual may or may not have been the name by which contemporaries knew the person.117 This inserted list of values assists us in understanding their metonymic meaning.

The concept of metonymic naming provides a context in which we see the names for values turned into names of people or places. It is a literary technique Mormon used frequently, but which is absent in the small plates. The crucial difference is that the small plates were written by the authors who lived the events they record. There is no reason to believe that they did not use their own names, or that any other name listed was anything other than the actual name of that person.

When Mormon writes, it may be safest to assume that most names are listed for some reason related to the story he was telling. That is not to suggest that all names would be metonymic. Mormon would have used his own name. Naming his son Moroni for the great Captain Moroni suggests that both of those men bear their actual names.

Mormon understood and made a point of highlighting, the divisions in Zarahemla that resulted from the uneasy merging of two different peoples with different languages, religions, and by extension, politics. The resulting conflict was certainly behind the civil war that would have been discussed in greater detail in the lost chapter or chapters of Mosiah. During the reign of Mosiah₂, the people of Limhi and the people of Alma₁ returned to Zarahemla. Mormon notes: “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 25:4).

It is quite certain that those two bodies of people were the descendants of Nephi and the descendants of Mulek. Tensions in Zarahemla always tended to divide along those lines. This is a division that Mormon subtly

115. Ibid., 15–16.
116. Ibid., 8.
117. See the discussion of the order of the Nehors in Gardner, Second Witness, 4:41–43.
underscores using names. The Hebrew root of the name Mulek would have been mlk, with the meaning of “king.” As Mormon creates names, he uses names with a mlk root to designate that the bearer was part of the anti-Nephite and pro-king (meaning a Mulekite king) faction in Zarahemla.

In Alma 46 we are introduced to Amalickiah: “Now the leader of those who were wroth against their brethren was a large and a strong man; and his name was Amalickiah. And Amalickiah was desirous to be a king; and those people who were wroth were also desirous that he should be their king; and they were the greater part of them the lower judges of the land, and they were seeking for power” (Alma 46:3–4). Amalickiah is based on the mlk root. Note that he is both “against their brethren,” and that he was “desirous to be king.”

More complicated is the interesting case of the Amlicites and Amalekites. Royal Skousen notes that Joseph likely pronounced Amlicites Amlikites. In fact, “the first two occurrences in [the printer’s manuscript] of Amlicites (in Alma 2:11–12) are spelled Amlikites. He then notes:

There is one additional Book of Mormon name, Amalekite, that could be included in the above list of names taking the form am-l-k. The printer’s manuscript (and every published edition) uses the term Amalekite(s) to refer to a group of religious apostates, 14 times in Alma 21–27 and 5 times in Alma 43. Yet the original manuscript and other evidence suggests that these Amalekites were not an otherwise unidentified group of religious dissidents, but were in fact Amlici’s own group, the Amlicites.119

J. Christopher Conkling accepts Skousen’s suggestion and notes that: “Chronologically, the Amlicites and Amalekites fit together perfectly; they never overlap.”120 However, Benjamin McMurtry provides what I believe is a much more careful examination of the posited two different groups:

The first textual reference to either of these groups is the appearance of Amlici in Alma 2:1. The rise of Amlici was in the commencement of the fifth year of the reign of the judges. Amlici gains a following, and they call themselves Amlicites (Alma 2:11).

119. Ibid., 1606.
They do battle with the Nephite armies. Amlici is killed by the sword of Alma the Younger, and his followers are defeated and scattered. This all occurs in the fifth year of the judges.

The first textual reference to the Amalekites occurs in Alma 21:2: “Now the Lamanites and the Amalekites and the people of Amulon had built a great city, which was called Jerusalem.” We must not fall into the trap of thinking that because this story appears nineteen chapters after the story of the Amlicites that it takes place at a later time. The text reveals that Alma 21 takes place “when Ammon and his brethren separated themselves in the borders of the land of the Lamanites” (Alma 21:1). This separation took place “in the first year of the judges” (Alma 17:6). The Amalekites very likely existed long before the first year, due to the fact that their city was already “great” when it was first discovered by Aaron in the first year of the judges. They continued to be a distinct people until the eighteenth year of the judges (Alma 43:4, 6).121

McMurtry’s solution is to posit the two as different peoples with similar names. I suggest that Mormon is using names for his own textual purposes rather than providing the names by which those people were known to others. Mormon gave apostate groups a generic designation of Amlicite/Amalekite with at least the implied meaning of apostate-of-Zarahemlaite-lineage.122

Mormon does not use the name as a pejorative, but as a lineage/cultural designation. Names with that root can have a positive influence, providing that they accept Nephite religion and political dominance. Living among apostates in Ammonihah, there is a righteous descendant of Nephi (Alma 10:3): Amulek. I suggest that Mormon is indicating that regardless of heritage, he had been part of the apostate religion, but had been converted (see Alma 10:5–8).

122. Mark A. Wright noticed this possibility and convinced me that it is the most plausible solution to the problems Skousen, Conkling, and McMurtry are attempting to resolve. It is the reason that they come to opposite conclusions while examining the same data. It is probable that there were two different groups who left at different times. Both shared the characteristic of the Zarahemla/Mulekite heritage. For Mormon, that was all that needed to be highlighted. The actual names of those involved was not only superfluous but might have hidden the important connection that Mormon saw in them.
Mormon’s use of *mlk*-root names for apostates should be read as a generic designation rather than as personal names. That use also suggests that when we see *king-men* in Mormon’s text that we are seeing the English translation of a *mlk*-root word. We should see *king-men* as a political party with roots in the descendants of Mulek. The specific use of this designation is intended to create a direct antithetical parallel with the Nephite-supporters, the *freemen*.

And it came to pass that those who were desirous that Pahoran should be dethroned from the judgment-seat were called *king-men*, for they were desirous that the law should be altered in a manner to overthrow the free government and to establish a king over the land.

And those who were desirous that Pahoran should remain chief judge over the land took upon them the name of freemen; and thus was the division among them, for the *freemen* had sworn or covenanted to maintain their rights and the privileges of their religion by a free government. (Alma 51:5–6)\(^{123}\)

Parallel to the implications of divisiveness that was inherited from the *mlk*-ites, Mormon also weaves in a theme of the destructive inheritance of the Jaredites among the Nephite nation. Even without a genealogical connection, Mormon makes certain that he includes the information that the last Jaredite king, Coriantumr, comes to and lives with the people of Zarahemla. Then, the next time we see that name: “And they came down again that they might pitch battle against the Nephites. And they were led by a man whose name was Coriantumr; and he was a descendant of Zarahemla; and he was a dissenter from among the Nephites; and he was a large and a mighty man” (Helaman 1:15).

A different type of subtle manipulation of names might be present in the unusual string of fathers and sons with the same names. The succession of Nephite dynasties, beginning with Alma₂, is quite complex. Continuation of the political line from father to son becomes rarer, and in 3 Nephi the government is completely dissolved, only to implicitly reappear in 4 Nephi. These dynastic/book changes are precisely the place where the most curious naming trend in the Book of Mormon occurs. At the end of the book of Mosiah, we have Alma₁. His son, Alma₂, begins the

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\(^{123}\) On a related note, notice that the freemen weren’t concerned with the nature of government or the person, but with the “rights and the privileges of their religion.” This is another confirmation to the close connection between religion and government, and why political differences were often expressed as religious differences, and vice versa.

From a cultural standpoint, the succession of same-named fathers and sons is an anomaly. Without the artificial addition of numbers to separate names, we have Amos the son of Amos, the son of Nephi the son of Nephi, the son of Helaman the son of Helaman, and the son of Alma the son of Alma. In the ancient world, it was not uncommon for a grandparent/grandchild to share a name, but it was very rare for a parent/child to have the same name. In a world without surnames and without the concept of the clarifying junior/senior, having a parent and child with the same name would lead to too much confusion. Yet we have that precise issue not once, but four times with four sets of same-named father/son pairs.

Joseph Spencer noticed an important pattern in these books and names:

[W]hile each book in Mormon’s history recounts a particular succession, each break between books also marks a succession. At the same time, Mormon softens the impact of these breaks by having all cross-book successions be those in which the successor shares his name with his father…

That Mormon highlights dynastic continuity even at points of historical transition makes clear his interest in maintaining the essential progression of the trajectory of Christian preaching that underlies his history.124

I suspect that I see the data he noticed in a slightly different light, but the recognition of the pattern is an important contribution. Combined with the understanding that Mormon uses names for textual purposes, this allows us to see a reason for the naming patterns that would otherwise be unattested in much of antiquity.

Mormon discussed the explicit division between church and state when Alma was required to adjudicate a case of religious apostasy. This was a difficult problem, because it dealt with religious principles, but religion and politics had always been nearly synonymous in Nephite society. Thus, it is possible that Alma was adjudicating a case of treason. He took the case to the Lord, who told him to forgive upon repentance, and if there were no repentance, to blot their names from church records. There was no indication that there was a political penalty. The creation of a church

had created a situation where there was the possibility of the separation of church and state, and this case confirmed the division (see Mosiah 26:5–36).

What Mormon is tracing then, is a dual system. On one line is the political succession and on the other the religious succession. Even as the political dynasties undergo turmoil, the fact that the same-named religious figures straddle the dynastic changes allows Mormon to suggest that there was a continuation of the religious line even as there was political turmoil.125 Thus, these father/son names have an important function in the text that is unlikely to have occurred naturally by using those father’s and son’s given names.

The appearance of the name Nephi in this sequence may have served a particular textual function. Not only do we have Nephi₂ and Nephi₃ providing the continuity across differently named books, we have them at an important ending and beginning. The change in book names might imply a discontinuity in the ruling line, but 3 Nephi makes it clear that there was not only a discontinuity, but a dissolution. Nephi₃ lives during a time when the Nephite government ceased to exist and all who had been part of the larger government returned to the rule of their separate tribes. When we again have Nephites reforming, what better name to have represent the emergence of the new people than Nephi (Nephi₃).

A final interesting example of Mormon’s manipulation of names comes from Mormon’s inclusion of Alma₂’s final instructions to his three sons. Mormon took these instructions from Alma₂’s personal record, and therefore made a conscious decision to include them. They have little historical significance, and do not move Mormon’s narrative along. Nevertheless, Mormon saw something important in them.

I suggest that at least a major reason for including them can be discerned from the names of the sons. I suggest that Mormon provided the names to fit with their stories and that the names we see were not those their parents gave them. Just as Zeezrom and Antionah referred to real people who probably were not known by those names, I believe that Mormon replaced the names of Alma₂’s sons with metonyms to reinforce a specific, intended lesson for his readers.

The oldest son, Helaman, bears a name previously given to one of king Benjamin’s sons (Mosiah 1:2). It is, therefore, a good, strong Nephite name.

125. Ibid., 112: “This first trajectory of continuous Nephite preaching is, however, coupled with a second trajectory — that, namely, of the progressive political collapse of the Nephite state... For the moment, it is only necessary to recognize that the initiation of Nephite preaching cannot be separated from the beginning of the collapse of the centuries-Old Nephite state — just as the culmination of Nephite Christian anticipation cannot be disentangled from the culmination of Nephite political deterioration.”
Helaman received the plates, and nothing in the instructions Alma gives him suggests that he was anything less than a faithful Nephite.

The next son is Shiblon. Shiblon has an ambiguous name. It is the name of a unit of measure (Alma 11:15), and therefore has a positive connotation. However, Shiblon was also the name of a Jaredite king (Ether 1:11–12). Shiblon is basically a good son, but in Alma’s final blessing, note how Alma suggests that Shiblon might be spiritually ambiguous:

And now, as ye have begun to teach the word even so I would that ye should continue to teach; and I would that ye would be diligent and temperate in all things.

See that ye are not lifted up unto pride; yea, see that ye do not boast in your own wisdom, nor of your much strength.

Use boldness, but not overbearance; and also see that ye bridle all your passions, that ye may be filled with love; see that ye refrain from idleness.

Do not pray as the Zoramites do, for ye have seen that they pray to be heard of men, and to be praised for their wisdom.

Do not say: O God, I thank thee that we are better than our brethren; but rather say: O Lord, forgive my unworthiness, and remember my brethren in mercy — yea, acknowledge your unworthiness before God at all times. (Alma 38:10–14)

Right after the admonition to be diligent and temperate, Alma lists the things that might tempt Shiblon to not be diligent or temperate. Those things are descriptions of apostasy. Apparently, Shiblon was a good son, but with the possibility of being tempted into apostasy.

The third son bears the name Corianton. That name is not otherwise attested in the Book of Mormon, but it shares the basic form Coriant-um, a Jaredite king (Ether 1:13–14). Similarly, Coriantor was also a Jaredite king (Ether 1:6–7). Of course, there is also Coriantumr, who was the last Jaredite king as well as the name of a prominent Nephite dissenter (1:15).

As suggested by his name, Corianton is the son who did apostatize (for a time). Alma tells Corianton that one of the things he did wrong was: “thou didst go on unto boasting in thy strength and thy wisdom” (Alma 39:2). That doesn’t seem so bad, but it is also the very thing Alma warned Shiblon against (Alma 38:11). As the child with the most obviously Jaredite name, it is unsurprising that he was the one to cause the greatest problem and to become an actual apostate rather than only have the potential to become one, as is suggested for Shiblon.
The names of Alma’s sons so directly correspond with the information we read about them that it would require an incredible coincidence to have those be the names their parents gave them. ¹²⁶ Given that we see Mormon intentionally creating names in other places, and even including a description of weights and measures so that we might understand them, it is best to see these names for their metonymic function.

**Fitting History into Types**

As Mormon begins to relate Nephite history at the beginning of the reign of the judges, the very first story he selected to tell was of “a man brought before [Alma₂] to be judged, a man who was large, and was noted for his much strength” (Alma 1:2). Mormon tells first of his apostate teachings, and then of the slaying of Gideon, which was the crime for which he appeared before Alma₂. Not until Mormon tells us that he was condemned to die does he tell us the name of the criminal: Nehor (Alma 1:15). This introduction is unusual not only for withholding the name, but also that his false teachings were emphasized even over the crime for which he was executed.

I believe that we can surmise that in the first year of the reign of the judges that there was such a large, strong, man brought before Alma₂. We may accept that he killed Gideon. It is the name that is interesting, and perhaps intentionally created for narrative effect.

Nehor is both a Jaredite land and city (Ether 7:4, 9). Mormon uses Jaredite names in the way that old Hollywood westerns used black hats. In Mormon’s text, any person with a Jaredite name should be examined to see how they fit into Mormon’s narrative. In the case of Nehor, it is a complicated relationship with a religion. Knowing that Nehor murdered Gideon tells us that he is a bad man. Having a religion associated with his name tells us that it is a bad religion, an apostate religion.¹²⁷

Mormon calls this apostate religion the order of Nehor, or order of the Nehors.¹²⁸ Mormon describes Ammonihah as a city whose people

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¹²⁶ The use of literary names rather than given names is a practice also seen in the Bible, where they typically function as wordplay. See Matthew L. Bowen, *Name as Key-Word: Collected Essays on Onomastic Wordplay and the Temple in Mormon Scripture* (Orem, UT: The Interpreter Foundation, 2018), xlviii.


subscribed to the “profession of Nehor” (Alma 15:15). When Ammonihah was destroyed, it was called “Desolation of Nehors” (Alma 16:11).¹²⁹

The chronology of the order of the Nehors is even more convoluted when we find that the Amalekites and the people of Amulon had built a city named Jerusalem in which they “had built synagogues after the order of the Nehors; for many of the Amalekites and the Amulonites were after the order of the Nehors” (Alma 21:4). Benjamin McMurtry notes:

> We must not fall into the trap of thinking that because this story appears nineteen chapters after the story of the Amlicites that it takes place at a later time. The text reveals that Alma 21 takes place “when Ammon and his brethren separated themselves in the borders of the land of the Lamanites” (Alma 21:1). This separation took place “in the first year of the judges” (Alma 17:6). The Amalekites very likely existed long before the first year, due to the fact that their city was already “great” when it was first discovered by Aaron in the first year of the judges. They continued to be a distinct people until the eighteenth year of the judges (Alma 43:4, 6).¹³⁰

Mormon is using the name of Nehor to describe religious practices that were well established prior to the time that Nehor is introduced into the narrative. Not only do we have Nehorite Amalekites before Nehor, but an analysis of the teachings associated with the order of Nehor shows that the court of king Noah followed the same basic religion.¹³¹

Mormon created a subtle theme which associated apostate religion with the remnants of the Jaredites. Mormon used the Jaredite name for both the condemned man and the religion so that his readers would clearly understand that neither the man nor the religion was to be admired.

**Making History into Prophecy**

When Mormon selected material from Alma 2’s personal record, he included not only information about Alma 2’s preaching, but also the accounts of the missionary work of the sons of Mosiah. Why did Mormon concern himself with this mission to the Lamanites? As a Nephite, and particularly a Nephite living at during the final days of the Nephite nation, his view of the Lamanites would have been as enemies. It was a Lamanite

¹²⁹. I believe it likely that Mormon used Desolation of Nehors as an intentional parallel to the land of Desolation.


army that was pursuing his fleeing Nephites, and a Lamanite army that would destroy them at Cumorah.

Mormon’s experience with the Lamanites stands in stark contrast to the converted Lamanites from the missionary labors described in the book of Alma. Why does Mormon include those stories? As with all of Mormon’s editorial choices, suggesting that history required him to include the information is too simple. Mormon did not write because the history had occurred, but for what the history could teach to future readers. Mormon’s purposes looked forward, not backward.

Mormon declared that purpose rather clearly in his final statement, which we have as Mormon chapter 7:

And now, behold, I would speak somewhat unto the remnant of this people who are spared, if it so be that God may give unto them my words, that they may know of the things of their fathers; yea, I speak unto you, ye remnant of the house of Israel; and these are the words which I speak:

Know ye that ye are of the house of Israel.

Know ye that ye must come unto repentance, or ye cannot be saved.

Know ye that ye must lay down your weapons of war, and delight no more in the shedding of blood, and take them not again, save it be that God shall command you.

Know ye that ye must come to the knowledge of your fathers, and repent of all your sins and iniquities, and believe in Jesus Christ, that he is the Son of God, and that he was slain by the Jews, and by the power of the Father he hath risen again, whereby he hath gained the victory over the grave; and also in him is the sting of death swallowed up.

And he bringeth to pass the resurrection of the dead, whereby man must be raised to stand before his judgment-seat.

And he hath brought to pass the redemption of the world, whereby he that is found guiltless before him at the judgment day hath it given unto him to dwell in the presence of God in his kingdom, to sing ceaseless praises with the choirs above, unto the Father, and unto the Son, and unto the Holy Ghost, which are one God, in a state of happiness which hath no end.

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 7:1–10)

When Mormon closes his writing, he tells us why he wrote. He wrote to a specific people, those who remained after there were no more Nephites (Mormon 7:1). He wrote to the Lamanites. What did he hope for them? That they would repent and believe in Christ (Mormon 7:5). He very clearly says, in verse 9, that “this is written for the intent that ye may believe that” (“that” being the Bible’s testament of Christ). That is his reason for writing.

If his reason for writing looked forward to repentant and converted Lamanites, then it is clear that he included the missionary labors of the sons of Mosiah to demonstrate that it was possible that the gospel could touch Lamanite hearts, and not only convert them, but make a righteous people of them. He promised as much when he wrote: “All these things had happened and the Lamanites had become, the more part of them, a righteous people, insomuch that their righteousness did exceed that of the Nephites, because of their firmness and their steadiness in the faith” (Helaman 6:1).

The past evidence of the true conversion of the Lamanites was intended to foreshadow the future conversion of the Lamanites, to whom Mormon wrote and to whom his hopes extended. In spite of witnessing the Nephite demise, Mormon’s message is optimistic for the future.

**Mormon’s Explanation for the Nephite Demise**

It is inconceivable that Mormon could witness the end of the Nephites and not have those events influence his worldview and his message. How many times did Mormon ask himself how a people with such promise
could come to such an end? Along with his testimony of the Savior, Mormon wrote to provide his answer to that question.

For Mormon, it was impossible to understand the end without understanding the beginning. Hence, he began with the story of Lehi and his family leaving Jerusalem and coming to the New World. After that beginning, he used history as the natural framework for his story. Although we do not have Mormon’s version of early Nephite history, we can be certain of some things that were included. One that he surely emphasized was the Nephite foundational promise. Nephi recorded that his father said:

Wherefore, I, Lehi, have obtained a promise, that inasmuch as those whom the Lord God shall bring out of the land of Jerusalem shall keep his commandments, they shall prosper upon the face of this land; and they shall be kept from all other nations, that they may possess this land unto themselves. And if it so be that they shall keep his commandments they shall be blessed upon the face of this land, and there shall be none to molest them, nor to take away the land of their inheritance; and they shall dwell safely forever. (2 Nephi 1:9)

When we finally see that promise in Mormon’s writings, it is as a reference and not new information. In the story of Alma and Amulek at Ammonihah, Mormon quotes Alma saying: “Behold, do ye not remember the words which he spake unto Lehi, saying that: Inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments, ye shall prosper in the land? And again it is said that: Inasmuch as ye will not keep my commandments ye shall be cut off from the presence of the Lord” (Alma 9:13). Alma clarifies what he means by being cut off from the presence of the Lord:

But behold, I say unto you that if ye persist in your wickedness that your days shall not be prolonged in the land, for the Lamanites shall be sent upon you; and if ye repent not they shall come in a time when you know not, and ye shall be visited with utter destruction; and it shall be according to the fierce anger of the Lord.

For he will not suffer you that ye shall live in your iniquities, to destroy his people. I say unto you, Nay; he would rather suffer that the Lamanites might destroy all his people who are called the people of Nephi, if it were possible that they could fall into sins and transgressions, after having had so much light and so much knowledge given unto them of the Lord their God; (Alma 9:18–19)
One reason Mormon includes the story of Alma and Amulek at Ammonihah is to stand as historical confirmation of the fulfillment of the negative side of the Nephite foundational promise. While peace and prosperity were promised, they were conditional upon following God’s teachings. The negative aspect of the foundational promise was that failure to follow God’s teachings would result in destruction. Therefore, when Mormon tells of the destruction of Ammonihah not once, but twice — once from the Lamanite perspective and once from the Nephite perspective — we can be certain that there was a larger purpose than merely relaying history, for Mormon didn’t need to tell that tale twice. He was directing our attention to the importance of this event.

If repetition signals something to which Mormon wanted his readers to pay attention, then the story of the plates of Ether was particularly important. Mormon recounts the basic story three different times. The first recounting is when Ammon meets Limhi, and Limhi brings records to Ammon “which contained the record of his people from the time that they left the land of Zarahemla” (Mosiah 8:5); he also “brought twenty-four plates which are filled with engravings.” (Mosiah 8:9). At that time, Limhi asks if Ammon knows someone who might translate (Mosiah 8:12).

The second story is found in Mosiah 21 where Mormon tells how those twenty-four plates were obtained (Mosiah 21:25–27). That recounting also indicates that “Limhi was again filled with joy on learning from the mouth of Ammon that king Mosiah had a gift from God, whereby he could interpret such engravings” (Mosiah 21:28).

Finally, we get the plates of Ether again when Mosiah translates them with the “two stones which were fastened into the two rims of a bow” (Mosiah 28:12–13). Mormon could have found a more compact way to tell this story: instead he told it three times in three different settings. The record of Ether is at the heart of Mormon’s sub-theme, explaining how and why the Nephites would be destroyed. It is interesting that as important as the theme was, it was sufficient to reference it rather than retell it. Mormon intentionally uses only the moral of their story without the elaboration of their story. That task he promises (Mosiah 28:19), but perhaps understood all along that he would leave it to Moroni.

The development of historical Christianity included the elaboration of the role of Satan to the point where all wrongness might be attributed to Satan. Mormon does not blame Nephite woes on Satan; he blames the Jaredites.132 They were his model from history of how a nation might be

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132. Mormon does use Satan as a means of the reappearance of the Gadianton robbers after they had been removed from the land.
utterly destroyed. More than that, Mormon creates the case that their history actively affected the Nephites. Mormon carefully links the Jaredite secret combinations to destruction, then links both Jaredites and the destruction of governments to the secret combination he calls the Gadianton robbers.

This thread that will run through Mormon’s account begins with the translation of the plates of Ether. Note how Mormon describes the translated record that Mosiah read to his people: “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” (Mosiah 28:17). Mormon copies this text to make explicit the important lesson of those twenty-four plates. They were “an account of the people who were destroyed.”

As Mormon elaborated his text, these descriptions are associated with the Gadianton robbers. In Mormon’s turning of history into story, the Gadianton robbers personified the Jaredite secret combinations. The ties between the Jaredites are reinforced by similar language, such as murders, robberings, and plunderings, but most importantly by linking both the Gadiantons and the Jaredites to the same geography. The Nephites’ ancestral enemies, the Lamanites, always entered Nephite lands from the south. Mormon links the Gadiantons with the land northward — the Jaredite homeland. This was a conceptual homeland. Although Mormon describes the north that will be the ultimate source of the Nephites’ demise, we should not expect that he was dealing with actual, historical geography. That both the Gadiantons and Jaredites came from the lands northward was the connection. Our modern interests in locating Book of Mormon peoples on a map were not Mormon’s concerns, and we should not assume that the historical geography of the Jaredites was the equivalent of the lands northward that Mormon describes. His interest was not in accurate geography, but rather in symbolic geography.

While copying material from Alma’s personal record, Mormon came to Alma 22:27: “And it came to pass that the king sent a proclamation throughout all the land, amongst all his people who were in all his land.”

Now behold, it is these secret oaths and covenants which Alma commanded his son should not go forth unto the world, lest they should be a means of bringing down the people unto destruction.

Now behold, those secret oaths and covenants did not come forth unto Gadianton from the records which were delivered unto Helaman; but behold, they were put into the heart of Gadianton by that same being who did entice our first parents to partake of the forbidden fruit— (Helaman 6:25–26)
He stopped copying and inserted his own information. He marked his return to Alma’s record by repeating this information in Alma 22:35: “And now I, after having said this, return again to the account of Ammon and Aaron, Omner and Himni, and their brethren.” There is a chapter break, and then: “Behold, now it came to pass that the king of the Lamanites sent a proclamation among all his people” (Alma 23:1). Mormon both declared that he was returning to the original text and used the repetition of the departure point as he reengaged the copied text.

In between the repeated information, Mormon provides a geography lesson. Part of the intent was to help his readers understand the physical extent covered when the proclamation was sent among all the Lamanite king’s lands. However, Mormon also provides an essential definition. He wrote: “the land which they called Bountiful … bordered upon the land which they called Desolation, it being so far northward that it came into the land which had been peopled and been destroyed, of whose bones we have spoken, which was discovered by the people of Zarahemla” (Alma 22:29–30). The land Desolation is directly tied not only to the Lamanites but specifically to the destroyed Jaredites.

Mormon’s inserted explanation was triggered by the need to explain Lamanite lands, but it expanded to a general description of the lands pertinent to the Nephites. For Mormon, that included a description of the place, and the association, of the northern lands. I consider it probable that Mormon created the name Desolation for the land northward, specifically for use in his story. In Alma 16, a chapter Mormon wrote using the large plates rather than Alma’s personal record, Mormon says: “And now so great was the scent thereof that the people did not go in to possess the land of Ammonihah for many years. And it was called Desolation of Nehors; for they were of the profession of Nehor, who were slain; and their lands remained desolate” (Alma 16:11). Mormon used his authorial license to rename Ammonihah to the more symbolic “Desolation of Nehors.” Mormon clearly intends that his readers see Desolation — whether Ammonihah or the land northward — as the land of a destroyed people.\textsuperscript{133}

During the great war discussed at the end of the book of Alma, Mormon tells of a people led by a man named Morianton. Mormon reports that what they intended to do was very dangerous, and so he

\textsuperscript{133} Mormon’s use of the destroyed lands and peoples is a reference to the negative version of the promise of the land. They would be preserved upon righteousness but destroyed upon unrighteousness. These people were destroyed, hence that, in itself, demonstrates that they were not righteous.
reports that they were stopped. Without telling us why, Mormon writes: “Therefore, Morianton put it into their hearts that they should flee to the land which was northward, which was covered with large bodies of water, and take possession of the land which was northward. And behold, they would have carried this plan into effect, (\textit{which would have been a cause to have been lamented})” (Alma 50:29–30).

Mormon gives his readers no hint about why this journey north would have been much lamented. However, he drops a geographic hint that he will later elaborate. He says that northward there was a land “which was covered with large bodies of water.” We see that phrase in another passage where Mormon reports Nephites heading to northward lands.

The departure phrase comes in Helaman 3:3: “And it came to pass in the forty and sixth, yea, there was much contention and many dissensions; in the which there were an exceedingly great many who departed out of the land of Zarahemla, and went forth unto the land northward to inherit the land.”

The return is declared explicitly and also repeats the information from that marked the departure point for the insertion:

And now I return again to mine account; therefore, what I have spoken had passed after there had been great contentions, and disturbances, and wars, and dissensions, among the people of Nephi.

\textit{The forty and sixth year of the reign of the judges ended;}

And it came to pass that there was still great contention in the land, yea, even in the forty and seventh year, and also in the forty and eighth year. (Helaman 3:17–19)

In between, Mormon inserted specific descriptions of both the geographic and ecological features of the land northward. It was a land of many waters, and it was a land so devoid of trees that buildings were made of cement. Significantly, Mormon also says of the land northward:

And now there are many records kept of the proceedings of this people, by many of this people, which are particular and very large, concerning them.

But behold, a hundredth part of the proceedings of this people, yea, the account of the Lamanites and of the Nephites, and their wars, and contentions, and dissensions, and their preaching, and their prophecies, and their building of ships, and their building of temples, and of
synagogues and their sanctuaries, and their righteousness,
and their wickedness, and their murders, and their robbings,
and their plundering, and all manner of abominations and
whoredoms, cannot be contained in this work.

But behold, there are many books and many records of every
kind, and they have been kept chiefly by the Nephites.

And they have been handed down from one generation to
another by the Nephites, even until they have fallen into
transgression and have been murdered, plundered, and
hunted, and driven forth, and slain, and scattered upon the
face of the earth, and mixed with the Lamanites until they are
no more called the Nephites, becoming wicked, and wild, and
ferocious, yea, even becoming Lamanites. (Helaman 3:13–16)

When Mormon speaks of “this people,” we might think that he is
referring to the Nephites under the reign of Helaman. I suggest that “this
people” refers specifically to those who have gone north. Mormon notes
that there is much that could be said about them and that there were
histories kept. Those texts speak of “their murders, and their robbings,
and their plundering, and all manner of abominations.” Those are
themes he associates with the north and with the Gadianton robbers.

Mormon noted that many of the people of Ammon had gone north.
They were known as a particularly righteous people, and he has them
at least symbolically carry the ability to record history to the north.
However, Mormon then describes what happened to the Nephites in
the north: “they have fallen into transgression and have been murdered,
plundered, and hunted, and driven forth, and slain, and scattered upon
the face of the earth, and mixed with the Lamanites until they are no
more called the Nephites, becoming wicked, and wild, and ferocious,
yea, even becoming Lamanites” (Helaman 3:16).

Later in the book of Helaman, Mormon reports on efforts to preach
the gospel in the land northward:

Behold, now it came to pass in the sixty and ninth year
of the reign of the judges over the people of the Nephites,
that Nephi, the son of Helaman, returned to the land of
Zarahemla from the land northward.

For he had been forth among the people who were in the land
northward, and did preach the word of God unto them, and
did prophesy many things unto them;
And they did reject all his words, insomuch that he could not stay among them, but returned again unto the land of his nativity. (Helaman 7:1–3)

The dangerous nature of the lands northward is reiterated in 3 Nephi:

And the land which was appointed was the land of Zarahemla, and the land which was between the land Zarahemla and the land Bountiful, yea, to the line which was between the land Bountiful and the land Desolation.

And there were a great many thousand people who were called Nephites, who did gather themselves together in this land. Now Lachoneus did cause that they should gather themselves together in the land southward, because of the great curse which was upon the land northward. (3 Nephi 3:23–24)

Although little Nephite history involved the lands northward, Mormon nevertheless made sure to emphasize them. When he did, it was their dangerous aspects that were emphasized. Not only does he generally see the lands northward as cursed, but they bring the curse of the destruction of civilizations with them. Attempts to preach the word of God fail in the north. Even when good people go north, they are not heard from again (such as the people of Hagoth), or they are described as having become as corrupt as the others in that dangerous land.

Regardless of the actual history behind what Mormon wrote, he wrote so that his readers would understand that he saw danger in the land northward. He also specifically provided geographic clues so that his assumed readers — those he believed would have had some of his own cultural understanding — would be able to identify the particular north-people who would become Mormon’s Gadianton robbers at the end of Nephite history. They were a people from the north bringing with them the destruction of society. In Mormon’s mind, it was no coincidence that the Nephite nation met its end after it had been forced into the land northward. Mormon understood the symbolism when he equated the hill Ramah, around which the Jaredites gathered to meet their final destruction, and Cumorah, which fulfilled that very same function for the Nephites.

Lest we miss Mormon’s message, he made it clear:

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 2:13–14).
Chapter 6: Mormon, Special Considerations

The Problem of the Lost Pages

Mormon wrote a cohesive book that set out his arguments explaining the destruction of his people and his hope in Christ. Sadly, we have only part of that book. The sculpture known as Venus de Milo is still beautiful without arms, but it must have been even more beautiful before they were lost. So it is with Mormon’s book. It is a marvelous work and a wonder, but what wonder might it have been had we all that he wrote.

That became impossible when the only manuscript copy of the translation to date was given to Martin Harris, and it was lost. Lucy Mack Smith described the scene when Joseph learned of the lost manuscript:

Oh! My God My God said Joseph clenching his hands together all is lost is lost what shall I do I have sinned it is me that tempted the wrath God by asking him to that which I had no right to do ask as I was differently instructed by the angel — and he wept to like and groaned walking the floor continually.

To add to the normal human despair that accompanied the loss of so much work that had been so long awaited, Joseph had to endure the Lord’s very specific disapproval. Later appearing as D&C 3, the following comes from the manuscript version recorded in the Revelations Book 1:


Remember Remember that it is not the work of God that is frustrated but the works of men for although a man may have many Revelations & have power to do many Mighty works yet if he boast in his own strength & Sets at naught the councils of God & follows after the dictates of his will & carnal desires he must fall to the Earth & incur the vengeance of a Just God upon him behold you have been intrusted with those things but strict was your commandment & Remember also the Promises which were made to you if you transgressed them & behold how oft you have transgressed them Laws of God & have gone on in the Persuasions of men for behold you should not have feared men more then God although men set at naught the councils of God & dispise his words yet you should have been faithful & he would have extended his arm & supported you against all the firey darts of the advisary & he would have been with you in evry time of trouble behold thou art Joseph & thou wast chosen to do the work of the Lord but because of transgression thou mayest fall but remember God is merciful therefore repent of that which thou hast done & he will only cause thee to be afflicted for a season & thou art still chosen & will & will again be called to the work & except Thou do this thou shalt be delivered up & become as other men & have no more gift & when thou deliveredst up that Which that which God had given thee right to Translate thou deliveredest up that which was Sacred into the hands of a wicked man who has Set at naught the Councils of God & hath broken the most Sacred promises which was made before God & hath depended upon his own Judgement & boasted in his own arm wisdom & this is the reason that thou hast lost thy Privileges for a Season for thou hast suffered that the council of thy directors to be trampeled upon from the begining

The solution was to abandon the book of Lehi entirely. There was a great fear that if Joseph were to translate again, the first manuscript might reappear and any differences between the first and second translation would be used to discredit the whole process. Specifically, it was thought

138. D&C 10:30: “Behold, I say unto you, that you shall not translate again those words which have gone forth out of your hands.”
the first translation might have been modified to guarantee the damning differences. The manuscript for D&C 10 has the Lord saying:

Shall publish it as the Record of Nephi & thus I will confound those which have altered my words I will not suffer that they shall destroy my work yea I will shew unto them that my wisdom is greater than the cuning of the Devil Behold they have only got a part or an abridgement of the account of Nephi Behold there are many things engraven on the Plates of Nephi which do throw greater views upon my Gospel therefore it is wisdom in me that ye should translate this first part of the engravings of Nephi & send forth in this work.¹³⁹

Nevertheless, not everything Joseph had translated was given to Martin Harris. Some small portion was kept for D&C 10:41 records: “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” (D&C 10:41). Because we have the end of Benjamin’s reign in the book of Mosiah, it is probable that some portion of at least our Mosiah chapter 1 was the retained text.¹⁴⁰

Precisely how much of the book of Mosiah was lost is difficult to determine. Royal Skousen looked at the way chapter numbers were entered on the printer’s manuscript and noted that our current chapter I was originally III, with two of the numbers crossed out to leave us with chapter I.¹⁴¹ Thus, there could have been two missing chapters. Skousen speculates that the first chapter would have been the beginning of the reign of Mosiah, including the ascension of Benjamin, with the second chapter dealing with the reign of Benjamin.¹⁴² That speculation is based on two foundational ideas. The first is that there are two missing chapters based on the changed number in Mosiah, and the second is that

¹³⁹. The Joseph Smith Papers, Revelation Book 1. For the full context, see D&C 10.
¹⁴². Ibid., 139.
the chapters would have followed conceptual units based on events that go together. Each premise is problematic.

First, while there has been a change from an original number III to I, that evidence comes from the printer’s manuscript, not the original. The original is not extant at this point, so we have no idea what the original numbering might have been. Since the numbers, even in the printer’s manuscript, were added later, we are seeing Oliver’s ideas more clearly than Mormon’s in the numbering of chapters. Indeed, while Mormon created chapters, there is no evidence that he numbered them.143

Unfortunately, chapter beginnings for Mosiah are missing in the original manuscript. However, in the book of Alma, we have a good indication that Oliver would write the word “Chapter” and then return to number the chapters. The first appears for Alma XV, and Skousen notes that the number itself is in a heavier ink flow.144 This would appear to suggest that, as in other cases, the word “Chapter” was written as part of the text, and the number was added at a later point. Similarly, there is an ink flow difference between the word “Chapter” and the number XVI.145 This tells us that when Oliver scribed, he entered the numbers after the fact. Since all he had ever seen was what we currently have, Oliver had never seen chapter numbers until he added them. This suggests that he had no guide for the beginning of the book of Mosiah and created the numbers based on his reading after the translation was completed. While there is missing content at the beginning of the book of Mosiah, we have no way to know how many chapters would have been involved. It appears that the change in the chapter numbers came from Oliver’s misreading Omni as chapter I of Mosiah.146

Skousen is certainly correct that the ascensions of both Mosiah1 and Benjamin would have been part of the book of Mosiah. While that gives us two logical “chapters,” Mormon didn’t create chapters according to that type of division. If Mormon recorded any of Mosiah1’s sermons,147 the ending of that sermon might have created a chapter even if the story of Mosiah1 were not finished. Since the evidence from the printer’s

143. Ibid., 138.
145. Ibid., 281.
147. I suggest that there was at least one. Benjamin references a speech from Mosiah1 that spoke of listening to the evil spirit. See Mosiah 2:32–33, 37, and the theme as it is referenced in Alma 3:27.
manuscript cannot tell us about the original chapters, there might have been more than the suggested two chapters.

The Lost Pages: What Must Have Been on Them

If we knew exactly what was on the 116 pages, they wouldn’t be lost. Nevertheless, there are some hints and some ways to reconstruct possibilities for what was on them.¹⁴⁸

It is a rare member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints who isn’t familiar with the beginning of the Book of Mormon: “I, Nephi, having been born of goodly parents … ” It seems fitting that the first thing we encounter is the identification of the person writing what we will be reading. We have a similar beginning in Mormon 8:1 when Moroni undertakes finishing his father’s book: “Behold I, Moroni, do finish the record of my father, Mormon.” When Moroni begins his own eponymous book, he similarly introduces himself: “Now I, Moroni, after having made an end of abridging the account of the people of Jared … ” (Moroni 1:1).

Jacob doesn’t have an “I, Jacob” beginning, though he does introduce himself in the first sentence: “Nephi gave me, Jacob, a commandment concerning the small plates” (Jacob 1:1). We then have “I, Enos” (Enos 1:1); I, Jarom” (Jarom 1:1); “I, Omni” (Omni 1:1); “I, Amaron” (Omni 1:4); “I, Chemish” (Omni 1:9); “I, Abinadam” (Omni 1:10), and “I am Amaleki” (Omni 1:12). Those who wrote their own story on the plates consistently introduced themselves by name.

These personal introductions identify the holographic writer. Both Nephi and Mormon tell us about their youth, and Enos tells a personal story, but most simply identify themselves as the writer. What we don’t have is Mormon’s introduction of himself as the editor/compiler of the Book of Mormon. Mormon’s book was uniquely conceived and executed. Where others recorded history, or what they perceived to fit the mandate of the “more sacred things” (1 Nephi 19:5) for the small plates, Mormon created a work that used history for the overarching purpose that the Jew and Gentile “might not be destroyed” and that they could be convinced that “Jesus is the Christ” (Title Page). There was no precedent for Mormon’s work in the brass plates, no precedent in the large Plates of Nephi, and as modern readers we can find, no precedent in either the Old or New Testaments.

¹⁴⁸. Don Bradley, The Lost 116 Pages: Reconstructing the Book of Mormon’s Missing Stories (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2019). His book was released as this book was being serialized; it arrived too late for any interaction with the ideas therein.
What Mormon did was unique, and at some point he needed to tell us what he was doing; it is logical that he would do so. We don’t have it. I believe we may safely posit that such an introduction must have existed. In the realm of informed speculation, I offer what might logically have been the original beginning of the Book of Mormon, even prior to the beginning of the book of Lehi:

- There was a “Words of Mormon” preface before the book of Lehi, just as Mormon inserted a “Words of Mormon” as an explanatory introduction to the small plates.
- The first sentence of the original lost text would have begun: “Now I, Mormon, [verb].” This is based on both the beginning of Words of Mormon and the book of Mormon. It is also corroborated by Mormon’s strong tendency to begin chapters with “And now,” and “And now it came to pass.” The latter would not have been used because it requires a continuation of events already discussed, and this was a beginning. Also, the initial “and” would have been left off as there was no preceding text. All the “I, Mormon” statements have a verb following “I, Mormon.” He would have included a description of the plates of Nephi as his source. This is based on Mormon’s headers that introduce new sources. If he was that careful to designate the alternate sources, he certainly would have introduced his main source at the beginning.
- He would have included a statement about his purpose. It would be comforting to think that Moroni’s title page referenced his father’s purposes directly rather than creating some new purpose.
- He would have noted that the spirit had indicated that he should write. If he notes the spirit’s influence in Words of Mormon 1:7, he certainly would have at the beginning of the whole record.
- There would have been a statement that he couldn’t write the hundredth part of the history. He consistently uses that phrase in “I, Mormon” introductions which also accompany comments about his writing.
- There would have been some admonition to the future readers. It would have made a fitting bookend to his work if he addressed at the beginning some of the same themes he did when he concluded his work in Mormon 7.
Speculating on the book of Lehi, I offer the following suggestions. It must be emphasized that what would have been in the book of Lehi would be what Mormon selected from the large plates. There are certainly times where the small plates recorded the same events as on the large plates, but it is important to remember that Mormon used the large plates. The stories might similarly tell of the Nephite beginnings, but the language would not have been the same.

The evidence for the following suggestions comes mostly from hints in Mormon’s extant writing. I have ordered the list according to what I suspect the appearance in the text would have been.

- Nephi tells us that he created and wrote the history on the large plates (1 Nephi 9:4, 19:4). The book of Lehi was named in honor of his father, not because his father ever wrote any of it. Nephi, as the writer, probably included some kind of “I, Nephi” beginning on the large plates.¹⁴⁹ Perhaps it was similar to that in 1 Nephi 1:1, but I doubt that Nephi’s literary sensibilities would have allowed an exact replication. We can’t tell if Mormon would have quoted this beginning. Probably not. Thus, we would have Mormon’s description of Nephi rather than the first-person introduction.

- Very early, and probably on the first engraved plate of the large plates, Nephi would have indicated that he made the plates (since he reiterates their creation in the text on the small plates, he certainly would have done so on the large plates). He would have proposed the charter for the plates, that they contain the acts of the rulers and the wars and contentions. Mormon would have wanted to include this information.

- Nephi would have indicated that he had other plates (Doctrine and Covenants 10:38–41). It is unclear whether Mormon would have listed them since he appears to have been surprised to find them (Words of Mormon 1:3).

- After introducing the plates, their creation and their purpose, he would have some way of noting that he was telling the story of his people. This would move the narrative from the author-voice into historical time, and the ability to tell the story of the creation of the Nephite peoples.

¹⁴⁹. Nephi uses “I, Nephi” at the beginning of nearly every chapter he wrote on the small plates. We would certainly expect it here.
I have suggested that 1 Nephi is an ethnogenetic story that followed a typology known from the Old World.\textsuperscript{150} That structure would have been even more important in the large plate record. Therefore, I suggest that many of the events we see in our current 1 Nephi would also have been told, though probably in different words, in the large plate book of Lehi.

- The story of Lehi’s call as a prophet and command to depart Jerusalem. This is the beginning of the Nephite nation, and ties them to Yahweh’s call. That would have been important.

- At some point, Lehi’s six-hundred-year prophecy would be recorded. Mormon references the time at the beginning of 3 Nephi although he doesn’t relate it to the prophecy at that time. Nevertheless, the only reason to note it at that time (and not use the date of the departure from Jerusalem in any other part of his edited record after Alma) was that it would be fulfilled in the events he is about to discuss in 3 Nephi. That tells us that Mormon must have recorded the prophecy in his own record.

- The return to Jerusalem for the brass plates. Mormon references the brass plates. They were important, and the story of their acquisition would be important to show the continuity of scripture from the Old World to the New, as well as to define their place as a part of the sacred set of objects passed from king to king (Mosiah 1:16).

- The incident with Laban. Mosiah 1:16 mentions the sword of Laban, therefore, the story of that sword had to have been known.

- The incident with Zoram. Since there are Zoramites in Mormon’s text, their origin story would be important. Doctrine and Covenants 3:17 mentions Zoramites, and at that point it had to refer to the lost pages as the translation had not yet begun again.

- The discovery of the Liahona, including some description of travel setbacks if they didn't heed it (see Mosiah 1:17).\textsuperscript{151}
- At some point, the story mentioned Sariah by name. There was also a mention of the walls around Jerusalem, likely as part of the story of the return for the brass plates (because Emma informed Joseph of the pronunciation of Sariah).\textsuperscript{152}
- The story of the return for Ishmael's family.
- The birth of Jacob and Joseph in the wilderness. This would be required when noting their functions in the early community in the New World.
- The arrival in the New World. We don't know what the parameters of this story might have been, but it had to be told.
- Lehi's promise of the land (prosperity upon righteousness, no protection of wicked). Mormon emphasizes this theme. Mormon knows that it is linked to Lehi (Alma 50:19).
- The division into Lamanites and Nephites. This is a foundational element of Nephite society. It is well known in Mormon's text without explanation. The explanation was in the lost pages.
- The establishment of the land and city of Nephi. The fact that Mormon can easily mention the city of Nephi and the land of Nephi means that he had already introduced them.
- The enthronement of the second Nephi as king (as well as mention of those who followed). This is a supposition since the rule of kings was written on the large plates, and Mormon was pretty faithful in presenting the sequence of the rulers. We would expect that there would be at least some mention of the succession of the Nephite kings.

\textsuperscript{151} Jolie Griffin noticed that the functioning of the Liahona foreshadows the whole of the Nephite foundational promise. It worked upon faith and didn't work without faith. The Nephite foundational promise similarly "worked" with faithfulness and did not protect them without faithfulness.

\textsuperscript{152} Edmund C. Briggs, "A Visit to Nauvoo in 1856," \textit{Journal of History} (Jan. 1916), 454:

> When he stopped for any purpose at any time he would, when he commenced again, begin where he left off without any hesitation, and one time while he was translating he stopped suddenly, pale as a sheet, and said, 'Emma, did Jerusalem have walls around it?' When I answered, 'Yes,' he replied, 'Oh! [I didn't know.] I was afraid I had been deceived.' He had such a limited knowledge of history at that time that he did not even know that Jerusalem was surrounded by walls.
None of them are known from the small plates, so we can’t speculate on how many there were.

• Frequent mention of wars and how the Nephites ultimately triumphed. It is probable that on some of them, Mormon moralized using the promise of the land.

• It is probable that the final battle that resulted in the loss of the land of Nephi would have been recorded in the book of Lehi. Mormon tends to set up the story of the new dynasty before beginning the book named for the dynasty (this is different for Helaman because of the desire to fit the beginning of the dynasty to the two-katun, forty-year, date).

• If the pattern seen later in the Book of Mormon helps us understand the way the large plates were written, then the story of finding the people of Zarahemla would have been at the end of the book of Lehi.

• The problems of unification due to language and religion would have been introduced.

Less certain but highly likely is the story of the vision of the Tree of Life. That vision was an important introduction to the Atoning Messiah, a theme that continues to be important throughout Nephite scripture. That vision also included prophecy about the final fate of the Nephites. Both the theme of the Atoning Messiah and the ultimate fate of the Nephites would have matched Mormon’s selection criteria. If that story was on the large plates, Mormon included it in his book of Lehi.

Speculation on the book of Mosiah:

• The first story in the book of Mosiah would have been the anointing of Mosiah₁ as king over the city and land of Zarahemla.

• A speech from Mosiah₁ would have been included (discussed below).

• “And it came to pass in the days of Mosiah, there was a large stone brought unto him with engravings on it; and he did interpret the engravings by the gift and power of God” (Omni 1:20). Two points are important here, the first is that there is something that requires translating and the second that it was interpreted by “the gift and power of God.” While that isn’t very descriptive, we see a parallel account in Mosiah 8:12–14. Because Mormon thought that this second description was important to include, it is
reasonable to suggest that he would also have included the one referenced in Omni 1:20.

- The story of the translation of the stone is linked with the story of Coriantumr. There is no later reference to this Coriantumr (a different person by that name is a Lamanite general). Mormon doesn’t mention the stone later, and even when he has the plates of Ether that also record Coriantumr’s story, Mormon does not provide details. Perhaps Mormon’s desire to link the descendants of Mulek with the Jaredites suggests that he told the story of Coriantumr.

- “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” (Omni 1:24). Both because of Mormon’s interest in important wars and contentions, and the position of this particular contention as the precursor to king Benjamin’s speech, it is virtually certain that Mormon described this war, and in more detail than this single sentence from Amaleki. This is confirmed by the synopsis we have in Words of Mormon 1: 13–18. Mormon both knew about, and cared about, this conflict.

- The departure of the people of Zeniff for the land of Nephi would be described. Mosiah 7:1 references them, assuming their story to have been known.

During king Benjamin’s great discourse, he mentions one of his father’s sermons: “O my people, beware lest there shall arise contentions among you, and ye list to obey the evil spirit, which was spoken of by my father Mosiah” (Mosiah 2:32). Benjamin warns his people of something his father had also warned them of. It is possible this reference in Benjamin’s speech was recorded as it was spoken, and Mormon had not included the referenced speech in the lost chapters of Mosiah. However, Mormon picks up this theme later. At the end of the second invasion, which occurred right after the one involved in the Amlicite rebellion, Mormon moralizes:

26 And in one year were thousands and tens of thousands of souls sent to the eternal world, that they might reap their rewards according to their works, whether they were good or whether they were bad, to reap eternal happiness or eternal
misery, according to the spirit which they listed to obey, whether it be a good spirit or a bad one.

27 For every man receiveth wages of him whom he listeth to obey, and this according to the words of the spirit of prophecy; therefore let it be according to the truth. And thus endeth the fifth year of the reign of the judges. (Alma 3:26–27)

Mormon is intentionally reprising this teaching, to which Benjamin alluded. As it was important enough for Mormon to highlight it in one of his moralizing insertions, it is highly likely it was important enough to include when Mosiah1 first said it.

Don Bradley has made a few suggestions of what might have been in the book of Lehi. One concerns Aminadi. We get only the briefest of mentions in our text: "I am Amulek; I am the son of Giddonah, who was the son of Ishmael, who was a descendant of Aminadi; and it was that same Aminadi who interpreted the writing which was upon the wall of the temple, which was written by the finger of God" (Alma 10:2). Bradley suggests:

Amulek assumed his audience would recognize the name Aminadi and wonder if he spoke of “that same Aminadi” who had interpreted the writing on the temple wall. That the people of Ammonihah could be assumed to know the story of Aminadi is telling. These, after all, are people known to us not for zealously reading the scriptures, but for zealously burning them. If they could be assumed to know this incident from Nephite sacred history, then it was a prominent one indeed and likely included by Mormon in his abridgment of early Nephite history in the lost pages.

Mormon himself felt no need to add an explanation of who Aminadi was for his audience, the latter-day reader. But Mormon could assume his audience, the latter-day reader, would know the story only if he had told it in a portion of his abridgment not currently available to us — in other words, the lost pages.153

It is a reasonable assumption. However, it is also possible that it is a reference without antecedent. That happens in 3 Nephi. Mormon records:

And it came to pass that on the morrow, when the multitude was gathered together, behold, Nephi and his brother whom he had raised from the dead, whose name was Timothy, and also his son, whose name was Jonas, and also Mathoni, and Mathonihah, his brother, and Kumen, and Kumenonhi, and Jeremiah, and Shemnon, and Jonas, and Zedekiah, and Isaiah — now these were the names of the disciples whom Jesus had chosen — and it came to pass that they went forth and stood in the midst of the multitude. (3 Nephi 19:4)

This is the only mention of Timothy or of any of the rest of the listed names. Specifically, we do not have any story of Timothy being raised from the dead, even though it is a miracle Nephi performed. Mormon mentions it here because Timothy is among the chosen disciples. Mormon clearly knows the story and perhaps intended to tell it. He didn’t. These incidents without antecedents suggest it is possible that the story of Aminadi, who interpreted the writing on the wall (Alma 10:2), was also a reference without antecedent in Mormon’s text.

The Lost Pages: What Should Not Have Been on Them

There is certainly much of the story we know from 1 Nephi that must have been present in the book of Lehi. However, Nephi specifically notes that the large plates and small plates had significant differences:

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. (1 Nephi 9:3–4).

Knowing there were differences, we would not expect that what Mormon wrote would be identical to what Nephi wrote on the small plates. Even though Nephi himself made and wrote on both sets of plates, it was Mormon who wrote what was translated and lost on the 116 pages. Therefore, we have two levels of difference from the small plates — those things Nephi saw as separately appropriate to the two records and the subset Mormon elected to include for his own didactic purposes.
Nephi was fond of long scriptural quotations, often entering entire chapters of Isaiah.\footnote{154} Even had Nephi copied those chapters onto the large plates, which I doubt, Mormon would not have included them. Mormon quotes people’s sermons but not scripture. The Nephites considered the brass plates to be their scripture, and Mormon simply does not use that source.

Without the long chapters on Isaiah, it is unlikely that Nephi’s prophetic midrash on those Isaiah chapters would have been included. There are two reasons. The first is that they are dependent upon the chapters Mormon wouldn’t have quoted, and the second is that this section of 2 Nephi appears to have been part of Nephi’s work on the separate small plate record. It was a project that seems separate from that which was recorded on the large plates. Mormon wouldn’t have seen it at the time he was writing the book of Lehi.

Next, it is unclear how much of Jacob’s teachings would have been included. Mormon includes sermons in the context of the wars and contentions — that is, in the context of the political framework that defined the large plates of Nephi. Even though Jacob’s sermon arguing against polygamy and costly apparel (Jacob 2–3) had political ramifications, they were not favorable to the ruling class. The story of Sherem at least hints that Jacob was no longer in favor with the political leaders in the city of Nephi.\footnote{155} If that reading is correct, the fact that Jacob was outside of the political elite argues against anything from the book of Jacob being recorded in the large plates of Nephi — and therefore Mormon would not have seen them and could not have abridged them. That would mean that the great Olive Tree allegory would also have been missing.

It is highly unlikely that anything contained in Enos was included. Jarom does mention that there were battles with the Lamanites, and certainly Mormon would have made mention of continuing conflicts. I speculate that Mormon would have recorded wars and contentions, but without significant details. I believe he was not as concerned with details until he comes to the wars in Alma and Helaman. The significance of the final wars in Omni suggest that Mormon might have included more details for them.

154. In 1879, the “chapters” of Isaiah were made to follow the way chapters appear in the King James Version of Isaiah. They are not entered according to those chapters in Nephi’s writings. Rather, they combine several chapters, but are divided on different principles. See John Gee, “Choose the Things That Please Me’: Selection of the Isaiah Sections,” in \textit{Isaiah in the Book of Mormon}, eds. Donald W. Parry and John W. Welch (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1998), 68.

Words of Mormon

The translation of the small plates solved one problem and created another. The small plates created a way to begin the Book of Mormon after the beginning had been lost, but they were different in authors, intended content, and transmission lines from the large plates. The juncture of the inserted small plates text had to be reconciled with the remainder of Mormon’s work. That problem was not original to the plates but arose only from the loss of the 116 pages. The solution to the new problem was to use — and, I suggest, to modify — Mormon’s statement to his future readers about his inclusion of the small plates. Words of Mormon became a pivotal chapter rather than an introduction to an appendix.

Words of Mormon can be easily divided into two sections. Verses 1–9 are an introduction to the small plates. Verses 10–18 cover historical information not on the small plates and not contained in the extant part of the book of Mosiah.

It is the remaining verses, 10–18, that seem out of place. They fit precisely at this point in the text, even though the rest of Words of Mormon has a different purpose entirely. Jack M. Lyon and Kent R. Minson provided one solution to the problem. In the introduction to their article they explain:

Verses 12–18 of the Words of Mormon have always been a bit of a puzzle. For stylistic and other reasons, they do not really fit with verses 1–11, so commentators have tried to explain their presence as a sort of “bridge” or “transition” that Mormon wrote to connect the record of the small plates with his abridgment from the large plates. This paper proposes a different explanation: Rather than being a bridge into the book of Mosiah, these verses were originally part of the book of Mosiah and should be included with it.\(^{156}\)

Their is an important argument even though I disagree with it. Those interested in that topic should examine both their paper and my response.\(^ {157}\)

I agree with their statement that verses 10–18 do not fit with the first half of Words of Mormon. I offer a different hypothesis; that they were a prophetic expansion on the text of the Book of Mormon, specifically intended to replace information that was lost with the 116 pages and not included in the quick notes about Mosiah, and Benjamin from the

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end of Omni. Based on the information I have been presenting about Mormon, I will look at these verses for any evidence that they follow the style we have developed for Mormon.

The very first verse we have unassailably from Mormon’s abridgment is: “And now there was no more contention in all the land of Zarahemla, among all the people who belonged to king Benjamin, so that king Benjamin had continual peace all the remainder of his days” (Mosiah 1:1). Although the phrase that there was no more contention could come either near the beginning or the end of a chapter, were it the beginning we would expect “and now, it came to pass.” That is Mormon’s favored way to begin chapters (see the section on chapter beginnings). The second verse begins a different topic (Benjamin’s sons). That tells us that the “continual peace” phrase was intended as the conclusion to a section, not as a beginning. For both of these reasons, we can clearly conclude that our current book of Mosiah begins somewhere after Mormon’s chapter began.

The next important information comes from the two verses on each side of our current division between Words of Mormon and the book of Mosiah:

Wherefore, with the help of these, king Benjamin, by laboring with all the might of his body and the faculty of his whole soul, and also the prophets, did once more establish peace in the land.

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. (Words of Mormon 1:18–Mosiah 1:1)

These two verses create a repetition of a phrase that Mormon has used as both an introduction and a conclusion to material he wrote. Mormon has most often used repetition of an important phrase for an insertion, but there is no insertion here. There is only one case where Mormon has had a repetition this close together, and it was between a chapter break. Although the division between Words of Mormon and the book of Mosiah certainly appears to fit that example, we must remember that we don’t have the beginning of the book of Mosiah. There are other anomalies in Words of Mormon 1:12–18 against Mormon’s typical practice. In verse 13 we find: “And it came to pass also that the armies of the Lamanites came down out of the land of Nephi, to battle against his people. But behold, king Benjamin gathered together his armies, and he did stand against them; and he did fight with the strength of his own arm, with the sword of Laban” (Words of Mormon 1:13). It isn’t overly

surprising for Mormon to give information about a battle without many
details, but with the importance of Benjamin’s speech to come, we would
expect Mormon to describe his participation more fully, particularly if
wielding the sword of Laban. When Mormon wrote of Alma₂ leading the
Nephites into battle, he includes a lot more information.

The information about false Christs in Words of Mormon 1: 15–16 is
very much an important theme for Mormon. He will later provide details
for Nehor and Korihor. There is every reason to believe he would have
been equally interested in the details of these false Christs, since that
becomes one of his themes introducing both apostasy and the results of
unrighteousness. Mormon would have written more than these verses,
and probably found a way to link them to the lands northward or to the
Jaredites.

We have, at the end of Words of Mormon, the ending of what had
been a traumatic invasion and then civil war. It was clearly a monumental
struggle that is boiled down to verses 17 and 18. This type of event is later
elaborated with more detail. There is every reason to believe Mormon
selected this type of record for its didactic impact, and these verses would
have been much expanded in Mormon’s description of these events.

Finally, Lyon and Minson’s hypothesis requires that these verses be
part of the text that follows. Verse 18, “Wherefore, with the help of these,
king Benjamin, by laboring with all the might of his body and the faculty
of his whole soul, and also the prophets, did once more establish peace
in the land,” concludes an episode, but doesn’t fit with the way Mormon
ended other chapters. That would mean that there was no Mormon-
created break after verse 18. Without a break, then verse 18 would have
had to have been connected to our Mosiah 1:1, except that structurally
that cannot be. Whatever the ultimate solution to understanding the
anomaly of Words of Mormon 1:12–18, it cannot be that it is a retained
copy from the book of Mosiah.

That leaves us with one significant remaining question: Where was
Words of Mormon physically located on the plates? There are only two
possible locations. One would be that it was located precisely where
we see it. That solution presupposes that verses 12–18 were written by
Mormon and therefore serve as an introduction to the book of Mosiah
which follows. That is an unsatisfying solution because there is no way
to understand how the first part of Words of Mormon might have been
placed inside the book of Mosiah.

The more logical location would be as an introduction to the small
plates. That is precisely the function of the verses 1–11. Had we only
those verses, there would be no controversy over the location. The small
plates would have been conceived as an appendix and added to the end of
Mormon’s record. Words of Mormon would have preceded those plates
to give the reader an understanding of what they were and why they
had been added. The makes verses 12–18 even more anomalous, which
I consider further evidence that they were Joseph’s prophetic addition.
While verses 12–18 probably did not translate text from the plates, they
did “translate” important information from the plates.
Section 2:  
Nephi the Writer

Chapter 7: Nephi Preparing

We have the Book of Mormon people because of Lehi. Nephi began the tradition that eventually allowed Mormon to create the Book of Mormon. Lehi led his family to the New World, but Nephi defined his descendants as a record-keeping people. The Nephites were a people of the Book both because Nephi (and his brothers) preserved a record-keeping tradition (the brass plates) and because he began a new one after arriving in the New World. Mormon may be most directly responsible for the Book of Mormon, but the records Mormon used (and many of the organizational structures that Mormon used) began with Nephi.

Our only absolute information about Nephi as a recordkeeper comes from records he created after arriving in the New World. Nevertheless, his story as a recordkeeper and creator began in the Old World. Nephi was born in Jerusalem, but we are not told when. Until the change of the year counts in the book of Alma, all dates depended upon the date when Lehi and his family left Jerusalem. The fixed dates that bracket the departure of Lehi’s family are the first year of the reign of Zedekiah (1 Nephi 1:4), or 597 BC, and the destruction of Jerusalem Lehi predicted, which occurred in 587 BC.159 Randall Spackman further clarifies:

This passage provides one of the most important clues for dating the time of Lehi’s departure from Jerusalem. According to Nephi,

the actions taken against Jeremiah and the other prophets were directly connected with the threats on Lehi’s life. This argument was not an academic discussion between friendly brothers, but an intense debate involving life and death issues.... Thus, the knowledge of Lehi’s sons concerning Jeremiah’s imprisonment places the escape of Ishmael’s family after the time when the Egyptians invaded the land of Judah [587 BCE].

We can therefore use 587 BC as the earliest departure date from Jerusalem, but we must guess how old Nephi might have been when they left. Early in the journey in the wilderness Nephi says of himself that he was exceedingly young, but large in stature (1 Nephi 2:16). Noel B. Reynolds suggests that he was born in 615 BC, but this date is derived from a departure date of 600 BC, which is thirteen years earlier than the best plausible date of departure. The date was likely based on a guess of how young he might have been. Fifteen is certainly young, but when Nephi says he was exceedingly young, it suggests something younger than fifteen. In the ancient world the responsibilities of maturity descended much earlier than in modern societies. Nevertheless, an age of fifteen can be used as an approximation in the absence of any specific evidence. Using the assumption of fifteen years when they left Jerusalem, Nephi would have been born about 602 BC.

Nephi doesn’t tell us when he began to write, but he does say he didn’t receive the command to create his second record, the small plates, until thirty years after their departure from Jerusalem (2 Nephi 5:28–30), or 554 BC, Nephi would have been forty-five years old. He also noted the passing of the fortieth year in that same chapter (2 Nephi 34), so ten years passed from the beginning of the creation of the plates to the time he wrote that verse. By the time Nephi began to write Jacob’s sermon on the plates of what we know as 2 Nephi, he would have been fifty-eight.

To guess when he began writing on the large plates, we need to eliminate all the time the family spent in the Old World. The command to create plates for a record of his people did not come until after they

had arrived in the New World (1 Nephi 18: 25–19:1).\textsuperscript{163} The family’s journey from Jerusalem to Bountiful took some unknown time longer than the eight years they spent in the wilderness (1 Nephi 17:4). Perhaps this might add an extra year. Nephi doesn’t say how long their ocean voyage took, but certainly less than a year.

The departure from Bountiful and arrival in the New World therefore might have been about 578 BC. That would have been the earliest that Nephi began to write. However, it is unlikely that Nephi began writing immediately. The fact that he began with the record of the rulers of the people of Nephi declares that he began the record after he and his people had separated from Laman, Lemuel, and those who stayed with them. However, the pressures of creating a new community in a new land would certainly have required concentrated effort at the beginning of the new community. As a guess, I suggest that perhaps ten years passed before there was a sufficient community established not only to select Nephi as a king but also to have the time required to become stable enough for Nephi’s attention to turn to recordkeeping. That guess would have him start creating and writing on the large plates around 568 BC, when he would have been thirty-four years old.

Jacob tells us that Nephi gave him the small plates fifty-five years after their departure from Jerusalem, or 532 BC (Jacob 1:1). In Jacob 1:9 he tells us that “Nephi began to be old, and he saw that he must soon die; wherefore, he anointed a man to be a king and a ruler over his people now, according to the reigns of the kings.” There is no way to know how much time, if any, passed from the time Nephi charged Jacob with keeping the small plates and the time he appointed his successor as king (presumably a son, but the text never says). The only hint we have is that Nephi understood he was nearing death. If he knew he was dying, those two important actions were fulfilled before he was unable. It would not be unreasonable to assume they occurred in close succession, and that Nephi would have died relatively soon thereafter.

Perhaps Nephi died in the fifty-fifth year from their departure from Jerusalem, which would make Nephi seventy years old when he died. Depending on when in the year he was born, if he lived to the fifty-sixth year, he might still have been seventy, or he could have been seventy-one. Of course, these ages are dependent upon his being fifteen years old when the family left Jerusalem, and there is no firm evidence of his age upon departure.

\textsuperscript{163} It is important to remember that these verses were together in the same chapter in the 1830 edition. They were divided in 1879 and in all subsequent editions.
Upon Plates Which I Have Made (1 Nephi 1:17)

After Lehi established a camp three day’s journey outside of Jerusalem, he received a dream-vision in which the Lord commanded him to send his sons back to Jerusalem to obtain “the record of the Jews and also a genealogy of my forefathers, and they are engraven upon plates of brass” (1 Nephi 3:3). Metal plates were certainly not the typical medium for creating records. Scrolls were much easier to make and to write upon. Pieces of broken pots often served as the ancient equivalent of a notepad. However, extremely important texts were, at times, engraved upon metal.164 John A. Tvedtnes has collected examples of ancient records upon plates. The thread binding the examples is the importance of the text and therefore the desirability to have it on an imperishable medium. In Hittite tradition, an inscription on metal became a talismanic blessing on a house or a temple: “As this copper is firm and sound, so may the house (temple) be firm and sound.”165 Tvedtnes notes that: “Isaiah 8:1 speaks of writing on a polished metal plate with an engraving tool; the terms are mistranslated ‘roll’ and ‘pen’ in the King James Bible.”166

Perhaps most relevant for the brass plates are texts that describe records on bronze plates:


Clay tablets were the commonest vehicles of written communications in Mesopotamia for many centuries, whereas in Egypt it was papyrus which claimed this distinction from about 3000 BC. Because of the abundance of stone in Egypt it was customary to carve hieroglyphic texts on stelae and on the walls of innumerable temples and tombs. Metal was much less commonly used as writing material than either stone or lay, although cuneiform inscriptions in Sumerian, Akkadian, and Old Persian have been discovered on objects made of gold, silver, copper, and bronze. Gold is mentioned in Exodus 28:36 as a writing-surface; stone is also referred to several times in the Old Testament in this connection (Exod. 24:12; 34:1; Deuteronomy 4:13; 27:6f.; Joshua 8:32; Job 19:24). The use of broken pottery as writing material was widespread throughout the ancient Near East, although potsherds were of limited value to the Mesopotamian, since they could only be utilized for a script like Aramaic, which was written with pen and ink rather than with a stylus. Wood in one form or another was employed as a means of receiving writing (Numbers 17:2f.; Ezekiel 37:16f.; cf. Isaiah 8:1; 30:8; Hab. 2:2), as were leather and parchment.


166. Ibid.
The *Cologne Mani Codex* says that an angel appeared to Sethel (biblical Seth), son of Adam and told him secrets that he was to “write upon bronze tablets and store them up in the desert land.” A similar story is told in the *Apocalypse of Enosh*, cited in the *Cologne Mani Codex*. The angel instructed Seth’s son Enosh (Enos in the King James Bible) to write “hidden things upon bronze tablets and deposit (them) in the wilderness.”¹⁶⁷

Archaeology has not found examples of this kind of longer text on bronze plates, but a very important find was a biblical inscription on small rolled up strips of silver. These likely served as sacred talismans, preserving quotations from Numbers 6:24–26 which speak of protection from evil that Yahweh provides.¹⁶⁸ These small silver scrolls are the earliest attestations of a biblical text.¹⁶⁹

William J. Hamblin notes that there was apparently a tradition of important writing on bronze which remains attested only in linguistic references:

Walter Burkert, in his recent study of the cultural dependence of Greek civilization on the ancient Near East, refers to the transmission of the practice of writing on bronze plates (Semitic root *dlt*) from the Phoenician to the Greeks. “The reference to ‘bronze deltoid [plates, from *dlt*]’ as a term [among the Greeks] for ancient sacral laws should point back to the seventh or sixth century [bc]” as the period in which the terminology and the practice of writing on bronze plates was transmitted from the Phoenicians to the Greeks. Students of the Book of Mormon will note that this is precisely the time and place in which the Book of Mormon claims that there existed similar bronze plates which contained the “ancient sacred laws” of the Hebrews, the close cultural cousins of the Phoenicians.¹⁷⁰

Ironically, few examples of writing intentionally committed to an imperishable medium have survived. However, the texts that do survive

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¹⁶⁷. Ibid., 149–50.
provide a time-appropriate cultural context for the brass plates. The brass plates became the physical and spiritual model of a sacred record that crossed the ocean with Nephi and became the model for Nephi’s record creating and keeping.

The plates delivered to Joseph Smith consisted of the record Mormon created, but also included of a set of plates Nephi himself had made (1 Nephi 9:3, the small plates of Nephi). The modern witnesses who handled the plates describe them as a uniform set (not varying in their dimensions). Nevertheless, they contained plates physically created nearly a thousand years apart. The ancient world typically had no concept of standard sizes, yet the two sets of plates apparently fit together without noticeable division. I hypothesize that Nephi’s original plates established a tradition followed by later historians, archivists, and plate-makers. When Nephi made plates for his new record I suspect he intentionally modeled his plates on the brass plates that had formed such an important part of his Old World life. The size would have become the Nephite standard size.

The material upon which Nephi wrote was not brass, but probably a New World alloy called tumbaga, which combines gold, silver, and sometimes other metals into a metal lighter than solid gold but retaining the golden color.171 An interesting concatenation of information occurs across one of the new chapters Orson Pratt created for the Book of Mormon — a concatenation that strengthens the possibility that some version of tumbaga was used to create Nephi’s plates (and those which came after):

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.

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. (1 Nephi 18:25–19:1)

Nephi’s mention that his people discovered both gold, silver, and copper leads directly to his making the plates. The two may have

been related. Although we use the shorthand “gold plates” to refer to the plates Joseph received, they were likely not pure gold. Historian Matthew B. Brown notes:

Joseph Smith did not say that the plates of the Book of Mormon were made of pure gold, but rather that they “had the appearance of gold.” Oliver Cowdery is likewise reported as saying in 1830 that the Book of Mormon was “written on golden plates, or something resembling golden plates.” A secondhand statement by David Whitmer in 1831 says that “the leaves were plates of metal of a whitish yellow color.”

Another clue that we are not dealing with pure gold is the weight of the plates, according to witnesses. In addition to the descriptions of the material and color, there are various descriptions of the size and weight of the plates, as Robert F. Smith describes:

Joseph himself gave us the length, width, and thickness of the whole set of plates as 6” x 8” x 6” in his famous Wentworth Letter. On separate occasions, David Whitmer gave larger dimensions of 7” x 8”, and 6” x 9”, and 8” x 10”; Martin Harris claimed a smaller set at 7” x 8” x 4.” Following Joseph’s dimensions would amount to .1666 cubic foot (.005 cubic meter).

As shown many years ago by metallurgist/blacksmith Reed H. Putnam, hammered plates of pure twentyfour karat gold would probably not weigh more than about 50 percent of the solid dimensions, i.e., 100.4 pounds (45.2 kilograms).

However, even one hundred pounds contradicts the testimony of those who handled them: “William Smith, a brother of the Prophet who had handled and hefted the plates in a pillowcase, claimed on several occasions that the set of plates weighed about sixty pounds, as did Willard Chase, while Martin Harris said that they weighed forty to fifty pounds.”

If not pure gold, then of what were they made? William Smith suggested that the plates were “a mixture of gold and copper,” though how he might have known that cannot be determined. Nevertheless,

174. Ibid., 276. The evidence that he handled them while in a pillowcase is not consistent with being able to describe the composition. The description of the composition comes either from a different occasion or from hearing Joseph describe them.
175. Ibid.
Nephi’s suggestion that finding gold, silver, and copper might have led directly to the creation of the plates provides the hypothesis that an alloy of those metals was used.

Orson Pratt provides an interesting description of the characters on the plates. He says:

Eight other witnesses testify that Joseph Smith showed them the plates, and that they saw the engravings upon them, and that they had the appearance of ancient work and curious workmanship. They describe these plates as being about the thickness of common tin, about eight inches in length, and from six to seven in breadth. Upon each side of the leaves of these plates there were fine engravings, which were stained with a black, hard stain, so as to make the letters more legible and easier to be read.176

Jerry Grover suggests that there are two possibilities that account for the black color of the engraved characters: it is the byproduct of corrosion, or there was a material purposely placed in the engraved character depressions.177 After a discussion of the possible methods, he settled on depletion gilding. He had an experiment conducted to discover the alloy ratios and processes that might yield the blackening of the characters:

As part of a small research project that experimented with various New World depletion gilding techniques and parameters, one depletion gilding technique involved sequential washing and then heating with a torch. This technique was used on ternary alloy plates consisting of 37.5% gold, 57.5% silver, and 5% copper with various designs engraved on their surfaces. Areas where depletion gilding was not desired were covered with a resist, and to give variations in the color of the enriched surface the resist was

176. Orson Pratt, “Evidences of the Bible and Book of Mormon Compared,” in Journal of Discourses (London: Latter-day Saints’ Book Depot, 1854–86), 7:30–31. Orson did not see the plates, but certainly spoke with those who did. In 1844, William Ivins Appleby described the characters as being filled with “black cement.” W. I. Appleby, “A Dissertation on Nebuchadnezzar’s Dream,” (Philadelphia: Brown, Bicking & Gilbert, 1844), 23. Appleby did not see the plates. As with Orson Pratt, his information must have come from conversations with the witnesses, or with others who had spoken with them. Both Pratt’s and Appleby’s comment about the black letters have no other known corroboration, but their separate witness without apparent copying suggests that it was a detail that had been under-reported.

applied in different stages of the heating and washing cycles. The surface was burnished and was finally heated in the presence of ammonium sulphide or sulfur to give a brown-black surface color or patina to the undepleted regions. [One] experimental plate … [was found that] would most approximate the description given for the Book of Mormon gold plates with black filled engravings, and was produced using known pre-Columbian New World depletion gilding techniques. It was thought that the color was caused by the formation of silver and copper sulfides.178

Although the known New World techniques post-date Nephi in the region posited for the Book of Mormon,179 examples from the Old World suggest that such techniques were known, and therefore potentially available to Nephi.180 Significant in Grover’s experiment is the combination of gold, silver, and copper — the very metals Nephi mentioned just prior to discussing his creation of the original set of plates. Grover’s research cannot tell us that the plates were made of just such an alloy, but the ability of that combination of metals to produce plates matching the description of not only the color and weight of the plates, but also the blackening of the characters, provides an important foundation of plausibility.

**Nephi’s Plausible Training as a Scribe**

After leading those who would follow him to a new part of the land (2 Nephi 5:5–9), Nephi created plates and wrote upon them “a full account of the history of my people” (1 Nephi 9:2). We know very little of what was on those plates, save that it was an account of “the reign of the kings and the wars and contentions” (1 Nephi 9:4) of the Nephites. These were the plates that Mormon abridged and incorporated into his Book, but what Mormon chose from them vanished with the 116 manuscript pages that were lost (though I speculate on the lost pages in section “The Problem of the Lost Pages”). At some point after he had been recording the full account of the history of his people, the Lord instructed Nephi to create a second type of record (1 Nephi 9:4), which we know as the small plates of Nephi. As the founder of the recordkeeping tradition, understanding Nephi’s contribution should set the trajectory that eventually arrives at Mormon’s creative use of that tradition.

178. Ibid., 81
179. There is a growing consensus among scholars with training in archaeology and anthropology that Mesoamerica best fits the textual requirements for geography, geology, and cultural complexity.
How did Nephi come to be a record creator? Inspiration is too simple an answer. Inspiration had to act upon an existing ability to both create metal plates and write a complex, long text. How did Nephi come to have the basic skills necessary for each of those two tasks?

Creating the plates required skill in metalworking. There is abundant information in the text that attests to Nephi’s familiarity with metal working, and the logical source of that knowledge was his father, Lehi. Lehi and his family were quite wealthy, as attested by the ability of the brothers to amass a substantial bribe, consisting of “our gold, and our silver, and our precious things” (1 Nephi 3:22). It was large enough to buy Laban’s envy, even if not his cooperation.

John A. Tvedtnes was the first to suggest that Lehi’s wealth was the result of metalsmithing. Interestingly, most of Tvedtnes’s evidence concerns Nephi’s familiarity with metalworking, not Lehi’s. Nephi was given detailed instructions on how to build a ship, but there is no similar set of instructions on how to make the tools with which to build it. Nephi simply asks the Lord “whither shall I go that I may find ore to molten, that I may make tools to construct the ship after the manner which thou hast shown unto me?” (1 Nephi 17:9). He did not seem to need to ask how to create the tools once he knew a source for the ore. After he arrived in the New World, he listed useful animals and also “all manner of ore, both of gold, and of silver, and of copper” (1 Nephi 18:25) — presumably because the metals were also useful. He taught his New World people metalworking (2 Nephi 5:15–17).

Although the evidence for metalworking in the family is heavily based on information specific to Nephi, it still points to Lehi’s occupation. Jeffrey R. Chadwick, Associate professor of Church History at Brigham Young University, adds important information that more surely demonstrates Lehi’s involvement:

Lehi left behind gold and silver, two precious metals likely to have been used in expert jewelry smithing. While the population at large often utilized silver as money, in the form of cut pieces and small jewelry (no coins were in use in Judah during Iron Age II), to possess gold was very rare — gold was not used as a medium of common monetary exchange. For

182. Ibid., 94–95.
183. Ibid., 88–98.
Lehi to possess both gold and silver suggests that he worked with gold, which in turn suggests gold smithing.\textsuperscript{184}

With evidence pointing to metal working as his father’s profession, Nephi’s knowledge would have come from his father and the family business. It is not surprising that a son would understand and have some training in his father’s craft. However, while the family business explains how Nephi learned the business, it may not be sufficient to understand Nephi’s preparation. No matter how well Nephi learned the business, it was not going to be his. It would be earmarked for the first son, Laman. I believe that evidence also points to specific training in a different occupation: after Nephi used his experience with his father’s occupation to create the golden plates, he used his education as a scribe to create the text.\textsuperscript{185}

The most important evidence that Nephi was trained as a scribe is so obvious that it is easily missed: Nephi could read and write. Even among those who could read, the nature of what they could read differed. Some might be able to read and write simple texts, but only a few were able to both read and write more complex, literary texts.\textsuperscript{186} Perhaps more surprising for modern readers is that many could read, but not write.\textsuperscript{187}

It is difficult to ascertain the level and nature of literacy in ancient Israel. Some level of literacy may have been fairly extensive, with at least rudimentary reading and writing being taught in the villages.\textsuperscript{188} Nevertheless, while Israel might be argued to have a slightly higher literacy rate than its neighbors, their rates were so low as to suggest

\textsuperscript{184} Jeffrey R. Chadwick, “Lehi’s House at Jerusalem and the Land of His Inheritance,” in \textit{Glimpses of Lehi’s Jerusalem}, eds. John W. Welch, David Rolph Seely, and Jo Ann H. Seely (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2004), 114. Chadwick proposes ten reasons to see Lehi as a metalsmith (114–17), all but the first of which deal with Nephi rather than Lehi. We simply have better information for Nephi and the best explanation for Nephi’s expertise is that of his father.


that we should be cautious in assuming widespread literacy in Israel. Karel van der Toorn notes:

The great civilizations of antiquity were oral cultures. Though the figures differ depending on place and period, literacy was always restricted to a small segment of society. The Mesopotamians were the first humans to write, but less than 5 percent of the population was actually literate. In Egypt the rate of literacy was slightly higher than in Mesopotamia, but even the most generous estimates put it at no more than 7 percent of the population. In the classical world the situation was not much different. Greece had an overall literacy rate of about 10 percent, yet it was still predominantly an oral culture, rhetoric being the foundation and eloquence the aim of education.\(^{189}\)

Hebrew culture was similarly heavily oral. In Hebrew as well as several other languages, the word for “to read” meant “to say aloud.”\(^{190}\) An interesting example of the borders between literacy and orality is found in one of the Lachish Letters. The Lachish letters were ostraca (scraps of pottery used for writing) written to and from military leaders apparently preparing for Nebuchanezzar’s invasion (around 590 BC). That invasion eventually resulted in the fall of Jerusalem, the Babylonian exile, and of course, Lehi and his family’s departure for the New World. A military commander sent the following response to his superior:

Your servant Hoshayahu (hereby) reports to my lord Ya’ush. May YHWH give you good news … And now, please explain to your servant the meaning of the letter which my lord sent to your servant yesterday evening. For your servant has been sick at heart ever since you sent (that letter) to your servant. In it my lord said: “Don’t you know how to read a letter?” As (Y)HWH lives, no one has ever tried to read me a letter! Moreover, whenever any letter comes to me and I have read it, I can repeat it down to the smallest detail.\(^{191}\)

That letters were exchanged clearly points to some literacy. However, the commander’s expectation was that the recipient might not be able to read. Rather, it was assumed the letter would be read to the recipient. The subordinate’s reply reflected justifiable pride in his ability to read, but it

\(^{190}\) Coogan, “Literacy in Ancient Israel,” 437.
also highlights the continuing emphasis on orality. The subordinate also declares that when “I have read it, I can repeat it down to the smallest detail.” There is no indication that the record itself would be referenced, but rather that the function of the writing was to provide the information that would then be remembered without the written copy.\(^{192}\)

Karel van der Toorn suggests for Israel that “even if basic reading skills were more common in certain places and periods than generally assumed, it is doubtful whether this constituted widespread literacy. The ability to decipher a letter, for instance, does not amount to an active command of the written tradition of a culture. ‘High Literacy’ was confined to a small group.”\(^{193}\)

This is precisely the point at which Nephi’s training becomes most obvious. Perhaps all of Lehi’s family could read and write at a basic level. However, even in our modern society with very high literacy rates, there is a gap between writing a short note and composing a longer, more complicated text. What we know as First Nephi\(^ {194}\) is much closer to van der Toorn’s “High Literacy” that a simple letter would be, not only for its length but because of the artistry in its construction.

Nephi’s writings are far beyond writing or deciphering a letter. At least in the text we know as 1 Nephi, we have a remarkably well-crafted document. We have in 1 Nephi the “high literacy” van der Toorn suggests

\(^{192}\) Van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible*, 12: “In order for a written communication to reach its destination, however, the written text needed a voice. Texts were for the ears rather than the eyes .... Even such a mundane form of written communication as the letter usually required the intervention of someone who read its contents to the addressee. A messenger did not deliver the letter like a mailman; he announced its message, and the written letter served as aide-mémoire and means of verification.”

\(^{193}\) Ibid., 10–11.

\(^{194}\) Skousen, *The Original Manuscript of the Book of Mormon*, 1:104; Robert F. Smith, *Book of Mormon Critical Text*, 3 vols. (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1987), 1:164, indicates that the break between First and Second Nephi must have been the same as what Joseph saw/understood as a chapter break. Prior to entering the text, the scribe wrote “Chapter VIII” (the previous chapter was chapter seven). When the dictation began, the first line is “The Book of Nephi An account of the death of Lehi ....” Later, in superscript, we have added “second” to give us “The Second Book of Nephi,” and also an addition of “Chapter 1.” It appears that in Nephi’s manuscript, the two books of Nephi were both named “The Book of Nephi,” with the distinction coming in the following text giving the basic outline of what the book would contain. This is the same naming that we see later for what we know as Third Nephi and Fourth Nephi. Both were originally simply “The Book of Nephi,” with the distinguishing information being the sentence indicating the author.
was confined to a small group. Untrained semi-literacy would not have been sufficient to attempt such a record.195

Being a scribe was much more than simply learning to read and write. It was a specific type of education following similar lines in each of the Middle Eastern traditions. The great civilizations of Egypt and Mesopotamia had scribal schools.196 Indirect evidence confirms the presence of scribal education in Israel and Judah.197 Pragmatically, only the higher social classes were acceptable sources of scribes.198 The combination of metalworking and rents from ancestral lands in Samaria would have Lehi and his family approaching Jerusalem's upper class, giving reason to believe that Nephi might have been accepted into one of those schools.199

The scribal schools’ curriculum covered a range of topics, from languages, classic texts, the interpretation of texts, to public speaking. Karel van der Toorn, President of the University of Amsterdam and scholar of religion and Ancient Near Eastern languages, describes the language component of such training:

Instruction in the idiom of particular professions and written genres could be seen as part of the larger program of language instruction. The linguistic skills of the scribes would normally have included the mastery of one or more foreign languages. Around 700, the officials of King Hezekiah were able to conduct a conversation in Aramaic, which to the common people was incomprehensible (2 Kings 18:26). In addition to Aramaic, the scribal program may have taught other languages as well, such as Egyptian and, later, Greek. In the words of Ben Sira, the accomplished scribe “will

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195. Perhaps we see the result of less training near the end of the small plate record with the number of writers in the book of Omni. Perhaps as much as not having much to say, the brief entries may also indicate that the writers did not the training that would have provided them with more to say.
197. Ibid., 96–104.
198. Ibid., 105: “In view of their social-economic situation, the Levitical scribes can be likened to civil servants with no financial worries. They could apparently afford to pay for the education of their children; for them, a tuition fee consisting of a large sum of silver was not prohibitive. While it is conceivable that mere copyists and lower clerks were drawn from the lower strata of society, scribes belonged to what we would call the upper middle class.” Internal quotation silently removed.
travel through the lands of foreign nations” to increase his knowledge (Sir 39:4). Such exploits presume that training in foreign languages was part of the scribal education.200

That such skill in linguistics and writing systems existed in Israel receives confirmation through a number of artifacts exhibiting Egyptian hieratic writing which have been found in Canaan. One suggestion stemming from these findings is that there were Egyptian scribes in Canaan who were training local scribes in the art. John S. Thompson, a PhD student at the University of Pennsylvania quotes Orly Goldwasser, head of Egyptology at the Hebrew University Jerusalem:

[A]fter the decline of the Egyptian Empire … many Egyptians, or Egyptian-trained Canaanite scribes lost their means of existence, and may have offered their scribal and administrative knowledge to the new powers rising in the area, first to the Philistines and then the Israelites …. We would like to suggest that these Egyptian or Egyptian-trained scribes, cut off from their homeland, well acquainted with Egyptian decorum as well as the Canaanite language, educated local scribes, who in turn passed on their knowledge to their successors.201

The text on an artifact found at Lachish contains the Egyptian title “scribe.” This bolsters the idea that there was an Egyptian scribal tradition in Judah.202

The presence of a scribal tradition dealing with both the Egyptian language and one (or more) of its writing systems may provide a specific cultural background to explain the enigmatic references in Nephi’s introduction:

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.

200. Van der Toorn, Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible, 100.
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 (1 Nephi 1:1 – 2).

Hugh Nibley first noticed and highlighted that Nephi’s proficiency with Egyptian was the result of having been taught. Many LDS scholars have suggested that “a record in the language of my father, which consists of the learning of the Jews and the language of the Egyptians” may have been an Egyptian script encoding Hebrew language. Evidence does exist to indicate that this kind of mixing of script and language did take place. John A. Tvedtnes and Stephen D. Ricks (professor of Hebrew at Brigham Young University) provide some examples:

[There] are Israelite documents from the ninth to sixth centuries BC, from which we learn that the Israelites adopted the Egyptian hieratic numerals and mingled them with Hebrew text. More important, however, are Hebrew and Aramaic texts — languages used by the Jews of Lehi’s time — that are written in Egyptian characters. One of these is Papyrus Amherst 63, a document written in Egyptian demotic and dating to the second century B.C. The document had, like the Dead Sea Scrolls, been preserved in an earthen jar and was discovered in Thebes, Egypt during the second half of the nineteenth century. For years Egyptologists struggled with the text but could make no sense of it. The letters were clear, but they did not form intelligible words. In 1944, Raymond Bowman of the

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203. Hugh Nibley, Lehi in the Desert and The World of the Jaredites (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1952), 13. Nibley references Mosiah 1:4, which specifically speaks of Lehi having been taught. While the text has Lehi as the one receiving this education, I suggest that this is due to the late reference. Mosiah is using this example over 400 years later. It would not be surprising that the reference had been passed to the Old World patriarch rather than to the New World king, Nephi.

University of Chicago realized that, while the script is Egyptian, the underlying language is Aramaic.\textsuperscript{205}

Although understanding that Nephi may have been trained as a scribe does not entirely clarify what he meant by the \textit{learning of the Jews} and the \textit{language of the Egyptians}, it does provide a context in which those two aspects of language fit naturally together in a written document, and where a single person might have the necessary linguistic skill to creatively use a script to represent the phonetics of a different language. One might expect one who was minimally literate to be able to write with their native language with their native script, but not to exhibit the learning necessary to combine the phonetics of one language with a symbolic representation typically used for a different language.

In addition to languages, the curriculum of a scribal school included studying important cultural texts. Essentially the same Mesopotamian list of texts has been found in diverse locations, suggesting that they formed a standard curriculum for different scribal schools.\textsuperscript{206} Egyptian scribes similarly worked with and often memorized many of their classic texts.\textsuperscript{207} For the Israelites, van der Toorn notes: “The scholars of Israel were no exception to the common pattern: they were scribes who had specialized in the classic texts, which in their case made them scholars of the Torah.”\textsuperscript{208}

Perhaps Nephi’s love of and frequent citation of Isaiah was a direct result of a scribal school’s emphasis on Isaiah. Van der Toorn suggests that the presence of multiple copies of Deuteronomy, Isaiah, and the Psalms among the Dead Sea Scrolls is an “indication of their position in the scribal curriculum.”\textsuperscript{209} Everything Nephi wrote attests to his intimate familiarity with Isaiah, a familiarity that may have been the result of his study of Isaiah as a classic text.

It appears that the New World scribal training may have been even more limited to the social elites. While we do hear of writing, it is also clear that Nephite culture remained predominantly oral. Nephi himself noted:

And now I, Nephi, cannot write all the things which were taught among my people; neither am I mighty in writing, like unto speaking; for when a man speaketh by the power of the

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\item \textsuperscript{206} Van der Toorn, \textit{Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible}, 57–58.
\item \textsuperscript{207} Ibid., 68.
\item \textsuperscript{208} Ibid., 81.
\item \textsuperscript{209} Ibid., 102.
\end{itemize}
Holy Ghost the power of the Holy Ghost carrieth it unto the hearts of the children of men (2 Nephi 33:1).

For Nephi, the power of the Spirit was more markedly present in oral discourse. Modern readers may perhaps have felt spiritual promptings as we read scripture, but Nephi expected that it would be more prevalent, more powerful, through oral communication.

At the end of the Book of Mormon, Moroni appears to underline that same primacy of oral communication when he declares: “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” (Ether 12:23).

When Nephite writers wrote, they often followed conventions that came from oral literature rather than conventions dependent upon the written word.210

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Chapter 8: Nephi Organizing

As the author of these two books on the small plates as well as the beginning of the book of Lehi on the large plates, Nephi began the Nephite record-keeping tradition. Principles that Nephi used to create his text were copied and continued until Mormon’s time.

Nephi Ending Chapters

As with the analysis of Mormon’s chapters, the important question for Nephi is when he elected to stop writing. The beginnings of chapters will be simple and mostly predictable. There is a greater variation in what triggered Nephi to stop writing a chapter.

Nephi uses the testificatory amen as a trigger to close a chapter (a practice Mormon continued, as noted in the section on Mormon’s chapter endings). Chapter II (6–9) ends with a testificatory amen. A testificatory amen also ends Chapter III (10–14), Chapter IV (15), and Chapter VII (22, this is also the end of the book of 1 Nephi). In 2 Nephi, the testificatory amen ends chapters I (1–2), II (3), III (4), VI (9), VII (10), XIII (31), and XV (33, the end of the book of 2 Nephi). The copied Isaiah chapters did not have an original amen, nor was one added. Unlike the presence of the word amen in Mormon’s writing, we have no anomalous appearances. Whenever there is an amen used by Nephi, it ends a chapter. This might be due to comparatively fewer pages from Nephi than Mormon, or more likely because Nephi is typically writing his own story and not copying, editing, and inserting information. Also similar to Mormon’s chapter endings are Nephi’s chapters where a quotation triggers an end of a chapter. This method of chapter ending occurs in 1 Nephi VI (19:22–21) and 2 Nephi XI (25–27).

When Orson Pratt created new chapters in 1879, one of his goals was to assist readers to match Book of Mormon quotations of chapters from the Bible. Therefore, in the extensive quotations from Isaiah (and in the later extensive quotations from the Sermon on the Mount), he made chapters that matched the way chapters appear in modern Bibles. However, that was not the way chapters were created in antiquity, and
not the way the Isaiah material in 2 Nephi was broken into chapters. Early manuscripts of Isaiah did not mark paragraphs, punctuation, and often not chapters. John Gee has commented:

> When quoting lengthy passages, Book of Mormon prophets intentionally start and stop in certain specific places, reflecting natural breaks in Isaiah’s text. Nephite writers normally marked breaks in passages through a syntactic or phrasal marker at the beginning of a new section. One of these is a statement of acknowledging the presence of a quotation; such statements are common in ancient authors and we will refer to them as “inquit” statements after the most common Latin phrase *inquit*, “he said ….”

Jacob chose with care the long Isaiah passage that he quotes in 2 Nephi 6:6–8; 25 (see 2 Nephi 6:4); he is not simply rambling on until he gets tired. Inquit statements mark the boundaries of the passage he quotes. The selection Jacob quotes from Isaiah contains four sections, each of which begins with the phrase “Thus saith the Lord” (Isaiah 49:22, 25; 50:1; 51:22; parallel to 2 Nephi 6:6, 17; 17:1; 8:22), and the final sections ends just before a fifth “Thus saith the Lord” (Isaiah 52:3).

Nephi also quotes part of this passage (1 Nephi 21:22–26; parallel to Isaiah 49:22–26), but he stops earlier. The words immediately after his stopping point are “Thus saith the Lord” (Isaiah 50:1; parallel to 2 Nephi 7:1), and he began with a phrase just as distinctive: “Hear ye this, O house of Jacob” (Isaiah 48:1; parallel to 1 Nephi 20:1).

The chapter endings for the quoted Isaiah material correspond to the *inquit* beginnings. Interestingly, Gee points out that the Isaiah chapters were triggered by a beginning statement rather than by an ending. This is probably due to the presence of those divisions on the brass plates which were copied. Thus, there was no triggering of an ending. They were copied, not created.

**The Anomalous Chapter Endings**

The break between chapters I (1–5) and II (6–9) does not occur at one of the more common triggers, nor at a clear break in the narrative. Once

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211. Gee, “‘Choose the Things That Please Me’,” 68.
212. Ibid., 68–69. Internal subheadings silently removed.
Nephi finishes with his introduction and begins his story (1 Nephi 1:4), he continues in narrative-voice through the end of the chapter. Chapter II begins with an author-voice comment on what Nephi will and will not write. Although the shift from narrative-time to author-voice describes the end of Chapter I and the beginning of Chapter II, that shift did not trigger the end of Chapter I. Not long after Chapter I begins, Nephi breaks into author-voice: “And now I, Nephi, do not make a full account of the things which my father hath written, for he hath written many things which he saw in visions and in dreams; and he also hath written many things which he prophesied and spake unto his children, of which I shall not make a full account” (1 Nephi 1:16). It is a direct parallel to the opening of Chapter II: “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 6:3).213 That shift in narrator/author perspective did not trigger a chapter ending, so the similar change between chapters I and II is unlikely to have been triggered by that shift.

Nephi is telling a complex story that necessarily begins with the revelation to his father of the coming destruction of Jerusalem. At the beginning of the story, Nephi clearly places his father at the head of the family, and at the head of the prophetic tradition. However, the point of the book of 1 Nephi is to justify Nephi’s position as rightful ruler, not Lehi. In Chapter I Nephi opens with his father receiving revelation (1 Nephi 1:6–15). He closes the chapter with a revelation through Lehi (1 Nephi 5:4–5).

After the first revelation, Nephi adds:

And now I, Nephi, do not make a full account of the things which my father hath written, for he hath written many things which he saw in visions and in dreams; and he also hath written many things which he prophesied and spake unto his children, of which I shall not make a full account.

But I shall make an account of my proceedings in my days. Behold, I make an abridgment of the record of my father, upon plates which I have made with mine own hands; wherefore, after I have abridged the record of my father then will I make an account of mine own life. (1 Nephi 1:16–17)

213. Note that there is a missing negative, here inserted: “And it mattereth not to me that I am [not] particular to give a full account of all the things of my father.”
Immediately after his father’s vision, Nephi informs his reader that he really isn’t writing about his father, but he is writing his own story. After briefly noting the revelation to flee into the wilderness (1 Nephi 2:1–3), the story leaves Lehi and turns to the story of the brothers returning to Jerusalem for the brass plates. That story is the major focus of Chapter I, and prominently features Nephi. Nephi contrasts his murmuring brothers (1 Nephi 2:11–14) with his first experience with the Lord (1 Nephi 2:16). That revelatory experience sets up one of the subthemes of 1 Nephi, which is Nephi’s right of rule. The Lord declares:

And it came to pass that the Lord spake unto me, saying: Blessed art thou, Nephi, because of thy faith, for thou hast sought me diligently, with lowliness of heart.

And inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments, ye shall prosper, and shall be led to a land of promise; yea, even a land which I have prepared for you; yea, a land which is choice above all other lands.

And inasmuch as thy brethren shall rebel against thee, they shall be cut off from the presence of the Lord.

And inasmuch as thou shalt keep my commandments, thou shalt be made a ruler and a teacher over thy brethren.
(1 Nephi 2:19–22)

Amazingly, the first time Nephi mentions the promise of a new land is when the Lord makes the promise to Nephi. We read that Lehi obtained the land of promise only near the end of Chapter I (1 Nephi 5:5). Although Nephi brackets Chapter I with revelations to his father, he is clearly setting up the shift from Lehi as the prophet/leader to Nephi as the leader/prophet. Note how he ends the chapter:

And it came to pass that thus far I and my father had kept the commandments wherewith the Lord had commanded us.

And we had obtained the records which the Lord had commanded us, and searched them and found that they were desirable; yea, even of great worth unto us, insomuch that we could preserve the commandments of the Lord unto our children.

Wherefore, it was wisdom in the Lord that we should carry them with us, as we journeyed in the wilderness towards the land of promise. (1 Nephi 5:20–22)
Where the chapter began with Lehi, it ends with a team. Tellingly, both Nephi and Lehi received the promise of a new land, and Nephi ends the chapter with “as we journeyed in the wilderness towards the land of promise.” The we is intentional, and means Lehi and Nephi, not the entire family.

Chapter I ends because it is the end of the story of Lehi as the leader. From this point on, Nephi continues to shift the narrative to his own story. Even though it is Lehi who receives the command for his sons to return for Ishmael and his family, the story emphasizes how Nephi continues his ascendance over Laman and Lemuel. Not only is Nephi the one who supports his father, but the story has him teaching his older brothers. Remember that Nephi was promised that he would be a “ruler and teacher” (1 Nephi 5:22) over them. Nephi is not yet the ruler, but he emphasizes his role as teacher, a reversal of cultural expectations. It should have been the elder brothers who taught, but Nephi emphasizes the fulfillment of that part of the prophecy. What triggered the end of Chapter I? It was the end of the structural introduction of Lehi as the prophet leading them from Jerusalem and the introduction of Nephi’s future status. Future chapters continue the increase Nephi’s presence and diminish Lehi’s.

Chapter V (16–19:21) has a non-standard ending that has a contextual explanation. Chapter IV (15) ended with a testificatory amen. Because the amen created the chapter ending, the essential story of that chapter had not been finished. Our 1 Nephi 16:1–6 should be considered the ending of the events for the previous chapter. The chapter begins with the departure from their temporary encampment in the valley called Lemuel. In it, we have the stories of the marriages of the brothers, finding the Liahona, the incident of the broken bow, the sojourn in the wilderness, arrival in Bountiful, the building of the ship and the arrival in the New World. That is a lot of history to pack into a single chapter. With the arrival in the New World, all the events listed in the book’s synoptic header have been discussed. I suggest that it was Nephi’s intent to end the first book of Nephi with the arrival in the New World.

What happened as Nephi wrote the ending of Chapter V led to the addition of two more chapters, which flowed directly from the end of Chapter V, but not from the historical intent or plan for the book of 1 Nephi. To understand what came later, we need to pay attention to a critical transition:

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.

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. (1 Nephi 18:22–19:1)

Chapter I ended with “Wherefore, it was wisdom in the Lord that we should carry them with us, as we journeyed in the wilderness towards the land of promise” (1 Nephi 5:22). Both Nephi and Lehi had received the notice that they were to go to a land of promise, and Nephi clearly points out — by repeating the phrase three times — that they fulfilled the Lord’s promise and arrived in the land of promise.

After arriving in the New World, Nephi indicates that it was indeed a land of promise because they could grow food, and that there were animals of prosperity in the land. He ends the list of good things in the land with a recounting of ore. As I have noted before, there was no chapter break at the point in Nephi’s original chapter. The making of plates followed immediately upon the finding of the ore.

It is possible Nephi’s intent for the first book of Nephi ended with the first sentence of our chapter 19: “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” (1 Nephi 19:1). What follows is an expansion of the concepts behind the creation of the plates. I suggest that after the simple statement, he made the plates and a record and that
he began to add more information about the records he made and upon which he had written. Thus:

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 engraved 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.

Nevertheless, I do not write anything upon plates save it be that I think it be sacred. And now, if I do err, even did they err of old; not that I would excuse myself because of other men, but because of the weakness which is in me, according to the flesh, I would excuse myself. (1 Nephi 19:2–6)

The first set of plates are those we call the large plates of Nephi. What we are reading is on the second set, the small plates of Nephi. Nephi has already written this history on the large plates, and here it begins to reflect on the reason for writing on the small plates. What is important for understanding what comes after is that when Nephi mentions creating plates in the timeframe of the arrival in the New World, it is
for the large plates. He did not begin writing on the small plates until later. Therefore, he notes that “an account of my making these plates shall be given hereafter” (1 Nephi 19:5). That explanation, coming in a more appropriate timeframe, is found in 2 Nephi 5:

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. (2 Nephi 5:28–31)

That Nephi would note that there would be an account of the creation of the small plates given later means that he intended to discuss them within their more appropriate timeframe. It also suggests that he had not planned to speak of them at this point. As Nephi wrote, what he wrote triggered new and unplanned information.

The first of the new information was the creation of the small plates. The second was the different nature of the information to be recorded on the small plates, the very plates upon which he was writing. To this point in his record, Nephi had certainly provided some spiritual lessons, but most of the historical story was designed for other purposes. At this point, however, Nephi begins thinking upon the more spiritual things. He specifically declares: “this I do that the more sacred things may be kept for the knowledge of my people. Nevertheless, I do not write anything upon plates save it be that I think it be sacred” (1 Nephi 19:5–6).

Ruminating on what the sacred might be, Nephi displays his understanding of the most sacred things he can write. He begins to speak of the God of Israel (1 Nephi 19:7):

For the things which some men esteem to be of great worth, both to the body and soul, others set at naught and trample under their feet. Yea, even the very God of Israel do men trample under their feet; I say, trample under their feet but I would speak in other words — they set him at naught, and hearken not to the voice of his counsels.
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. (1 Nephi 19:7–10)

Although current LDS terminology makes a distinction between God the Father and Jesus Christ, for Nephi, Yahweh was his God, and Yahweh would descend from heaven to be known as Jesus. Note that as Nephi continues on this track, he quotes from prophets found on the brass plates. These quotations continue until Nephi ends the chapter:

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)

Nephi finished his long aside and ended the chapter, but he wasn’t finished with the theme. When Chapter VI (19:22–21) opens, he picks up with brass plate scripture. To introduce Isaiah 48, he notes:

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.

Wherefore I spake unto them, saying: Hear ye the words of the prophet, ye who are a remnant of the house of Israel, a branch who have been broken off; hear ye the words of the prophet, which were written unto all the house of Israel, and liken them unto yourselves, that ye may have hope as well as your brethren from whom ye have been broken off; for after this manner has the prophet written. (1 Nephi 19:22–24)

The combined desire to preach of the coming Christ and the previous quotations from the brass plates led to his selection of Isaiah chapters 48 and 49, both of which were written into Nephi’s Chapter VI, which ends with the conclusion of the quotation from Isaiah 49. When Nephi introduced Isaiah 48 and 49, he indicated: “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”

215. When Orson Pratt created new chapters, he specifically made quoted chapters line up with the way they appeared in the Bible. Thus, he removed the beginning of Chapter VI in which Nephi introduced Isaiah and added it to the end of the previous chapter (our chapter 19). This allowed our current chapter 20 clearly match with Isaiah 48.

216. Up to this point in 1 Nephi, preaching to “my brethren” has meant Nephi preaching to Laman and Lemuel. That is not the case here. Nephi has stepped out of the narrative-time and into author-voice. He is speaking of the things he taught the people of Nephi.
(1 Nephi 19:23). Chapter VII (22) is Nephi’s specific likening of these Isaiah chapters to his own people.

**Nephi Beginning Chapters**

Nephi did not use a standard beginning for his chapters, but there is very little variation:

**1 Nephi**
- Chapter I (1–5) I, Nephi, having been born …
- Chapter II (6–9) And now I, Nephi, do not give …
- Chapter III (10–14) And now I, Nephi, proceed …
- Chapter IV (15) And it came to pass that after I, Nephi, had been carried away …
- Chapter V (16–19:21) And now it came to pass that after I, Nephi, had made an end …
- Chapter VI (19:22–21) Now it came to pass that I, Nephi, did teach …
- Chapter VII (22) And now it came to pass that after I, Nephi, had read …

**2 Nephi**
- Chapter I (1–2) And now it came to pass that after I, Nephi, had made …
- Chapter II (3) And now I speak unto you, Joseph, my last-born. Lehi speaking. The previous chapter was ended by an Amen, hence this picks up with Lehi still speaking.
- Chapter III (4) And now, I, Nephi, speak …
- Chapter IV (5) Behold, it came to pass that I, Nephi, did cry …
- Chapter V (6–8) The words of Jacob, the brother of Nephi (an inserted sermon)
- Chapter VI (9) And now, my beloved brethren, I have read … (still Jacob — the previous chapter was ended by the end of a quotation)
- Chapter VII (10) And now I, Jacob, speak unto you again … (previous chapter ended with amen)
Chapter VIII (11–15)  And now, Jacob spake many more things to my people at that time; nevertheless only these things have I caused to be written, for the things which I have written sufficeth me. And now I, Nephi, write more of the words of Isaiah … (The first sentence ends the event of the previous chapter — which ended with amen, creating the need for this material to begin the next chapter. When Nephi begins his own chapter, he returns to the formula)

Chapter IX (16–22)  Isaiah
Chapter X (23–24)  Isaiah
Chapter XI (25–27)  Now I, Nephi, do speak …
Chapter XII (28–30)  And now, behold, my brethren, I have spoken unto you …
Chapter XIII (31)  And now I, Nephi, make an end … And I cannot write but a few things …
Chapter XIV (32)  And now, behold, my beloved brethren, I suppose …
Chapter XV (33)  And now I, Nephi, cannot write …

The 2 Nephi chapters which quote Lehi, Jacob, or Isaiah do not have Nephi as the author of the chapter beginning. When we do have Nephi, the typical formula is “And now” then “I, Nephi,” followed by a verb. 2 Nephi XII and XIV have “I,” but lack the specific “I, Nephi.”

The prevalence of “I, Nephi” contrasts with the much rarer occurrence of “I, Mormon” in the rest of the text. Mormon does not use the self-identification to begin chapters — and should not, because he was not the ultimate author.

Opening chapters with the self-identifying “I, Nephi” shows one place where Nephi uses that self-introduction, but chapter beginnings account for only a small number of the times it is used. In 1 Nephi, “I, Nephi” opens every chapter, but accounts for only seven instances. In 2 Nephi, we see “I, Nephi” less in the chapter openings (six of fifteen chapters). Subtracting the thirteen chapter-beginning instances still leaves seventy-five more times where Nephi adds the self-identifying phrase inside a chapter. As a text written in the first person, we can expect a heavy usage of the pronoun “I.” Note how it appears in just a single verse:
But I shall make an account of my proceedings in my days. Behold, I make an abridgment of the record of my father, upon plates which I have made with mine own hands; wherefore, after I have abridged the record of my father then will I make an account of mine own life. (1 Nephi 1:17)

After beginning with an “I, Nephi” opening in 1 Nephi 1:1, Nephi tells his father’s story and discusses his father’s vision of the future of Jerusalem. Then, in 1 Nephi 1:16 we have “And now I, Nephi, do not make a full account of the things which my father hath written....” Nephi follows this statement with an aside where he indicates that he will later give an account of his own life (1 Nephi 1:16–17). He returns to his father’s story, noting that he was mocked in Jerusalem and that there they sought to take his life.

Next, Nephi writes:

But behold, I, Nephi, will show unto you that the tender mercies of the Lord are over all those whom he hath chosen, because of their faith, to make them mighty even unto the power of deliverance.

For behold, it came to pass that the Lord spake unto my father, yea, even in a dream, and said unto him: Blessed art thou Lehi, because of the things which thou hast done; and because thou hast been faithful and declared unto this people the things which I commanded thee, behold, they seek to take away thy life. (1 Nephi 1:20–2:1)

This section continues until the end of Lehi’s exhortation to Lemuel in the Valley of Lemuel. The transition from the end of that section to the “I, Nephi” statement is:

And it came to pass that my father did speak unto them in the valley of Lemuel, with power, being filled with the Spirit, until their frames did shake before him. And he did confound them, that they durst not utter against him; wherefore, they did as he commanded them.

And my father dwelt in a tent.

And it came to pass that I, Nephi, being exceedingly young, nevertheless being large in stature, and also having great desires to know of the mysteries of God, wherefore, I did cry unto the Lord; and behold he did visit me, and did soften my heart that I did believe all the words which had been spoken
by my father; wherefore, I did not rebel against him like unto my brothers. (1 Nephi 2:14–16)

After examining all of the occasions where we find “I, Nephi” in the text, it appears that Nephi uses that phrase to make transitions. Sometimes there is a longer section between the phrases than others. We find the phrase in 1 Nephi 3:7, then again in 1 Nephi 3:9. In all cases but one, Nephi uses the self-identification as a separation between sections of his story.

The exception is found in two contiguous sentences:

And it came to pass that the Lord commanded him that I, Nephi, and my brethren, should again return unto the land of Jerusalem, and bring down Ishmael and his family into the wilderness.

And it came to pass that I, Nephi, did again, with my brethren, go forth into the wilderness to go up to Jerusalem. (1 Nephi 7:2–3)

What is interesting here is that these verses are essentially duplicated. Unlike other uses of “I, Nephi,” there is nothing between the statements that is being set off from what went before and after. It is true that what follows the second occurrence begins the story of the journey to Ishmael’s house. The preceding story is Lehi’s revelation that they should return for Ishmael and his family. This particular duplication has no structural reason, nor any poetic reason.

My best guess is that we are seeing a type of repetitive resumption, but in this case we have a temporal disjunction rather than an aside or other intervening text. Perhaps Nephi was writing and ended for a time at 1 Nephi 7:2. When he returned, he picked up where he left off and intentionally, or perhaps even unintentionally, repeated the sentence as he started the new story.

Making Two Books

Nephi is the only writer to provide two separate books. The books of Omni, Mosiah, Alma, and Helaman all demonstrate that there may be more than one individual writing in a named book, but Nephi is

217. Donald W. Parry, Poetic Parallelisms in the Book of Mormon: The Complete Text Reformatted (Provo, UT: The Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, Brigham Young University, 2007), 13, sees this as a chiasm. In spite of the fact that most of the phrases are repeated in the same order, Parry finds a way to make it appear to be a chiasm. I believe that it is very obviously a parallel and not a chiasm. Unfortunately, some chiasms are the result of the scholar’s imposition of order rather than the author’s.
unique in being a single author with two books.\footnote{Mormon edits multiple books, and authored both the book of Mormon and Words of Mormon. Words of Mormon is more of an introduction that a book. A closer possibility is 3 and 4 Nephi, which are about the same person. However, 3 Nephi is from his personal journal, not a book on the large plates. 4 Nephi comes from the large plates, and probably indicates a new political dynasty, but the intents and original locations of the two writings do not parallel the kind of division that Nephi made on the same record, speaking of the same events.} One of the interesting responses from LDS scholars has been to minimize or relocate the break between the two books.

In 1986, Frederick W. Axelgard suggested that while we have two books, there was a more important division into two themes:

The decisive evidence for breaking Nephi’s record into two parts, divided at the end of 2 Nephi 5, is more precise. Nephi gives the definitive clue in a passage in 1 Nephi 19. The following excerpt is taken from his discussion of the small plates:

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 19:5)

In this rare glimpse into his organizational thoughts, Nephi promises to give us later an account of his making the small plates. Furthermore, he marks that account as a threshold he will cross before he conveys “more sacred things.” As promised, Nephi describes the creation of the small plates near the end of 2 Nephi 5. This juncture is thus an unmistakable turning point, the gateway to what Nephi calls “the more sacred things [to] be kept for the knowledge of my people.”\footnote{Frederick W. Axelgard, “1 and 2 Nephi: An Inspiring Whole,” in BYU Studies 26, no. 4 (1986): 55.}

Joseph Spencer reemphasized Axelgard’s essential structural conclusion:

Nephi ... identifies for his readers a basic structural division in his record, one he apparently imposed on it consciously and of which he wanted his readers to be aware. Nephi’s record divides into two major parts: (1) the twenty-seven chapters stretching from 1 Nephi 1 to 2 Nephi 5, leading up to the account of the physical production of the small plates; and (2) the twenty-eight chapters stretching from 2 Nephi 6 to
2 Nephi 33, following the account of the physical production of the small plates.\textsuperscript{220}

Both scholars make a division between historical and spiritual content, and neither explains how that structure explains the hard division between two books. Nevertheless, Axelgard specifically notes that these two books come from the small plates which contain holographic writings.\textsuperscript{221} As the original writer, it was Nephi himself who divided the books.

Noel B. Reynolds examined the general idea originally proposed in Axelgard and supported in Spencer. He discusses his reasons for rejecting their notion of the conceptual division. Reynolds finds that “[t]he most obvious and probably most egregious offense introduced by Axelgard and followed by Spencer is their disregard for Nephi’s division of his writing into two books. While they do offer an argument for seeing another division between 2 Nephi 5 and 6, neither of these writers even pauses to recognize the clear facts of Nephi’s two-book division and the enormous interpretive burden they have assumed in disregarding the evident intention of the author and asserting a different one as his true intention.”\textsuperscript{222}

One of the interpretive problems modern readers impose upon the text is the assumption that our categories informed Nephi’s categories. Spencer makes the astonishing suggestion that: “Because Nephi only begins to ‘fulfill the commandment’ concerning the small plates with 2 Nephi 6, the break between 2 Nephi 6–30 and 2 Nephi 31–33 turns out to be important: it allows one to identify 2 Nephi 6–30 as the core of Nephi’s record.”\textsuperscript{223} If this were true, Nephi would have essentially wasted the ten years from the beginning of making the small plates to the end of 2 Nephi 5 (2 Nephi 5:28, 34).

It is therefore important to understand what Nephi thought he had done in those ten years before he began what Spencer suggested was the core of his record:

\begin{quote}
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.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{220} Spencer, \textit{An Other Testament: On Typology}, 34–35.
\textsuperscript{221} Axelgard, “1 and 2 Nephi: An Inspiring Whole,” 55.
\textsuperscript{223} Spencer, \textit{An Other Testament: On Typology}, 36.
Wherefore, I, Nephi, to be obedient to the commandments of the Lord, went and made these plates upon which I have engraven these things.

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

And if my people desire to know the more particular part of the history of my people they must search mine other plates.

(2 Nephi 5:30–33)

Axelgard had suggested that Nephi’s writings “contain two primary divisions, one heavily historical and the other exclusively spiritual in content.” Nevertheless, at the end of the section that Axelgard deemed historical, Nephi himself felt that he had written according to the Lord’s command and had already written “that which is pleasing unto God.” Attempts to split Nephi’s work into a distinction between historical and spiritual reflect our modern understandings of the two terms. More productive for understanding Nephi is to attempt to understand why Nephi thought that what we deem historical, he felt fulfilled the commandment to write “an account... of the ministry of my people” (1 Nephi 9:3).

First, it is important to understand that Axelgard, Spencer, and Reynolds are all interested in structures that might be found within Nephi’s writings. Reynolds describes my position with respect to Nephi’s structures: “The primary goal of scholarly interpretation of ancient scripture is to improve our understanding of the messages intended by their authors.” Nephi left a very clear understanding of

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225. Reynolds, “On Doubting Nephi’s Break Between 1 and 2 Nephi,” 93; analyzes Axelgard and Spencer’s interpretation of 1 Nephi 19:5 as referring to the discussion of the plates in 2 Nephi 5 as the time when the “more sacred” discussion will begin. Reynolds (93–94) concludes (and I agree): “The phrases ‘sacred things,’ ‘more sacred things,’ and ‘more plain and precious parts’ all refer generally to the contents of the small plates and not to some distinct section within Nephi’s writings in the small plates.”
226. Ibid., 85: “A few contemporary Book of Mormon scholars are increasingly convinced that the internal structures of Nephi’s writings provide important guidance for would-be interpreters of his teachings. Joseph Spencer and I are two who are working on this issue currently.”
227. Ibid., 98. Reynolds also warns, in the paragraph preceding the statement quoted: “Any interpretation of Nephi that needs to resort to esotericism will more likely be drawing on the interpreter’s own theses and philosophical positions than on teachings and clues deliberately embedded in the text by Nephi himself.”
what he intended to write. He laid out his intentions in outline headers for each of his two books.

The header for the first book of Nephi reads:

An account of Lehi and his wife Sariah, and his four sons, being called, (beginning at the eldest) Laman, Lemuel, Sam, and Nephi. The Lord warns Lehi to depart out of the land of Jerusalem, because he prophesieth unto the people concerning their iniquity and they seek to destroy his life. He taketh three days’ journey into the wilderness with his family. Nephi taketh his brethren and returneth to the land of Jerusalem after the record of the Jews. The account of their sufferings. They take the daughters of Ishmael to wife. They take their families and depart into the wilderness. Their sufferings and afflictions in the wilderness. The course of their travels. They come to the large waters. Nephi’s brethren rebel against him. He confoundeth them, and buildeth a ship. They call the name of the place Bountiful. They cross the large waters into the promised land, and so forth. This is according to the account of Nephi; or in other words, I, Nephi, wrote this record.

The header for the second book of Nephi is much shorter: “An account of the death of Lehi. Nephi’s brethren rebel against him. The Lord warns Nephi to depart into the wilderness. His journeyings in the wilderness, and so forth.” As with the discussion of the outline headers for Mormon, these headers in Nephi preceded the writing of the books themselves. Thus, they provide Nephi’s general outline of what would be included. The header for 1 Nephi therefore shows the major events that would be discussed, ending with the family’s arrival in the New World.

The header for 2 Nephi continues with the theme of what a modern reader would consider historical events. Those events include the separation of the people of Nephi from Laman and Lemuel after Lehi’s death. Then it stops, even though we have some discussion of the early settling of the city of Nephi that was not described in the header.

What do these headers tell us? First, they tell us what Nephi’s outline was for his two books. Regardless of our interpretation of what Nephi meant when he said he was commanded to write about “the more part of the ministry” (1 Nephi 9:4), Nephi believed that information to have been couched in what our modern sensitivities label history.

The second thing that the headers tell us is that Nephi intended to have two books. It wasn’t an accident. He had a book that began with the vision to leave Jerusalem and ended with the arrival in the New World. His
second book began in the New World. The hint that his second book was to include: “Nephi’s brethren rebel against him. The Lord warns Nephi to depart into the wilderness. His journeyings in the wilderness, and so forth” suggests that Nephi was creating a New World parallel to the Old World story of his people. Thus, there were two books. One book told the Old World origin story. The second book concentrated on the New World origin story, and one that Nephi intended his readers see as parallel to the story from the Old World. It was a plan that began with Lehi’s prophetic blessings that predicted the rise of Nephite dominance over the Lamanites.

That was Nephi’s plan. His plan was short-lived. In his second book, the first three chapters (our 2 Nephi 1–4) continue the detail we saw in 1 Nephi. After Nephi wrote of his father’s death he engraved the moving section known as Nephi’s Psalm. It is an emotional and poetic response to his father’s passing, one spontaneous rather than planned.228

Then we get chapter IV (5). In only thirty-four verses of our modern edition, Nephi takes his story from the death of his father to the separation of the Nephites and Lamanites to his current time: “and it sufficeth me to say that forty years had passed away” (2 Nephi 5:34). For all of the care Nephi took in telling his story up to the beginning of chapter IV (5), he rushes through the rest of his history and abruptly ends. In the next chapter he changes focus entirely. His next chapter isn’t even about Nephi, it is about his brother, Jacob. Understanding this stark change in the nature of Nephi’s story-telling requires that we see more of what happens in his chapter IV (5).

I suggest that we owe the abrupt change to two factors. The first is that Nephi may have been facing his own mortality. I have suggested that Nephi stopped recording his sermon in 2 Nephi XIV (32) in order to begin writing his final farewell in 2 Nephi XV (32).229 The second is that Nephi’s departure into a different type of record was allowed because he had finished most of his outline for Nephite history.230 This occurs in a whirlwind tour through the events of his last almost thirty years.

229. Ibid., 2:456.
230. This analysis suggests that, contrary to Axelgard and Spencer, Nephi did not have an overarching plan for 2 Nephi that originally included the material from 2 Nephi 6 to the end of the book. It is also contrary to Noel B. Reynolds, “On Doubting Nephi’s Break,” 89, who notes: “In Axelgard’s case, the whole exercise ironically brings him to a general conclusion that I would strongly support for different reasons than those he advances. Nephi’s writings do constitute an inspiring whole — contrary to the prevailing academic opinion in the 1980s that 2 Nephi was a random collection of leftovers.”
The beginning of the end comes when Nephi wraps up the historical/political purposes he had for the small plates:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

And the Lord God said unto me: They shall be a scourge unto thy seed, to stir them up in remembrance of me; and inasmuch as they will not remember me, and hearken unto

I see a change in the way Nephi wrote, but rather than random additions, I see them as having been triggered by previous content.
my words, they shall scourge them even unto destruction. (2 Nephi 5:20–25)

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

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

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

With this, Nephi finishes the story of the creation of the Nephite people. The ethnogenetic story is complete. However, he does have an editorial promise to fulfill. Nephi describes the making of the plates upon which he is writing:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(2 Nephi 5:34)

This is speculative, but I suggest that this verse was not intended to be an ending. When he puts this sentence in his record he clearly sets the stage to discuss something about wars and contentions. Except he stops. Speculation doesn’t allow for any understanding of why Nephi stopped at this point, but I suggest that there was some reason why Nephi stopped writing after this sentence, and some time passed before he wrote again.

When Nephi wrote again, I suggest that he reviewed what he had written and knew that he had intended to speak of wars and contentions. I believe that he decided to examine contentions but decided to change the way he had been writing. Rather than narrate a story of contentions, he entered a sermon from Jacob that was designed and delivered to ease the contentions. I have suggested that Jacob’s sermon makes the most sense in a situation where there are Old World Israelites and New World peoples merged into the same city. The tensions that might have arisen between the groups would explain why Isaiah’s description of the Gentiles saving the house of Israel would have been a present need rather than a sermon that only related to a distant future. 231

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

Orson Pratt separated our chapter 11 from 12 so that chapter 12 would be directly parallel to Isaiah 2 as found in the Bible. Nephi had no break at this point. Nephi’s intent was to follow Jacob’s sermon with a set of chapters from Isaiah. I suggest that this addition was also a triggered addition. Jacob’s

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sermon was based on Isaiah, and Nephi intended to add his vision of the future that would be grounded in the chapters of Isaiah that he added.

Although it is easy for modern readers to make a division between the historical and spiritual, and to therefore see 2 Nephi 6–33 as the “more spiritual” content,\textsuperscript{232} doing so suggests that Nephi spent at least ten years writing on the small plates before he ever got around to fulfilling the reason for which they were written. Noel B. Reynolds provides an appropriate rule for analyzing an ancient text: “The reader must allow the author to guide his interpretation through explicit statements, culturally recognized rhetorical devices, and textual organization. The reader should not twist the text to accommodate philosophical, doctrinal, or historical theses or insights the reader has brought to the exercise.”\textsuperscript{233}

The Synoptic Header for 1 Nephi

In the section discussing Mormon’s outline headers, I noted that the printer’s manuscript marked a difference between the header and the beginning of the book itself, and that this is also attested in the only remaining book header from Mormon’s edited sections on the original manuscript. It is not the case that the outline headers for either 1 or 2 Nephi have any clear indication of the separation between the header and the beginning of the book. There is no line clearly indicating the division. This becomes interesting because John H. Gilbert, the compositor for Grandin Press, was the one who made the decision. In the case of 1 Nephi, I suggest that he made an error, and that the intent of Nephi’s book began a sentence earlier than it does now.

The current header is:

An account of Lehi and his wife Sariah, and his four sons, being called, (beginning at the eldest) Laman, Lemuel, Sam, and Nephi. The Lord warns Lehi to depart out of the land of Jerusalem, because he prophesieth unto the people concerning their iniquity and they seek to destroy his life. He taketh three days’ journey into the wilderness with his family. Nephi taketh his brethren and returneth to the land of Jerusalem after the record of the Jews. The account of their sufferings. They take the daughters of Ishmael to wife. They take their families and depart into the wilderness. Their sufferings and


\textsuperscript{233} Reynolds, “On Doubting Nephi’s Break,’ 90.
afflictions in the wilderness. The course of their travels. They come to the large waters. Nephi's brethren rebel against him. He confoundeth them, and buildeth a ship. They call the name of the place Bountiful. They cross the large waters into the promised land, and so forth. *This is according to the account of Nephi; or in other words, I, Nephi, wrote this record.*

As with all other outline headers, the header is in the third person. In this header only, there is a shift to a first-person declaration. That does not occur in any other record. For that reason alone, I might suggest that the final sentence should rather be the first of the book of Nephi. However, there is another hint. The ending of the preceding sentence is “and so forth,” which Gilbert wrote out from the printer's manuscript's “.&C.” The header for 2 Nephi also ends in “.&C.”, written as “and so forth.”

The evidence suggests to me that we should move the final sentence of the header. However, placing it with the first verse is also awkward:

This is according to the account of Nephi; or in other words, I, Nephi, wrote this record. 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. (Header–1 Nephi 1:1)

I suggest that rather than the book header, or part of the first verse, we should see this sentence as a chapter header. Thus, it would be part of the chapter, but separated from the text. Grant Hardy suggests a similar change for 2 Nephi 6. In his Maxwell Institute Study Edition of the Book of Mormon he has moved 2 Nephi 6:1 from text to header.

Understanding that Nephi used a chapter header in 2 Nephi 6 confirms that he understood the concept. That reinforces the probability that this is what we are seeing in 1 Nephi 1. The chapter headers also appear to serve a bibliographic function. They introduce the sources.

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235. Ibid., 1:110–11.
Essentially, that is what we have in this sentence: “This is according to the account of Nephi; or in other words, I, Nephi, wrote this record.”
Chapter 9: Nephi Writing

Applying His Training

Noel B. Reynolds noted: “Of course [The Book of Mormon] is a witness for Christ and his teachings. But in addition, it provides reasons why we should believe that the tradition of the Nephites was just and correct. The two messages of the book are tied together in such a way that whoever accepts the teachings of Christ accepts that Nephi was a legitimate ruler, and vice versa.”

Politics, science, and religion were interrelated belief systems that were difficult to separate in antiquity. The Book of Mormon — the product of an author reared, trained, and immersed in such a society — is no exception. It is for this reason that when Nephi declares that “these [small] plates are for the more part of the ministry” (1 Nephi 9:4), the text he provides tells both a religious and political history. For Nephi, politics and religion merged into “the more part of the ministry.”

One of the important aspects of the national origin story is the presentation of the legitimacy of their rulers. Nephi was faced with that very task. He had a new people in a new city. As he began to write on the small plates thirty years after he had left Jerusalem, he turned his attention to telling the story of the legitimate right of his people to be a separate people and for Nephi to be their king. Even with this treatise supporting his legitimacy, Reynolds points out that: “[t]hrough a thousand years of Nephite history, both Nephite dissidents and

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Lamanite invaders would accuse Nephite rulers of usurping the right to rule that belonged to Laman and Lemuel”.240

The ways in which Nephi built his case drew upon his scribal training. One of the underlying structural elements with which he would have been familiar from his study of ancient Near Eastern texts was the cultural formula by which a new nation was justified. Establishing a new people is termed *ethnogenesis*. The texts Nephi would have studied would have modeled the typical origin story of a new people. Ann E. Killebrew lays out the basic form:

> Following Hedwig Wolfram’s definition, the process of ethnogenesis that forms the core ideology of a group often comprises three characteristic features: (1) a story or stories of a primordial deep, which can include the crossing of a sea or river, an impressive victory against all odds over an enemy, or combinations of similar “miraculous” stories (e.g., the exodus); (2) a group that undergoes a religious experience or change in cult as a result of the primordial deed (e.g. reception of the Ten Commandments and worship of Yahweh); and (3) the existence of an ancestral enemy or enemies that cement group cohesion (e.g., most notably the Canaanites and Philistines). These basic elements form the key themes in the biblical narrative about the emergence of early Israel.241

Although it is possible this was a subconscious model,242 the skill with which Nephi crafts his story to communicate these acceptable justifications for ethnogenesis points to an educated background that at least taught the texts that exemplified these ideas. Nephi made sure he covered the essential bases in 1 Nephi:

> 8. Nephi combined the crossing of the wilderness with the crossing of the ocean as the fulfillment of this element. He


included miraculous events to emphasize the presence of God in the process.

9. The acquisition of the brass plates functioned parallel to the reception of the ten commandments. The Lord’s requirement that they separate from Jerusalem, as well as the declaration that there were missing teachings in the scriptures provided the need for the new religious formulation. Both Lehi and Nephi taught the Atoning Messiah as the new, or restored, element of their religion.

10. Laman and Lemuel are written unsympathetically so that they might serve as the external enemy that enforced Nephite cohesion.243 The separation into Lamanite and Nephite defined both the “us” and “them,” with the Lamanites as the perennial enemy (even when there might not have been any lineal connection to Laman or Lemuel).

In addition to the standard ethnogenetic elements, Nephi had to justify why he should be the ruler instead of Laman. Laman was the oldest son and Nephi the youngest (until Joseph and Jacob are born in the wilderness). Scribes used established texts as they created new ones.244 Nephi therefore incorporates a parallel to Joseph of Egypt by receiving a revelation that he should be ruler over his brothers (Genesis 37: 5–10). Nephi establishes a divine model, then carefully builds the sequence to provide the revelation, have Laman and Lemuel recognize it, and then to declare it fulfilled.

As Nephi built his ethnogenetic origin story, he did not rely solely upon history, but he made certain to sacralize that history by intentionally modeling it against a known pattern. His family did not simply leave Jerusalem and travel. They enacted a new exodus:

243. Hardy, Understanding the Book of Mormon, 33: “The first thing to notice is that Nephi flattens his older brothers by treating them as a single unit rather than as individuals. The only time that Laman does anything independently is when he goes to Laban’s house to ask for the plates (1 Nephi 3:9–14); otherwise, he always speaks and acts in conjunction with Lemuel. Lemuel, in turn, never opposes Laman in any way, and never appears without Laman close by.”

244. Van der Toorn, Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible, 137–41, discusses the way that scribes used the established texts in the creation of new ones.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Incident</th>
<th>Exodus</th>
<th>1 Nephi</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The call to the responsible leader through a revelation accompanied by fire</td>
<td>Exodus 3:2–4</td>
<td>1 Nephi 1:6</td>
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<tr>
<td>The despoiling of the Egyptians and the taking of Laban’s possessions</td>
<td>Exodus 12:35–36</td>
<td>1 Nephi 4:38; 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deliverance on the other side of a water barrier</td>
<td>Exodus 14:22–30</td>
<td>1 Nephi 17:8; 18:8–23</td>
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<tr>
<td>An extended period of wandering</td>
<td>Exodus 16:35</td>
<td>1 Nephi 17:4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Complaints along the way</td>
<td>Exodus 15:24</td>
<td>1 Nephi 2:11–12; 5:2–3; 16:20, 25, 35–38; 17:17–22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outright rebellion</td>
<td>Numbers 16:1–35; 25:1</td>
<td>1 Nephi 7:6–16; 18:9–21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New law that was to govern the Lord’s people</td>
<td>Exodus 20:2–17</td>
<td>1 Nephi 2:20–24</td>
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The connection between the Exodus story and the departure of the Lehites from Jerusalem was salient for a long time in Nephite history. S. Kent Brown explains:

The memory of Israel’s Exodus from Egypt runs so deep and clear in the Book of Mormon that it has naturally drawn the attention of modern students. The chief focus of recent studies has fallen on the departure of Lehi’s family from Jerusalem as a replication, almost a mirror image — even in small details — of the flight of the Hebrews. Such interest emerges naturally because Nephite teachers themselves drew comparisons between Lehi’s colony and their Israelite

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245. S. Kent Brown, “The Exodus Pattern in the Book of Mormon,” *BYU Studies* 30, no. 3 (Summer 1990): 112. I have reorganized his insights into a table from the original paragraph form.
forebears. For instance, in an important speech, king Limhi referred to the Israelites’ escape from Egypt and, immediately thereafter, drew a parallel to Lehi’s departure from Jerusalem (Mosiah 7:19–20). Additionally, in remarks addressed to his son Helaman, Alma consciously linked the Exodus from Egypt with Lehi’s journey (Alma 36:28–29).246

The new Nephite origin story began with a new exodus. However, both the political right to rule and the right to exercise their religion depended upon the ties between the new Nephites and old Israel. To emphasize this, Nephi again turns to scripture to place his people inside the inherited blessings pertaining to the house of Israel. Nephi certainly understood that the olive tree was a symbol closely tied to Israel (see Hosea 4:5–9 and Jeremiah 11:16–17). In that context he provided his father’s vision of the future:

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. (1 Nephi 10:12–14)

The two elements of this prophecy that were important for Nephi’s people-building document were the scattering of Israel and the gathering.247 Further tying his people to the scattering and gathering, Nephi borrowed a phrase from Isaiah:

When thus it shall be in the midst of the land among the people, there shall be as the shaking of an olive tree, and as the gleaning grapes when the vintage is done.

246. Ibid., 111.
247. Hardy, Understanding the Book of Mormon, 61, noticed this pattern in Nephi’s paraphrase of his father’s prophecies.
They shall lift up their voice, they shall sing for the majesty of the Lord, they shall cry aloud from the sea.

Wherefore glorify ye the Lord in the fires, even the name of the Lord God of Israel in the isles of the sea. (Isaiah 24:13–15)

Isaiah had tied the olive tree to those who would “praise the Lord God of Israel in the isles of the sea.” Nephi implicitly includes his own people into those scattered to the isles of the sea, as well as to the promised gathering of the scattered:248

And behold, there are many who are already lost from the knowledge of those who are at Jerusalem. Yea, the more part of all the tribes have been led away; and they are scattered to and fro upon the isles of the sea; and whither they are none of us knoweth, save that we know that they have been led away. (1 Nephi 22:4)

And it shall come to pass that they shall be gathered in from their long dispersion, from the isles of the sea, and from the four parts of the earth; and the nations of the Gentiles shall be great in the eyes of me, saith God, in carrying them forth to the lands of their inheritance. (2 Nephi 10:8)

Another very subtle use of a scriptural model comes in Nephi’s use of the story of David and Goliath to serve as a backdrop and perhaps justification for his encounter with Laban. Ben McGuire sees Nephi and Laban as paralleling David and Goliath as antagonists. He sees allusions to Saul and Israel in the murmurings of Laman and Lemuel. McGuire notes:

Both protagonists cite miracles as the basis for their faith. David cites instances from his own life, and Nephi cites one from the history of Israel and one from his own life. They each then conclude by remarking that just as God performed those miracles, God will deliver them from the hand of their antagonists....

A second thematic parallel also occurs in David’s suggestion that “they servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them.” This suggests prophetically that what happened to the lion and the bear will also happen to the Philistine. In Nephi’s parallel account, he speaks of a similar fate awaiting Laban: “The lord

248. The emphasis on the Nephites as “scattered Israel that would be gathered again” is prominent in Nephi and Jacob, and then disappears as an overt theme in the Book of Mormon. By the time Mormon wrote, his interest was in bringing the gospel to his descendants and not their gathering home to a distant Israel.
is able to deliver us, even as our fathers, and to destroy Laban, even as the Egyptians.”...  

Another thematic parallel here is that David claims to be killing Goliath so that “all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel.” In Nephi’s account, Laban is killed so that Nephi’s posterity will know the God of Israel....  

Both narrative units then end with the death of the antagonist and the subsequent removal and keeping of his armor.  

These uses of the scriptural stories show Nephi’s mastery of the scriptural texts, a mastery sufficient that he could not only recall the stories but also understand their fundamental aspects well enough to recast them as models for a new historical event. When the occasion warrants, he easily turns to scripture to support his position. When his brothers’ resolve fails them in the quest for the brass plates, Nephi turns to a scriptural text that he parallels to their task. He recounts the Lord’s destruction of Pharaoh during Israel’s Exodus (1 Nephi 4:2–3). Scribes often incorporated previous texts into their new works. Rather than copying, however, they relied on their memory of the texts.  

Although Nephi was writing this long after the actual event, there is every reason to believe that he was capable of such extemporaneous citation and explication of scriptural texts.

**Nephi’s Interpretation of Scripture**

Once a scribal student mastered the fundamental texts, he was trained in the exegesis of those texts. This tradition is evidenced in the Dead Sea Scrolls. Robert Wiseman explains how this attribute of the scribal industry functioned in the Dead Sea Scrolls:

> A *pesher* is a commentary — at Qumran, a commentary on a well-known biblical passage, usually from the Prophets, but also from Psalms and sometimes even other biblical books like Genesis, Leviticus, or Deuteronomy. The important thing is that the underlying biblical passage being interpreted should be seen as fraught with significance in relation to the ideology or history of the Scroll Community. Often this takes the form of citing

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251. Ibid., 58.
a biblical passage or quotation out of context or even sometimes slightly altered, followed by the words, “pesher” or “pesher ha-diver,” meaning “its interpretation” or “the interpretation of the passage is.” The text then proceeds to give an idiosyncratic interpretation having to do with the history or ideology of the group, with particular reference to contemporary events.252

Nephi understood scripture in very similar terms. Where Qumran interpreted scripture in “an idiosyncratic interpretation having to do with the history or ideology of the group,” Nephi similarly declared: “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 19:23).

When Nephi speaks of likening the scriptures, his intent parallels the Qumran pesher.253 After Nephi inserted multiple chapters from Isaiah, he declared what he intended to do with them:254

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.


253.  Hardy, Understanding the Book of Mormon, 65, suggests, specifically for Nephi’s reading of Isaiah: “As a fellow prophet, Nephi may have considered himself capable of providing creative reinterpretations of Isaiah’s words that may never have occurred to the eighth-century bc seer but which were nevertheless divinely inspired and authoritative.”

254.  It is not uncommon for LDS scholars to discuss Nephi’s commentary on Isaiah. As Hardy, Understanding the Book of Mormon, 65, points out: “Nephi’s general pattern for interpreting scripture is to follow a direct quote — often rather lengthy — with a discussion that incorporates a few key phrases but does not provide a comprehensive or detailed commentary.”
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. (2 Nephi 25:1–4)

Isaiah’s writings were on the brass plates, and the brass plates were the only record the Nephites ever called scripture. Nevertheless, Nephi indicates that they required interpretation for his people. For them to understand Isaiah, they needed the spirit of prophecy, which Nephi not only declared he had but also declared he would exercise to explain the intent of Isaiah as it pertained to this branch of the house of Israel in a new world. Karel Van der Toorn confirms this was part of Nephi’s scribal training: “The true scribe, in other words, has learned to see what others could not see even if they were given the ability to read.”

Nephi uses the difference between his trained understanding and Laman and Lemuel’s less sophisticated scriptural understanding as a foil to explain his inclusion of Isaiah 48 and 49 at the end of 1 Nephi (1 Nephi 20, 21). At the beginning of 1 Nephi 22 (VII) we find:

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)

How to understand Isaiah relies on the Spirit in this case and on spirit of prophecy at the end of 2 Nephi. The two declarations have the same intent. Nephi’s learning allowed him to understand, and his susceptibility to the Spirit allowed him to liken that understanding to their current circumstances.
Chapter 10: Final Considerations about Writing

Paragraphs without Paragraphs

Neither the extant original manuscript nor the printer’s manuscript of the Book of Mormon have any indication of punctuation. The dictation was written as it was heard, with no attempt to add the literary niceties of paragraphs and punctuation. The nature of the dictation in English cannot tell us whether the Nephite language had visual clues that helped divide ideas. Based on many early texts, it is safest to assume that it did not.

How can we understand a text that doesn’t follow our visual conventions? We can do an experiment and discover how it might work. The following text is from the book of Jarom, verses 1–7:

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 behold it is expedient that much should be done among this people because of the hardness of their hearts and the deafness of their ears and the blindness of their minds and the stiffness of their necks nevertheless God is exceedingly merciful unto them and has not as yet swept them off from the face of the land and there are many among us who have many revelations for they are not all stiffnecked and as many as are not stiffnecked and have faith have communion with the Holy Spirit which maketh manifest unto the children of men according to their faith and now behold two hundred years had passed away and the people of Nephi had waxed strong in the land they observed to keep
the law of Moses and the sabbath day holy unto the Lord and they profaned not neither did they blaspheme and the laws of the land were exceedingly strict and they were scattered upon much of the face of the land and the Lamanites also and they were exceedingly more numerous than were they of the Nephites and they loved murder and would drink the blood of beasts and it came to pass that they came many times against us the Nephites to battle but our kings and our leaders were mighty men in the faith of the Lord and they taught the people the ways of the Lord wherefore we withstood the Lamanites and swept them away out of our lands and began to fortify our cities or whatsoever place of our inheritance

That is an intimidating block of text, but as we read it, most of us silently vocalize the words. We turn the visual into the internally audible, and then the meaning isn’t nearly so difficult as the block of text makes it appear. The reason is that we verbalize meanings in certain ways that can assist meaning. Hervey, Higgins, and Haywood describe this process:

Looking at individual sentences in discourse reveals that they often contain ‘markers’ signaling how sentences relate to one another, markers whose main role is to give a text a transparent inter-sentential organization. Compare, for instance, these two texts:

I was getting hungry. I went downstairs. I knew the kitchen was on the ground floor. I was pretty sure that the kitchen must be on the ground floor. I don’t know why I was certain. But I was. I didn’t expect to find the kitchen so easily. I made myself a sandwich.

I was getting hungry. So I went downstairs. Well ... I knew the kitchen was on the ground floor. I mean. I was pretty sure it must be there. Actually. I don’t know why I was so certain, but I was. Still, I didn’t expect to find it so easily. Anyway. I made myself a sandwich.

The first text is so devoid of inter-sentential connectives that, if it hangs together at all — that is, if it is cogent at all — this is only thanks to the underlying chronological narrative structure. In the second text, however, a rational ‘train of thought’ is provided by filling in the discourse-connectives (in italics) missing from the first text, which [serve] as markers of a transparent inter-sentential structure. Some of the markers
are rather like illocutionary particles, while others are instances of anaphora — that is, the replacement of previously used words and phrases by elements such as pronouns or adverbs that refer back to them; here, the anaphoric elements are ‘it’ (replacing ‘the kitchen’) and ‘there’ (replacing ‘on the ground floor’). The place of these markers is in individual sentences. but their function would seem to be outside them: it is an inter-sentential function linking sentences to one another in a larger text.256

While not nearly as colloquial as this example, the language in the Book of Mormon uses similar principles of inter-sentential clarification. The reason is that the Book of Mormon is an artifact of a literature still heavily dependent upon the techniques of oral discourse. As noted in the section “Nephi’s Plausible Training as a Scribe,” early written texts were supposed to be converted into oral texts when the writing was read out loud. While reading a text out loud is often done to provide information to another person or group of persons, even private reading was typically voiced. Silent reading is a much later skill.257

The longer a written text, the more important are markers to assist the target in understanding the text. In modern written texts, these markers take the form of conventions including spacing and punctuation. Punctuation typically marks sentence-level information, where space marks larger concepts. A space between sentences — particularly followed by an indentation — will mark the end of one paragraph and the beginning of another. These inherently visual clues are unavailable when a text is read, so other types of linguistic triggers are required to assist the hearer in comprehension.258

The linguistic triggers in the Book of Mormon are so obvious as to be almost unnoticed. They appear with such frequency that modern readers

tune them out as redundant — which they are for reading a written text with its visual clues to coherence.

And

By far the most common linguistic trigger is the simple conjunction “and.” While the examination of “and” in the Book of Mormon has been most often used to suggest that it is the result of the retention of an early Hebrew language on the plates, I am not suggesting that it is descriptive of a particular language but rather of a linguistic feature used when oral cultures begin to write, but that continue to be principally oral. 259

Using his understanding of Hebrew, John A. Tvedtnes described one use of “and” in the Book of Mormon:

Hebrew uses conjunctions much more frequently than English does. One clear example of this can be found in lists of items. In English, the conjunction and is normally used only before the last item in a list, such as wood, copper, and brass. But Hebrew usually uses a conjunction before each item. The Book of Mormon contains many examples of this Hebrew-like usage, such as this one found in 2 Nephi 5:15: “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.” 260

The function of “and” is a superset of the way it is used in English. The conjunction “and” continues a concept or story. It is a simple ligature that indicates that what comes next is a part of what has come before. It can be better understood when some special cases are examined.

And It Came to Pass/And Now

Both “and it came to pass” and “and now” are textual markers that move a narrative or, in Skousen’s terminology, a narrative connector. 261 The difference is the location of the story on a conceptual temporal timeline. “And now” marks new information associated with the same time frame as the previous information. “And it came to pass” moves the narrative in time. There is still information related to the previous sentences, but the

260. Ibid., 82.
time frame has shifted and comes later. They are similar to the English markers “with” and “later.”

In the following examples, the verse before the “and now” phrase is given, then the verse following it.

And it must needs be that the power of God must be with him, even unto his commanding you that ye must obey. But behold, it was not he, but it was the Spirit of the Lord which was in him, which opened his mouth to utterance that he could not shut it.

And now my son, Laman, and also Lemuel and Sam, and also my sons who are the sons of Ishmael, behold, if ye will hearken unto the voice of Nephi ye shall not perish. And if ye will hearken unto him I leave unto you a blessing, yea, even my first blessing.

But if ye will not hearken unto him I take away my first blessing, yea, even my blessing, and it shall rest upon him.

And now, Zoram, I speak unto you: Behold, thou art the servant of Laban; nevertheless, thou hast been brought out of the land of Jerusalem, and I know that thou art a true friend unto my son, Nephi, forever. (2 Nephi 1:27–30)

Verses 28 and 30 in this example begin with “and now” and mark a separation of the person being addressed, but as part of the same event.

A more interesting series of these statements comes from Jacob’s discourse:

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.
And now, these are the words: Thus saith the Lord God: Behold, I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people; and they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders.

And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers; they shall bow down to thee with their faces towards the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet; and thou shalt know that I am the Lord; for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me.

And now I, Jacob, would speak somewhat concerning these words. For behold, the Lord has shown me that those who were at Jerusalem, from whence we came, have been slain and carried away captive. (2 Nephi 6:3–8)

The first “and now” marks the transition from introduction to the topic of the discourse. The second declares that Jacob will read from Isaiah, whereupon the quotation is also introduced with a subject changing “and now.” The final “and now” introduces the commentary on that verse.

Note how the temporal state changes with the phrase “and it came to pass.” Where “and now” often marks movement of ideas during the same event, “and it came to pass” describes sequences. For instance, the following are all of the “and it came to pass” statements from 2 Nephi 5:

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. (2 Nephi 5:5)

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

And it came to pass that I, Nephi, did cause my people to be industrious, and to labor with their hands.

And it came to pass that they would that I should be their king.

But I, Nephi, was desirous that they should have no king; nevertheless, I did for them according to that which was in my power. (2 Nephi 5:17–18)

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

And it came to pass that we lived after the manner of happiness.
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. (2 Nephi 5:26–30)

Each of these statements is an event, and they are sequenced by the “and it came to pass.” They do not occur simultaneously, nor during the same limited period. The distinction between conceptual movement and movement in time is the reason “and it came to pass,” a phrase used so often in the Book of Mormon, appears only thirteen times in 2 Nephi. Those thirteen occurrences are concentrated in chapters 4 and 5. It also occurs where Isaiah uses the phrase in a context that similarly marks time: “And it came to pass in the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham …” (2 Nephi 17:1).

In contrast to its relatively sparse use in 2 Nephi, 1 Nephi uses the phrase 109 times. This difference results from the different nature of 1 Nephi and 2 Nephi, with 1 Nephi being more historical in focus. The two chapters with high concentrations of “and it came to pass” are precisely those that contain the historical data in 2 Nephi. Nephi also uses the combined phrase “and now it came to pass” (1 Nephi 16:1; 17:19, 48; 22:1; 2 Nephi 1:1) to mark the combination of a major change in topic as well as a different time.

With no known connection to Hebrew, Maya texts also have verbal markers that indicate similar meanings of and now and and it came to pass. I suggest the similarity results from a similar solution to a similar problem of visually representing speech rather than a connection to any Book of Mormon language.

Behold/And Now, Behold

The first sentence-initial “behold” comes in 2 Nephi IV (current 2 Nephi 5:1), where it marks a transition between a quoted discourse by Lehi and the beginning of Nephi’s personal narrative about the brothers’ separation into two groups. The next two appearances of “behold” are Enos 1:1 and Omni 1:1. Jarom 1:1 has a slight variant: “Now behold.”

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263. This section is slightly updated from Gardner, Second Witness, 2:196–98.
264. Ibid., 1:25.
In each case, “behold” marks a major shift in the topic and, in the last three cases, a change of authors. Furthermore, in the first case, although the author (Nephi) remains the same, the speaker is different; Nephi has been quoting Lehi then resumes his own narrative.


Chapter XXI of the 1830 edition (our Alma 45) begins the portion that Helaman wrote in Alma’s book after Alma’s contributions closed (Alma 44:24). Helaman’s writings begin with “Behold, now it came to pass … ” (Alma 45:1). As a new writer in the same book, Mormon notes the transition with the “behold” beginning.

Other “behold” beginnings that serve as transitions within the text are in the 1830 edition at Alma XXVIII (our Alma 61:1), Helaman III (our Helaman 7:1), and 3 Nephi VIII (our 3 Nephi 17:1). Interestingly, however, Mormon does not begin new books with “Behold.” I hypothesize that Mormon sees his writing as a continuous unit; therefore, his beginning to the books he is abridging are more typically “And now” or “and now it came to pass.” Extrapolating from the available data, I see “behold” as making a distinct type of transition from one chapter or book to the next, typically either because of quoted texts where “behold” is associated with identifying the original author or else to introduce new authors on the source plates. When Mormon is simply moving through his narrative, he uses the same transitions (“and now,” “now,” “and now and it came to pass … ”) that appear within chapters as well.

There are other occurrences of “behold” which appear to indicate emphasis rather than a new beginning:

Do ye suppose that our fathers would have been more choice than they if they had been righteous? I say unto you, Nay.

Behold, the Lord esteemeth all flesh in one; he that is righteous is favored of God. But behold, this people had rejected every word of God, and they were ripe in iniquity; and the fulness of the wrath of God was upon them; and the Lord did curse the land against them, and bless it unto our fathers; yea, he did curse it against them unto their destruction, and he did bless it unto our fathers unto their obtaining power over it. (1 Nephi 17:34–35)

Behold, my soul is rent with anguish because of you, and my heart is pained; I fear lest ye shall be cast off forever. Behold, I am full of the Spirit of God, insomuch that my frame has no strength. (1 Nephi 17:47)

And now, Zoram, I speak unto you: Behold, thou art the servant of Laban; nevertheless, thou hast been brought out of the land of Jerusalem, and I know that thou art a true friend unto my son, Nephi, forever. (2 Nephi 1:30)

Therefore, we have two ways in which “behold” marks a text: One simply provides emphasis, and the second introduces a new topic. Since the introduction of a new topic is a type of emphasis, it is probable there is an underlying concept that ties these uses together. Of course, a second hypothesis would simply be that we have translated multiple Nephite words with the same English word.266

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But why does the phrase “and it came to pass” appear in the Book of Mormon so much more often, page for page, than it does in the Old Testament? The answer is twofold. First, the Book of Mormon contains much more narrative, chapter for chapter, than the Bible. Second, but equally important, the translators of the King James Version did not always render wayehi as “and it came to pass.” Instead, they were at liberty to draw from a multitude of similar expressions like “and it happened,” “and … became,” or “and … was.”

Wayehi is found about 1,204 times in the Hebrew Bible, but it was translated only 727 times as “and it came to pass” in the King James Version. Joseph Smith did not introduce such variety into the translation of the Book of Mormon. He retained the precision of “and it came to pass,” which better performs the transitional function of the Hebrew word.
Wherefore/Therefore

There is no functional difference between the use of wherefore or therefore in the translation of the Book of Mormon. The use of therefore clusters around the translation of the Mosiah to Words of Mormon section of the Book of Mormon as well as the revelations given to Joseph during that period. Joseph appears to have simply made a lexical choice that shifted after that time to wherefore.267

Either wherefore or therefore was used as the most common introduction of the moral of an argument. As a unit, a particular argument typically began with the explanation of a situation and then moved to a wherefore/therefore to provide the conclusion to that particular argument.

A simple transition is seen early in Nephi’s writing:

And it came to pass that my father did speak unto them in the valley of Lemuel, with power, being filled with the Spirit, until their frames did shake before him. And he did confound them, that they durst not utter against him; wherefore, they did as he commanded them. (1 Nephi 2:14)

The statement begins with the event (marked as a new point in time by the “and it came to pass”) which describes Lehi speaking to his sons and the action of the Spirit upon them. The clause beginning with wherefore shows the conclusion, result, or consequence of the event. In this case, it is the result of the Spirit shaking Laman and Lemuel.

Mormon employs a more complicated thesis/conclusion. One example is from Words of Mormon:

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.

267. Brent Lee Metcalfe, “The Priority of Mosiah: A Prelude to Book of Mormon Exegesis” in New Approaches to the Book of Mormon: Explorations in Critical Methodology, ed. Brent Lee Metcalfe (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1993), 410. This analysis follows my suggestion that the majority of the Book of Mormon is a functional translation, and the specific words are dependent upon Joseph’s vocabulary. See Gardner, The Gift and Power, chapter 19. This differs from Royal Skousen’s opinion of the nature of the translation. It is not the purpose of this book to resolve those differences.
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. (Words of Mormon 1:3–5)

Verse 3 begins a new topic, marked by and now. That topic is “that which I have written.” Mormon speaks about an event that occurred as he was writing, which was the discovery of the small plates. He explains what they were and particularly that they were “pleasing me, because of the prophecies of the coming of Christ” (v. 4).

After expounding the historical situation and the things which he found pleasing, he concludes, using a wherefore clause that shows the result of the event. The result was that he included those plates in his record.

Even more complex usages come with the word therefore because of the theological emphasis in some of the Alma chapters rather than any intrinsic value of the word therefore. For example:

Now, whether there shall be one time, or a second time, or a third time, that men shall come forth from the dead, it mattereth not; for God knoweth all these things; and it sufficeth me to know that this is the case — that there is a time appointed that all shall rise from the dead.

Now there must needs be a space betwixt the time of death and the time of the resurrection.

And now I would inquire what becometh of the souls of men from this time of death to the time appointed for the resurrection?

Now whether there is more than one time appointed for men to rise it mattereth not; for all do not die at once, and this mattereth not; all is as one day with God, and time only is measured unto men.

Therefore, there is a time appointed unto men that they shall rise from the dead; and there is a space between the time of death and the resurrection. (Alma 40:5–9)
Verses 5 and 6 are both introduced with now, simply indicating elements of the argument. The and now in verse 9 indicates an expansion of the question, and the therefore in verse 9 indicates the conclusion. Verse 9’s “there is a time” reprises the “there shall be one time” and “a space betwixt the time of death and the time of the resurrection.” Verse 8 is an aside, and the conclusion comes in 9. That conclusion restates the earlier statements. The circuitous logic simply provides the reasoning behind what might have been simply declared, that “there is a time appointed unto men that they shall rise from the dead; and there is a space between the time of death and the resurrection.”

**Antithetical Construction — But**

The word but is complicated in its use in the Book of Mormon. Skousen documents Oliver Cowdery mixing up but and and in the manuscripts. In English usage available in Joseph’s day, the word but might also be used where more modern speakers would use only. Webster's 1828 dictionary gives this example: “2. Only. A formidable man, but to his friends. There is but one man.” The use of interest here is that of providing a contradiction to the thesis.

A pithy use of the form comes in Moroni’s letter to Pahoran:

> Behold, I am Moroni, your chief captain. I seek not for power, but to pull it down. I seek not for honor of the world, but for the glory of my God, and the freedom and welfare of my country. (Alma 60:36)

Moroni has two clauses, where he states what he does not wish to do, contradicted by his true goal. A longer example comes from Teancum’s second foray into the Lamanite camp:

> And it came to pass that Teancum in his anger did go forth into the camp of the Lamanites, and did let himself down over the walls of the city. And he went forth with a cord, from place to place, insomuch that he did find the king; and he did cast a javelin at him, which did pierce him near the heart. But behold, the king did awaken his servants before he died, insomuch that they did pursue Teancum, and slew him.

> Now it came to pass that when Lehi and Moroni knew that Teancum was dead they were exceedingly sorrowful; for

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behold, he had been a man who had fought valiantly for his country, yea, a true friend to liberty; and he had suffered very many exceedingly sore afflictions. But behold, he was dead, and had gone the way of all the earth.

Now it came to pass that Moroni marched forth on the morrow, and came upon the Lamanites, insomuch that they did slay them with a great slaughter; and they did drive them out of the land; and they did flee, even that they did not return at that time against the Nephites.

And thus ended the thirty and first year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi; and thus they had had wars, and bloodshed, and famine, and affliction, for the space of many years.

And there had been murders, and contentions, and dissensions, and all manner of iniquity among the people of Nephi; nevertheless for the righteous’ sake, yea, because of the prayers of the righteous, they were spared.

But behold, because of the exceedingly great length of the war between the Nephites and the Lamanites many had become hardened, because of the exceedingly great length of the war; and many were softened because of their afflictions, insomuch that they did humble themselves before God, even in the depth of humility. (Alma 62:36–41)

This example might be clearer if it were reformatted so the but, behold statements were more clearly parallel in their narrative function. However, in each case, a statement sets an expectation, and but, behold is used to show the conclusion which is the opposite of what might have been expected in the thesis.

The contrast between thesis and the but conclusion can also provide a positive example:

And the people of Nephi began to prosper again in the land, and began to multiply and to wax exceedingly strong again in the land. And they began to grow exceedingly rich.

But notwithstanding their riches, or their strength, or their prosperity, they were not lifted up in the pride of their eyes; neither were they slow to remember the Lord their God; but they did humble themselves exceedingly before him. (Alma 62:48–49)

In this case, the expectation of Nephites prospering would be that they would begin to gain in pride and return to costly apparel. That
they did not is emphasized with two *but* phrases. The phrase is not a contraction to the first *but*; it is rather an emphasis by repetition.

The frequent repetition of these conjunctive elements allow us to deduce their textual functions. They all mark specific types of linguistic triggers that allow the listener to follow the sense of the topic in the absence of visual markers we provide with modern punctuation. Those modern markers are more subjective than the original linguistic triggers. Two different editors might create paragraphs differently, and even the same person might see the same text differently and produce a different set of paragraphs at different times. For example, Grant Hardy combines verses 4–6 of 1 Nephi 1 into one paragraph, whereas Lynn A. and David L. Rosenvall have 4, 5, and 6 as separate paragraphs.

### Two Men and Their Two Stories

In his introduction to *The Structure of Thucydides’ History*, Hunter Rawlings noted:

> [There are] two basic methods open to the historian for marshalling his data, the explicit method in which he simply narrates and analyzes the data consecutively is by far the easier and the more common one. The other, more subtle than the first, is the implicit method, in which the historian arranges and characterizes the facts in a matter that brings out or even creates their essential meaning. With this method, the historian judges without seeming to judge, or, even more subtly, the historian makes the reader judge, unconsciously, in the way the historian wants, by leading him to form certain impressions about the material. The historian who masters this method is more than a recorder of facts — he is an artist.

That definition fits both Nephi and Mormon. Both wrote without calling attention to the way they wrote. Nephi wrote from experience but included other sources he named, such as his father’s record and various chapters of Isaiah from the brass plates. Mormon wrote some from experience but mostly from other sources. While the tradition of

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records called “the plates of Nephi” served as his major source, Mormon left his readers a breadcrumb trail to point to alternative sources.

Both Nephi and Mormon wove events into a story that told more than lists of events.272 Both had overarching concepts in mind, and neither was so simple a writer that he pointed his writing to only one idea. Nephi looked forward to when Yahweh would descend to earth. Mormon knew that not only had it happened but that there were Nephites in and around Bountiful who had witnessed that very event. Nevertheless, Nephi also wrote to establish a new people and his divine appointment to rule them. Mormon lived through the destruction of his people and wrote of the signs that led to that destruction in the hopes his future readers might avoid them.

Both Nephi and Mormon wrote stories. They wrote history as story, not as sequenced events. They selected from the available stories a specific set of stories designed to promote their overarching purposes. While they were faithful to the actions of the events, those actions were molded to be faithful. At the beginning and the end of Nephite civilizations, two consummate artists left their picture of a people striving toward God, sometimes failing and sometimes repenting. While their people may not have continually walked it, they both unfailingly described the straight and narrow path that led to the Tree of Life.

272. Hardy, “Mormon as Editor,” 25: “The purpose of the Book of Mormon makes the spiritual meaning of history much more important than any specific set of facts.”
As Nephi began his last chapter, he reflected on what he had done. He wrote:

And now I, Nephi, cannot write all the things which were taught among my people; neither am I mighty in writing, like unto speaking; for when a man speaketh by the power of the Holy Ghost the power of the Holy Ghost carrieth it unto the hearts of the children of men.

But behold, there are many that harden their hearts against the Holy Spirit, that it hath no place in them; wherefore, they cast many things away which are written and esteem them as things of naught.

But I, Nephi, have written what I have written, and I esteem it as of great worth, and especially unto my people. For I pray continually for them by day, and mine eyes water my pillow by night, because of them; and I cry unto my God in faith, and I know that he will hear my cry.

And I know that the Lord God will consecrate my prayers for the gain of my people. And the words which I have written in weakness will be made strong unto them; for it persuadeth them to do good; it maketh known unto them of their fathers; and it speaketh of Jesus, and persuadeth them to believe in him, and to endure to the end, which is life eternal. (2 Nephi 33:1–4)

Intertwined with his prayers and embodied in his writings is Nephi’s lamentation that he was not powerful in writing as he was in speaking. In verse 3 he noted that while he had written, he hoped his prayers would make the text become effective. He prayed that his writing in weakness
will become a strength. The image of success came from the spoken word: “and it speaketh of Jesus.”

As Moroni reflected upon what he presented as the record of Ether,²⁷³ he echoed Nephi’s concerns about the effectiveness of the written word:

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. (Ether 12:23–25)

Moroni expanded upon the idea that he was more powerful in speaking than writing by declaring that “Thou hast also made our words powerful and great, even that we cannot write them.”

From the beginning of the Book of Mormon with Nephi to Moroni’s closing statements, Nephite writing was declared to be less effective than oral discourse. It was certainly a reflection of the primarily oral nature of Nephite culture, where there were fewer who could read and write, but many who might speak by the spirit. The primacy of orality in Nephite culture dictated some of the features we find in the Book of Mormon text.

When a text is encoded from a primarily oral culture, features that function as structural devices to assist in memorization or textual emphasis tend to become codified in the written text. Karel Van der Toorn explained the process from the viewpoint of Old World texts:

Oral cultures dictate a particular style in written texts, in Israel and Babylonia, texts were an extension, so to speak, of the oral performers. This is not to say that all texts were in origin oral artifacts, but that the oral delivery of the texts determined their

²⁷³ Moroni introduces this section as his own conclusions based on what he had written in Ether 12:6: “And now, I, Moroni, would speak somewhat concerning these things.”
style, even if they had originated in writing. The traditional texts from Israel and Mesopotamia are full of the stylistic devices of oral performance such as rhythm, repetition, stock epithets, standard phrases, and plots consisting of interrelated by relatively independent episodes.\(^{274}\)

William G. Eddington examined the Book of Mormon for evidence of a primary orality:

Formularic expressions occur frequently including such expressions as “and it came to pass”, “and now”, “but/and/or behold.” As an aid to memory, oral societies tend to develop meaning through reference to aggregative noun phrases, or word chunks. Thus… oral societies seldom refer to a soldier, rather “a brave soldier.” Likewise, in the Book of Mormon account of Lehi’s dream, it is never just a “rod,” but a “rod of iron.” Two examples of this word chunk occur in the same verse (1 Nephi 8:24, 1 Nephi 8:30), and six uses of this mnemonic chunk of language in eleven verses (1 Nephi 8:19–30). Likewise, in the same account it is never a “building” but always a “great (or large) and spacious building.”\(^{275}\)

Part 1 of this book examined the elements that Nephi and Mormon used to create their texts. They are elements that do not represent modern concepts of chapters and paragraphs, but rather respond to different conceptual triggers. This part examines the way Nephi and Mormon used those elements to structure their texts according to their underlying purposes.

The Title Page of the Book of Mormon provides a synopsis of the overarching purpose of the text:

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. (Title Page)

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\(^{275}\) Eggington “‘Our Weakness in Writing’,” 13–14. (Internal references to tables silently removed). Thomas, *Literacy and Orality in Ancient Greece*, 29–51 provides an overview of the work on oral poetry and its manifestation through written texts. Importantly, she cautions (49): “Formulae lie at the heart of the discovery that the Homeric poems were composed orally, and the idea that the composition of oral poetry is mechanically traditional. It is the formulaic system that helps an oral poet improvise in performance.”
Neither Nephi’s nor Mormon’s writings can or should be summarized so simply. Each writer had complex intents that can be discerned by examining the way in which they carefully constructed their texts to meet those purposes. Also instructive are the triggers that send each author into tangential information that was perhaps not part of the original design.

This part follows Nephi and Mormon’s writings, providing explanations of how they constructed each of their chapters. The text of the Book of Mormon is not included, though I do provide a few scriptural selections. For a fuller understanding, I recommend having the Book of Mormon available to see how the explanations fit with the whole of the written text in each chapter.
Section 3:
Making Nephi’s Books

One of the most important statements Nephi made about writing what we know as the books of 1 and 2 Nephi comes at the end of his historical section in 2 Nephi:

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)

The framing of this information with an indication of years tells us that what we read from 1 Nephi 1 to 2 Nephi 5:34 took nearly ten years to complete. Some of that time was required for actually making the plates (2 Nephi 5:31). The presence of these verses at the end of this chapter in 2 Nephi also tells us that Nephi did not begin writing until all the events covered to this point
in both books had already occurred. We are not reading a journal, but a retrospective life. That fact must influence our reading of his text.

The opportunity for a reflective retrospective allowed Nephi to use his text to establish the divine and political charter for his new people, providing the essential evidence that Nephi was destined to be the king and progenitor of a new Israel in a new world. Understanding that this is a story Nephi is constructing for a purpose rather than an event-driven autobiography allows us to examine his selection of events and the construction of his work to see how it advances his overall design.
Chapter 11: Book of 1 Nephi

1 Nephi Chapter I (1–5)276

Nephi begins his book according to traditions he learned in his scribal training.277 He adds a colophon,278 which had two functions: describe the contents of the book and to identify that author. The synoptic header prior to chapter I provides the outline of the events to be covered in Nephi’s first book: the departure of the family from Jerusalem, the journey into the wilderness, the return to Jerusalem for the brass plates, the acquisition of wives from Ishmael’s family, the arrival at Bountiful, the building of a ship, and the journey to the new world. Evidence from Mormon's use of the synoptic headers suggests that the synopsis was considered a part of the text. There was no apparent difference between the synopsis and the beginning of the text, as there is no evidence of such separation either in the extant original manuscript or in the printer's manuscript. Separating the synopsis appears to have been the compositor’s choice. It is not unreasonable under modern considerations, and certainly followed typical practices for printed texts of the day.

Included in the basic events listed in the synopsis are hints of the way Nephi intended to tell the tale: “Nephi taketh his brethren and returneth to the land of Jerusalem after the record of the Jews.” This verse tells us more of how Nephi wants to tell the story than it does of the history of the event. Lehi sent the brothers; Nephi did not take them. Nephi was the youngest and therefore would not have been in charge.

276. As introduced in Part 1, I am concerned with the original chapters that represent Nephi and Mormon’s ideas of what formed a chapter. The modern chapters date from Orson Pratt’s revisions for the 1879 edition of the Book of Mormon.
277. See the section “Nephi’s Plausible Training as a Scribe,” Chapter 7.
Nevertheless, even at the introduction to the book, Nephi foreshadows the very personal reason that this event is entered into the text.

Nephi also planned to speak about how: “Nephi’s brethren rebel against him. He confoundeth them.” The essential conflict between Nephites and Lamanites is foreshadowed from the very beginning, and the ultimate superiority of the Nephites declared — even before the actual events are discussed.

I see the final line now included in the synoptic head through 1 Nephi 1:3 as declaring the self-identification function of the colophon: 

*This is according to the account of Nephi; or in other words, I, Nephi, wrote this record.*

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 Nephi 1:3, verse numbers removed, bolding to highlight the essential information about the creation of the text.)

It was possible in scribal tradition that a scribe might be copying a first-person document. Hence the declaration, while redundant in this case, was conceptually required to note that the first-person speaker of the document was the very person who wrote it, rather than it’s being a copy.

As Nephi begins, he very clearly declares that this is his own story. Although he will need to begin his story with some information about his father, it is his own story that is the theme: “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*” (1 Nephi 1:1).

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279. The italicized verse is set as the last line of the book header in all versions since 1830. However, I see it as a chapter header that is separate from the book header.
The Setup

1 Nephi 1: 5–15 describes Lehi’s prophetic call. It is written in the third person, and quotes only Lehi himself in 1 Nephi 1:13. The rest is Nephi’s description of events. While it is possible that Nephi consulted Lehi’s record for this information, it is equally possible that this came from Nephi’s memory of the events. Although they were thirty years in the past, it is certain they had been important enough to Nephi to create a strong memory.

When Nephi finishes this introduction, it occurs to him that it might be confusing that he says this would be “a record of my proceedings in my days” (1 Nephi 1:1). Therefore, he inserts information to clarify what he was doing:

And now I, Nephi, do not make a full account of the things which my father hath written, for he hath written many things which he saw in visions and in dreams; and he also hath written many things which he prophesied and spake unto his children, of which I shall not make a full account.

But I shall make an account of my proceedings in my days. Behold, I make an abridgment of the record of my father, upon plates which I have made with mine own hands; wherefore, after I have abridged the record of my father then will I make an account of mine own life. (1 Nephi 1:16–17)280

Just before this insertion, Nephi had been speaking of “the things which he [Lehi] had seen” (1 Nephi 1:15). As he returns, he repeats that general idea: “that after the Lord had shown so many marvelous things unto my father, Lehi…” (1 Nephi 1:18). This is the standard form for repetitive resumption, clearly indicating that verses 16 and 17 were an

280. For ease of comparison to the current LDS edition, I have left the verses as they are in the 1983 edition. As noted in Part 1, our modern concepts of paragraphing do not fit with the linguistic markers Nephites used. Were I to try to replicate the way I think the Nephi conceived of his thought-units, I would format these two verses as follows:

And now I, Nephi, do not make a full account of the things which my father hath written, for he hath written many things which he saw in visions and in dreams. And he also hath written many things which he prophesied and spake unto his children (of which I shall not make a full account), but I shall make an account of my proceedings in my days.

Behold, I make an abridgment of the record of my father upon plates which I have made with mine own hands. Wherefore, after I have abridged the record of my father then will I make an account of mine own life.
aside and not part of the originally planned text. This marks Nephi’s return to his father’s story.

Verses 1 Nephi 1:18–2:7 describe Lehi’s rejection in Jerusalem, the revelation to leave, and the arrival at the first camp. Fittingly, this section ends with Lehi setting up an altar to provide a thanks-offering281 to the Lord 1 Nephi 2:7. At the end of 1 Nephi 1:20 Nephi indicates that he “will show unto you that the tender mercies of the Lord are over all those whom he hath chosen, because of their faith, to make them mighty even unto the power of deliverance.” The fulfillment of this promise is immediate, for he records that the Lord spoke to his father in a dream to save them by having them leave Jerusalem (1 Nephi 2:1).

In 1 Nephi 2:8–14, Nephi sets up the conflict with Laman and Lemuel. At this point, their conflict is with their father. That changes rapidly. Nephi contrasts his own experience with his brothers, indicating that he had some of the same reservations but took them to the Lord. In 1 Nephi 2:16 he relates that “I did cry unto the Lord; and behold he did visit me, and did soften my heart that I did believe all the words which had been spoken by my father.” Nephi now shows himself as one who also communicates with Yahweh, specifically having had Yahweh visit him (without any more explanation than that). Thus, Nephi is aligned with Lehi not only in belief but in their common direct relationship with Yahweh.

Even the conflict with Laman and Lemuel shifts at this point:

And I spake unto Sam, making known unto him the things which the Lord had manifested unto me by his Holy Spirit. And it came to pass that he believed in my words.

But, behold, Laman and Lemuel would not hearken unto my words; and being grieved because of the hardness of their hearts I cried unto the Lord for them. (1 Nephi 2:17–18)

Sam recognizes Nephi’s new position as paralleling Lehi. Laman and Lemuel did not. They are now in conflict with both of the family’s prophets. With Nephi now established as one of the family prophets, Lehi becomes more and more a secondary character. We are now firmly in Nephi’s story.

The next recorded event comes without any indication of how it fits into the historical time frame. Coming after the discussion with Sam, Laman, and Lemuel, it might be a second revelation. However, it is possible that Nephi simply moved the specifics of Yahweh’s message

281. Also known as Peace offerings. For more information, see S. Kent Brown, From Jerusalem to Zarahemla (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1998), 2.
to this point in time. It is possible that establishing Nephi as parallel to Lehi in both communication with Yahweh and in conflict with Laman and Lemuel was the first priority. The actual content of the prophecy is essential for all that comes later and perhaps required the established conflict with Laman and Lemuel to be fully understood:

And it came to pass that the Lord spake unto me, saying:
Blessed art thou, Nephi, because of thy faith, for thou hast sought me diligently, with lowliness of heart.
And inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments, ye shall prosper, and shall be led to a land of promise; yea, even a land which I have prepared for you; yea, a land which is choice above all other lands.
And inasmuch as thy brethren shall rebel against thee, they shall be cut off from the presence of the Lord.
And inasmuch as thou shalt keep my commandments, thou shalt be made a ruler and a teacher over thy brethren.
For behold, in that day that they shall rebel against me, I will curse them even with a sore curse, and they shall have no power over thy seed except they shall rebel against me also.
And if it so be that they rebel against me, they shall be a scourge unto thy seed, to stir them up in the ways of remembrance.
(1 Nephi 2:19–24)

Nephi presents the divine revelations that will drive the rest of his narrative up to the end of 2 Nephi 5. Long before Nephi records that his father had received the promise of a new land (2 Nephi 1:5), Nephi declares that the promise of a new land came to him as well. It is probable that part of Lehi’s revelation that they leave included the promise of a new land that was to be the goal of their exodus, but Nephi doesn’t record it. This is, after all, Nephi’s story.

It is important to note that the promise came to Nephi because it foresees that Nephi will be the ruler in the new land. That rulership is specifically noted in 1 Nephi 2:22 where Nephi is prophesied to become a ruler and a teacher over his brethren. The position as ruler will not occur until after they arrive in the New World, but Nephi will use

282. Nephi never rules his brothers in the New World, The examples Nephi uses are all from the time before their arrival in the New World.
his record of the Old-World portion of their journey to demonstrate the fulfillment of this prophecy.

Finally, the contention with Laman and Lemuel that Nephi paralleled as their rebellion against their father is now prophetically imposed upon the future. Nephi sets up Laman and Lemuel as quintessential enemies of those who will eventually follow Nephi. The future Nephite conflicts are declared to be the result of prophecy and a divine declaration that “thy brethren” will become “a scourge unto thy seed.” In the requirements of the Ancient Near Eastern origin story, this fulfills the need for “the existence of an ancestral enemy or enemies.” It may not be a coincidence that “thy brethren” is used rather than the expected Laman and Lemuel. By the time the prophecy’s fulfillment is relevant, it wasn’t about specific brothers but rather the generic Lamanites who become the promised enemy.

One of the interesting features of Nephi’s discussion of family history while they camped in the valley of Lemuel is the frequent repetition of the idea of their father’s dwelling in a tent. Nephi uses references to his father’s tent to mark the boundaries of narrative units in the text. The reference tends to come at the end of the unit and notes that a particular story has finished. Perhaps a modern writer would have separated these events into discrete chapters, but that is not the way Nephi uses chapters.

**Return for the Brass Plates**

The next event Nephi elects to tell is the return to Jerusalem for the brass plates. This story is certainly in an appropriate chronological sequence, but we cannot know what Nephi might have left out. As written, Nephi receives Yahweh’s prophetic blessing and returns to his father’s tent, whereupon Lehi immediately sends the brothers to Jerusalem.

Nephi will use this event as the pivot from his position as younger brother to ruler and teacher over his brothers. This event will not have him as a ruler and teacher but rather as a leader and teacher. Nevertheless, the incident is written to demonstrate both of these changes in his relationship with his brothers.

283. Killebrew, *Biblical Peoples and Ethnicity*, 149. See Part 1 for an expanded explanation of this facet of Nephi’s text.

284. While Nephi doesn’t specifically define Lamanites as a generic label, Jacob explicitly does (Jacob 1:14). The prophesied scourge of the Nephites was not two specific brothers but a people descended from or at least associated with Laman and Lemuel.

285. The specific phrase, or at least a mention of coming to the tent of their father, occurs only for the time they spent in the valley of Lemuel. See verses 1 Nephi 2:6, 15; 3:1; 4:38; 5:7; 7:5, 21; 9:1; 10:16; 15:1; 16:6, 10.
The story begins with Lehi’s noticing and declaring Nephi’s obedience as contrasted to his brothers’ murmuring (1 Nephi 3:5–6). Although Lehi notes his faithfulness, the story is inexorably shifting to Nephi. Therefore, Nephi makes the distinction more personal with his own declaration of obedience to the Lord (perhaps pointedly not to Lehi in this context). When the story begins, we note that: “And I, Nephi, and my brethren took our journey in the wilderness” (1 Nephi 3:9). I suspect that it is intentional that Nephi places himself in the leadership position, even before the excursion begins.

At the beginning of the attempt for the brass plates, the brothers cast lots, and Laman is appropriately chosen. That attempt fails, and Nephi takes the position of instructing his brothers in the reasons for continuing the attempt (1 Nephi 3:15–21). Explaining the failure to his brothers puts Nephi in the position of a teacher over his brothers. Nephi proposes that they collect their riches from their land of inheritance and purchase the plates. It doesn’t go well.

The anger that followed this attempt was broken by the appearance of an angel. Nephi had taught, but that didn’t work. To set up the third attempt, it wasn’t Nephi’s teaching but the angel’s declaration that made the difference. Important to the way Nephi is developing his message, the angel specifically says: “Know ye not that the Lord hath chosen him to be a ruler over you…?” (1 Nephi 3:29). The divine declaration of Nephi’s position is now delivered to Laman and Lemuel through a heavenly messenger.

Even with the declaration that Nephi would be a ruler, Nephi still provides justification by relating another incident where he taught his brothers. This time, he cites the scriptural story of Moses escaping the powerful Egyptians as a model for Yahweh’s allowing them to escape the powerful Laban. Nephi writes: “Now when I had spoken these words, they were yet wroth, and did still continue to murmur; nevertheless they did follow me up until we came without the walls of Jerusalem” (1 Nephi 4:4). Laman and Lemuel do not necessarily change, but they follow. Even with the conflict remaining with his brothers, those brothers implicitly accept his leadership (if not the prophesied rulership).

The discovery of a drunken Laban and his subsequent beheading is obviously placed in the text intentionally. It is not recorded because

286. The randomness of the lots allowed for the expression of Yahweh’s will. Laman, as the eldest, should have borne the responsibility and the Lord allowed him that opportunity. For using lots as a means of divining Yahweh’s will, see Daniel H. Ludlow, *A Companion to Your Study of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 95.
killing Laban was an easy decision. Nephi specifically records that it was the Spirit which commanded the action and that Nephi was initially reluctant (1 Nephi 4:10–17). Most importantly, verse 11 notes that “the Lord hath delivered him into thy hands.” This appears to be a reference to Exodus 21:12–14:

He that smiteth a man, so that he die, shall be surely put to death.

And if a man lie not in wait, but God deliver him into his hand; then I will appoint thee a place whither he shall flee.

But if a man come presumptuously upon his neighbour, to slay him with guile; thou shalt take him from mine altar, that he may die.

Nephi would certainly have heard the phrase “delivered him into thy hands” as a reference to the legal definition of when one might legally take a life. Of course this depends upon Nephi’s understanding, but the probability of his scribal training combined with the ways in which he uses scripture to support his textual themes suggests that he understood it in just that way.

Similarly, if Ben McGuire correctly reads the allusions in this story, Nephi intentionally crafted this story to parallel the story of David and Goliath. In that story, a young David beheads Goliath and later is elevated to king. A young Nephi would be implying that his story would similarly end with his enthronement.  

The end of the story of the brass plates comes when they return with them to Lehi’s tent. Lehi reads them, and Nephi recounts their basic contents. Nephi had understood that one of the reasons for slaying Laban and obtaining the plates was for the benefit of future generations. In Nephi’s record, Lehi confirms this. He sees how he is connected to the past (an essential link to the house of Jacob and specifically Joseph of Egypt, 1 Nephi 5:14–16) and then connects the records to the future by means of prophecy (1 Nephi 5:17–19). Once again, we are reminded that

287. McGuire, “Nephi and Goliath,” 25. He concludes (27): “It has been the intent of this paper to demonstrate that the number of parallels between the texts and the structural connection between the two texts suggest that the Book of Mormon contains a literary allusion to the biblical narrative of David and Goliath. It is, however, the rhetorical purpose served by this allusion — a purpose that fits the internal statements of purpose and intent and enhances an understanding of the Book of Mormon narrative on a larger scale — that provides an indication that our hypothesis is correct.”
the small plates are written for Nephi’s purposes when he states: “And it came to pass that thus far I and my father had kept the commandments wherewith the Lord had commanded us” (1 Nephi 5:20).  

The end of this chapter marks the end of the section about the brass plates. The final sentence states the conclusion: “Wherefore, it was wisdom in the Lord that we should carry them with us, as we journeyed in the wilderness towards the land of promise” (1 Nephi 5:22).

1 Nephi Chapter II (6–9)

I suggest that after Nephi finished writing chapter I, he stopped. There is an unstated break in time. With that lapsed time, Nephi was no longer focused on where he intended to go with the story but had to reread what he had written in order to pick up the text again. As he read about his father’s finding his genealogy on the record, he adds a tangent that occupies the entirety of our current chapter 6. In it, Nephi shows that it was the idea of genealogy and connections to Israel that triggered the aside:

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. (1 Nephi 6:1–2)

As a topic triggered by what had been written and later read, this short section was not part of Nephi’s original plan. The shift also triggered the closing of chapter I and the beginning of chapter II. As Nephi reenters his intended text, he repeats the idea of journeying toward the land of promise. It isn’t a direct return, however, because he will pause for the important story of returning for Ishmael’s family. Nevertheless, he ties his return to the outlined text to the previously intended ending by repeating the idea of looking forward to the land of promise (1 Nephi 7:1).

There are two important events portrayed in chapter II. The first is the return for Ishmael’s family and the second is Lehi’s vision of the Tree of Life.

288. Allen Wyatt suggests that the phrase “thus far” may foreshadow the coming time when even Lehi will murmur against the Lord when all are hungry (1 Nephi 16:20). Personal communication.
Returning with Ismael’s Family

Certainly, the return to Jerusalem for Ishmael’s family was important, but that isn’t really the story Nephi tells. He tells the story of their return. After Ishmael has agreed to bring his family into the wilderness, Nephi notes a division among Ishmael’s family that mirrored the division in Lehi’s family:

And it came to pass that as we journeyed in the wilderness, behold Laman and Lemuel, and two of the daughters of Ishmael, and the two sons of Ishmael and their families, did rebel against us; yea, against me, Nephi, and Sam, and their father, Ishmael, and his wife, and his three other daughters.

And it came to pass in the which rebellion, they were desirous to return unto the land of Jerusalem. (1 Nephi 7:6–7)

This is the same rebellion that Laman and Lemuel instigated against their father. The implication is that they also fomented this rebellion in Ishmael’s family. Although no marriages have taken place, by implication the two daughters who followed Laman and Lemuel would have been those destined to be their wives. Although plausibly historical, this event allows Nephi to provide further indication that he was to be the teacher and leader over his brothers. In his opening statement, Nephi reiterates the reversal of cultural expectations that would have the younger brother as teacher and leader over his elder brothers: “Behold ye are mine elder brethren, and how is it that ye are so hard in your hearts, and so blind in your minds, that ye have need that I, your younger brother, should speak unto you, yea, and set an example for you?” (1 Nephi 7:8).

Nephi’s lecture is about prophecy to be fulfilled. He reminds them that they are going to a land of promise (1 Nephi 7:13). He reminds them of their father’s prophecy of the fall of Jerusalem (1 Nephi 7:13–14). This further angers his brothers. Nephi makes certain to link this incident to the story of the attempted fratricide of Joseph. Both Joseph and Nephi had been chosen to rule over their brothers. Both suffered the wrath of their brothers. Joseph was to be killed but was instead thrown into a pit. His coat was taken and dipped in the blood of a goat so it would appear he had been killed by wild beasts. Nephi was bound and was to be left for wild beasts.

This incident ends with Nephi’s forgiving his brothers and then immediately noting that “and it came to pass that we did come down

289. For Joseph’s story, see Genesis 37:17–31. Nephi’s story is found in 1 Nephi 7:16–18.
unto the tent of our father... and they did offer sacrifice and burnt offerings unto [Yahweh]” (1 Nephi 7:22).

Lehi’s Vision of the Tree of Life
Separating Lehi’s vision of the Tree of Life into a different chapter, as Orson Pratt did for the 1879 edition, has a modern logic. It appears to be unrelated to the first incident, of returning with Ishmael’s family. However, since Nephi put them in the same chapter, it is important to notice what Nephi tells of that vision as opposed to what he leaves out.

Nephi relates his father’s vision of the Tree. He provides the basic elements of the path, the tree, the river and a spacious building. As told, it is a vision of a few who partake of the fruit, and the majority who do not. The end of the story is the reason Nephi tells only this much of it:

And Laman and Lemuel partook not of the fruit, said my father.

And it came to pass after my father had spoken all the words of his dream or vision, which were many, he said unto us, because of these things which he saw in a vision, he exceedingly feared for Laman and Lemuel; yea, he feared lest they should be cast off from the presence of the Lord.

And he did exhort them then with all the feeling of a tender parent, that they would hearken to his words, that perhaps the Lord would be merciful to them, and not cast them off; yea, my father did preach unto them. (1 Nephi 8:35–37)

Nephi warned his readers that he wasn’t telling all of what his father said during the description of the vision (1 Nephi 8:29). He ends the chapter noting that Lehi “also prophesied unto them of many things” (1 Nephi 8:38). None of those things are told. Nephi will elaborate on what else his father saw when he relates his own vision of what his father saw. At this point, however, the emphasis on Laman and Lemuel is what ties this vision to the incident as they returned from Jerusalem with Ismael’s family. That incident becomes the solid foundation upon with the prophetic vision of Laman and Lemuel refusing the fruit is based. Lehi, as a good father, might hope to change them, but their destiny is prophesied.

290. Brown, From Jerusalem to Zarahemla, 3, notes that the addition of the burnt offering suggests that this was not just a thanks-offering as recorded when Lehi first built the altar but also a sin offering. That addition might have been occasioned by the attempted fratricide on the return with Ismael’s family.
The Aside
Unlike the previous aside triggered when Nephi returned to his text, this aside (at the end of chapter II, but separated to become the modern chapter 9) is triggered by what Nephi wrote: “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” (1 Nephi 9:1). This summary put Nephi into author-voice, and triggered an author-voice insertion about the plates upon which Nephi was writing. He noted: “And now, as I have spoken concerning these plates” (1 Nephi 9:2). He last spoke of them in 1 Nephi 6:1–6, which was similarly an inserted aside. In this aside, Nephi mentions that he wrote two sets of plates and provides the basic charter for each (1 Nephi 9:2–4). Nephi concluded:

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 9:5–6)

When Nephi testified that he knew the Lord was behind the creation of this new set of plates, the Amen ending forced an end to the chapter. It is possible the intended ending of Chapter II included the text we have from 1 Nephi 10:2–15. Those verses conclude the story of Lehi’s vision (with 1 Nephi 10:1 being a required transition sentence to return to the planned narrative). They could not follow in the same chapter because of the testificatory Amen. Therefore, the ending events come at the beginning of the next chapter. The subject of that chapter (after finishing the topic from the previous chapter) was Nephi’s vision, not Lehi’s.

1 Nephi Chapter III (10–14)
Before the testificatory Amen required the chapter to end, Nephi had been discussing the plates upon which he was writing. He wasn’t finished. As the new chapter begins, Nephi apparently realized two things. One, he had diverted from his plan, and two, he hadn’t finished an important description of the aftermath of his father’s vision. Nephi resolved both issues in the opening sentence of the next chapter: “And now I, Nephi, proceed to give an account upon these plates of my proceedings, and my reign and ministry; wherefore, to proceed with mine account, I must speak somewhat of the things of my father, and also of my brethren” (1 Nephi 10:1).
The mention of the plates makes the connection to the ending of the previous chapter, but also notes that he had deviated from the intended discussion. His plan for chapter III was to talk about his own vision, but the early ending of the previous chapter meant he still had some information to tell about his father’s vision. Thus “I must speak somewhat of the things of my father.” Nephi couldn’t ignore this discussion of what his father had seen because it was related to the most important part of the vision, the mission of the mortal Messiah and the future of the house of Israel. Nephi apparently does not elaborate this part of his father’s vision because he knew that he would spend a great deal of time on those details when he discussed his own vision of those same future events. Verses 1 Nephi 10:2–16 provide the material that had been planned for the end of chapter II. The intended topic of chapter III begins with 1 Nephi 10:17, takes a slight detour at 10:18–22, and returns to the topic in 1 Nephi 11:1 where Nephi’s vision will occupy the rest of chapter III (to the end of our chapter 14).

In 1 Nephi 10:17, Nephi noted that he “was desirous also that I might see, and hear, and know of these things.” He also wrote “the Holy Ghost, which is the gift of God unto all those who diligently seek him, as well in times of old and in the time that he should manifest himself unto the children of men.” That phrase pulled Nephi into an aside on the nature of God. Verses 18–22 were an unplanned extemporaneous addition to his text. To return to the planned topic, Nephi echoes 1 Nephi 10:17 with “after I had desired to know of the things that my father had seen” (1 Nephi 11:1). Having returned to the intended topic, Nephi begins his own story of his experience with the things his father had seen.

When Nephi ends the account of his vision, he writes:

And behold, I, Nephi, am forbidden that I should write the remainder of the things which I saw and heard; wherefore the things which I have written sufficeth me; and I have written but a small part of the things which I saw.

And I bear record that I saw the things which my father saw, and the angel of the Lord did make them known unto me.

And now I make an end of speaking concerning the things which I saw while I was carried away in the Spirit; and if all the things which I saw are not written, the things which I have written are true. And thus it is. Amen. (1 Nephi 14:28–30)

Although there were specific things that Nephi was not to write because John the Revelator was to write them (1 Nephi 14:24–27), the
general statement that he could not write everything is a common theme among many of those who wrote on plates. Even had the Nephite record-keepers had an infinite quantity of plates upon which to keep their records, no writer can record everything he knows or experiences about a topic. It is the nature of writing that experience must be distilled, and Nephi and Mormon, at least, made their choices for divinely directed reasons (even if the methods of fulfilling the divine instructions followed their own understandings and choices).

This vision understandably made an impact on Nephi. That impact was strong enough that at the end of his second book, he will rewrite what he saw, couching the events of the vision against Isaiah’s prophesies to demonstrate that there were multiple witnesses (Lehi, Nephi, and even Isaiah). To end the vision, Nephi testifies: “and I bear record that I saw the tings which my father saw,” and “the things which I have written are true.” To that testimony, he added Amen and ended the chapter.

1 Nephi Chapter IV (15)

That Nephi received the vision his father had seen placed him parallel to his father as one who communicated with Yahweh. Next, Nephi used his new understanding to teach his brothers. This continues to fulfill prophecy by showing Nephi in the role of teacher over his brothers.

The subject of the teaching is still the vision. With Nephi’s new divine understanding of his father’s vision, he can teach with authority. Nephi highlights that new authority when he asks of his non-understanding brothers: “Have ye inquired of the Lord?” (1 Nephi 15: 8). Nephi had done just that. When the brothers respond: “We have not; for the Lord maketh no such thing known unto us.” (1 Nephi 15: 9), Nephi begins to teach. He can teach precisely because he did ask, and Yahweh did make it known to him.

Nephi expounds how the plan of the gospel was represented in the symbols of the dream and ends with “and thus I spake unto my brethren. Amen” (1 Nephi 15: 36). That Amen bears testimony to this divinely revealed information he taught to his brothers. It also creates the end of a chapter.

1 Nephi Chapter V (16–19:21)

As with the end of chapter II, the Amen ended chapter IV before the end of the event Nephi was discussing. It appears at the beginning of chapter V (1 Nephi 16:1–5). Nephi wanted to assure his readers that he had been an effective teacher. That happens in these verses, ending with “And it came to pass that they did humble themselves before the Lord; insomuch
that I had joy and great hopes of them, that they would walk in the paths of righteousness” (1 Nephi 16:5).

Nephi now turns to the essentials of his family’s story. They marry the daughters of Ismael (1 Nephi 16:7), and Lehi receives word that the family should leave the valley of Lemuel (1 Nephi 16:9). Nephi provides the basics of the preparation for their journey. They gather seeds and other foodstuffs to carry with them, and Yahweh provides the Liahona.

The need for food is one of the reasons Nephi mentions the bows and arrows. Nephi notes:

And it came to pass that we did take our bows and our arrows, and go forth into the wilderness to slay food for our families; and after we had slain food for our families we did return again to our families in the wilderness, to the place of Shazer. And we did go forth again in the wilderness, following the same direction, keeping in the most fertile parts of the wilderness, which were in the borders near the Red Sea.

And it came to pass that we did travel for the space of many days, slaying food by the way, with our bows and our arrows and our stones and our slings. (1 Nephi 16:14–15)

Although the families’ needs for food might have been sufficient reason to note that they hunted for food along the way, Nephi’s purpose was not so mundane. The mention of the bows leads into the story of the broken bow. That this story is about Nephi rather than the family is evidenced by Nephi’s introduction of the broken bow and the problem of lack of food (1 Nephi 16:18). He notes the problem with his bow before mentioning that his brothers’ bows had already lost their springs (1 Nephi 16:21). The food crisis would not have been so dire had the brothers’ bows still been functional. It was the loss of all of them and perhaps Nephi’s last (rather than first) which precipitated the crisis.

This incident doesn’t show Nephi as a teacher but rather as the leader and provider. Nephi increasingly places himself in a leadership role for the whole family, particular when Lehi is also murmuring at this time. Nevertheless, Nephi does not explicitly take over his father’s role. He presents himself to his father for instruction in where to hunt.

Although this story is not directly related to kingship, the concept of a leader caring for his people is implied in the story. Evidence that these themes continue to inform the events Nephi writes about comes when the brothers again murmur in Nahom. Note that now they murmur not only against Lehi, but “they did murmur against my father, and also
against me” (1 Nephi 16:36). Very specifically, “Laman said unto Lemuel and also unto the sons of Ishmael: Behold, let us slay our father, and also our brother Nephi, who has taken it upon him to be our ruler and our teacher, who are his elder brethren” (1 Nephi 16:37). Only the voice of the Lord (1 Nephi 16:39) is able to restrain their murderous intent.

Rather than return to Jerusalem as Laman and Lemuel desired, the entire family continues their journey in the wilderness. The modern attempts to trace the families’ journey through the wilderness has them leaving the better-traveled portion of the Incense Trail and traveling through very difficult terrain. Nephi only briefly references those difficulties. Even though he doesn’t mention specifics, it is clear they went through hard times and suffered much. Nephi simply says that: “And it came to pass that we did again take our journey in the wilderness; and we did travel nearly eastward from that time forth. And we did travel and wade through much affliction in the wilderness; and our women did bear children in the wilderness” (1 Nephi 17:1).

Perhaps writing only that much but remembering how difficult the journey was prompted Nephi to enter another aside. He reflects:

And so great were the blessings of the Lord upon us, that while we did live upon raw meat in the wilderness, our women did give plenty of suck for their children, and were strong, yea, even like unto the men; and they began to bear their journeyings without murmurings.

And thus we see that the commandments of God must be fulfilled. And if it so be that the children of men keep the commandments of God he doth nourish them, and strengthen them, and provide means whereby they can accomplish the thing which he has commanded them; wherefore, he did provide means for us while we did sojourn in the wilderness.

And we did sojourn for the space of many years, yea, even eight years in the wilderness. (1 Nephi 17:2–4)

The eight-year sojourn in the wilderness is covered ever so briefly. Apparently, nothing occurred that furthered Nephi’s story of how he developed as the teacher and ruler over his brothers. Nevertheless, reflecting upon those hard times led Nephi to extract the blessing that came from it. They endured hard times and survived. Nephi credits Yahweh with strengthening them to meet the task but does not blame Yahweh that the hardships occurred.
After this brief description of the events that covered eight years, Nephi has the families arriving in Bountiful and begins to describe the building of the ship. At this point, Nephi is being elevated to the prophet for the New World. When it comes time to prepare to journey to their land of promise:

And it came to pass that after I, Nephi, had been in the land of Bountiful for the space of many days, the voice of the Lord came unto me, saying: Arise, and get thee into the mountain. And it came to pass that I arose and went up into the mountain, and cried unto the Lord.

And it came to pass that the Lord spake unto me, saying: Thou shalt construct a ship, after the manner which I shall show thee, that I may carry thy people across these waters. (1 Nephi 17:7–8)

When Nephi wrote of the incident of the bow, he noted that he still deferred to his father to discern where to go to find food. Now, at this singularly important juncture in the story, Lehi is entirely absent. Nephi’s position of leadership is boldly affirmed when Yahweh directs Nephi rather than Lehi to build the ship.

Of course, there is still enmity with his brothers. Their murmuring allows Nephi another teaching opportunity. Nephi specifically references the Israelite exodus from Egypt (as he also did in 1 Nephi 4:2–4). Nephi recounts the exodus story, including the selection of Moses as their leader, the crossing of the Red Sea, miraculous food and water, and the murmuring of the people before reaching their land of promise (1 Nephi 17:23–43). These events intentionally link Lehi’s clan’s exodus from Jerusalem to their land of promise to Israel’s exodus from Egypt to their land of promise. It also firmly links their story to the elements of the Near Eastern ethnogenetic story form.291

Nephi’s clear affiliation with Yahweh is confirmed as Nephi describes having been filled with Yahweh’s presence: “And it came to pass that I, Nephi, said many things unto my brethren, insomuch that they were confounded and could not contend against me; neither durst they lay their hands upon me nor touch me with their fingers, even for the space of many days. Now they durst not do this lest they should wither before me, so powerful was the Spirit of God; and thus it had wrought upon them” (1 Nephi 17:52). His brothers had to admit, however temporarily, “we know that it is the power of the Lord that has shaken us” (1 Nephi 17:55). The temporary reconciliation with his brothers (or their acquiescence to Yahweh’s will) allowed the ship to be built.

291. Killebrew, Biblical Peoples and Ethnicity, 149.
Nephi tells no more stories from the building of the ship. He notes the preparations to set sail. He apparently realizes that he has forgotten to mention the birth of his brothers Joseph and Jacob and so quickly adds the information (1 Nephi 18:7). They set sail, and all is well for a time.

When problems arise, it is again the leitmotif of Nephi’s right to rule. Nephi places this incident in the context of the brothers neglecting proper religious rites to Yahweh (1 Nephi 18:9). Nephi specifically notes: “they were angry with me, saying: We will not that our younger brother shall be a ruler over us” (1 Nephi 18:10). They bind Nephi.

The situation becomes dire. Laman and Lemuel will not listen to Lehi (1 Nephi 18:17). They would not listen to the women (1 Nephi 18:19). Nephi declares: “there was nothing save it were the power of God, which threatened them with destruction, could soften their hearts” (1 Nephi 18:20). A modern reader might simply assume that the great storm was a natural phenomenon, but ancient Israelites knew Yahweh as having power over and in the storms. Thus, the storm was a clear message from Yahweh to the rebellious brothers. “When they saw that they were about to be swallowed up in the depths of the sea they repented” (1 Nephi 18:20). Confirmation that Yahweh was behind the storm came in the rapid calm after they freed Nephi: “And it came to pass after they had loosed me, behold, I took the compass, and it did work whither I desired it. And it came to pass that I prayed unto the Lord; and after I had prayed the winds did cease, and the storm did cease, and there was a great calm” (1 Nephi 18:21). The rest of the journey passes without remark. The next story told is of their arrival on the land of promise.

The arrival in the New World simply notes that they landed and went forth onto the promised land, which had all the necessities for life:

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. (1 Nephi 18:23–25)

To better understand Nephi’s way of thinking, I have moved the final sentence of our verse 25 to the beginning of the next verse:

And we did find all manner of ore, both of gold, and of silver, and of copper. 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.” (1 Nephi 18:25–19:1)

The finding of the ore leads directly to the creation of the plates. These three metals may have made up the alloy used to create the plates.293 The connection between finding the ore and creating the plates would therefore be logical and quite direct. However, it was probably unplanned. I think Nephi intended to end his first book with chapter V, and that chapter was intended to end with the families’ arriving in the New World and finding they were in a land of promise.

The final event listed in the synoptic header at the beginning of 1 Nephi is: “They cross the large waters into the promised land, and so forth.” Nephi’s header had listed most of the other major historical events and ended with the arrival in the New World. The probable Old World/New World division between 1 Nephi and 2 Nephi also suggests that the conceived end of the first book could have come when they arrived. Why didn’t it?

Whether or not Nephi intended to write about finding the ore along with finding the animals “which were for the use of men” (1 Nephi 18:25) cannot be known. What we can surmise is that when Nephi added the finding of the ore, it triggered the statement that he used the ore to create plates. The discussion of the plates triggered an unplanned addition to his book that resulted in two additional chapters that have nothing to do with the historically-framed contents of 1 Nephi.

As with other asides, Nephi’s addition was not only triggered by what he had just written, but it followed immediately upon the triggering

293. See the section “Upon Plates Which I Have Made (1 Nephi 1:17),” Chapter 7.
idea without creating an intervening chapter break. The additional text hinged on the mention of the plates, which triggered Nephi to discuss both the plates upon which he was writing as well as the first plates he made after arriving in the New World:

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 [large plates] that I should be commanded of the Lord to make these [small] 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. (1 Nephi 19:1–2)

Having introduced the small plates, Nephi continues to discuss the ways in which the second set of plates was to be different from the large 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” (1 Nephi 19:3).

This shift into author-voice shifts his focus as well. Up to this point, Nephi’s audience was implicit. It is completely unclear if the audience is assumed to be his contemporaries or the far future modern readers. The nature of the author-voice directs at least this portion of his writings to his contemporaries, or “my people.”

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 19:4–5)

What does Nephi consider to be the “more sacred things”? The contents of the small plates up to this point contain a history with a theological function. When Nephi attempts to answer what the most sacred things are, we can watch as he shifts from his descriptions of his writing to an elaboration on what is most sacred:

Nevertheless, I do not write anything upon plates save it be that I think it be sacred. And now, if I do err; even did they err of old; not that I would excuse myself because of other men, but because of the weakness which is in me, according to the flesh, I would excuse myself.

For the things which some men esteem to be of great worth, both to the body and soul, others set at naught and trample under their feet. Yea, even the very God of Israel do men trample under their feet; I say, trample under their feet but I would speak in other words — they set him at naught, and hearken not to the voice of his counsels.

And behold he cometh, according to the words of the angel, in six hundred years from the time my father left Jerusalem. (1 Nephi 19:6–8)

Clearly, the most sacred — that which would “be of great worth” — was the atoning mission of the Messiah. It was that future time when “the very God of Israel” would come to earth. Having begun to speak of the future fulfillment of the most sacred event, Nephi provides his vision of the future. As witness to the conceptual shift in Nephi’s thinking from what he had written before, Nephi now does not address his brothers, but “my people.” His perspective is no longer looking back to the Old World, but his concern is in his present, for his New World people:

And I, Nephi, have written these things unto my people, that perhaps I might persuade them that they would remember the Lord their Redeemer.

294. See Gardner, Second Witness, 1:214–22 for a discussion of how the Nephites saw Yahweh as their God, and as the very God who would descend to earth.
Wherefore, I speak unto all the house of Israel, if it so be that they should obtain these things. (1 Nephi 19:18–19)

As part of what he taught, he taught his people using scriptures from the brass plates: “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 19:21). With that statement, Nephi closed his chapter V.

Nephi is less predictable in his chapter endings than Mormon will be, except when a testificatory Amen becomes a chapter end. The end of chapter I was more thematic, indicating a completion of an idea. I believe that this chapter ends for a similar reason. By referencing the brass plates, Nephi can close out his Old World story. He ended the discussion of his plates, but they were those upon which Nephi wrote. Now he shifts again to the brass plates as he begins to elaborate his contention that the mission of the atoning Messiah will be the most sacred thing for his people.

1 Nephi VI (19:22–21)

At the beginning of chapter VI, Nephi speaks of teaching his brethren again. Continuing his author-voice consciousness from the end of chapter V, these brethren are not his elder brothers, but the people of the City of Nephi over whom Nephi has become king and by extension, teacher:

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 19:22–23)

First, this continuation of author-voice suggests that Nephi wrote this chapter right after finishing the previous one. Second, Nephi is letting his shift in focus open an entirely new discussion. He is no longer speaking of his own story but rather of the things that should be most sacred to his people. He has tried to teach those things to his people
and reprises the fact that the brass plates hold much of this information. Nephi taught from the brass plates, and he specifically mentions Isaiah. Note what he says about Isaiah: “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.” The goal was to teach of the coming Redeemer, and Nephi did this by reading Isaiah. However, he read Isaiah not in an Old-World context, but according to the needs and understanding of his New World people.

Having mentioned Isaiah, he copies two Isaiah chapters, 48 and 49, into his record. The end of Isaiah 49 ends chapter VI. The chapter ends after the quotation of Isaiah, and the next chapter will begin Nephi’s application of those chapters to the understanding of his people. The final chapter is Nephi’s “likening” of Isaiah 48 and 49.

1 Nephi VII (22)

As Nephi begins this chapter, it appears that he realizes he has strayed from his original plan and needs to return to his historical context. He shifts back from author-voice to narrative-voice, using Laman and Lemuel as his foil: “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....” (1 Nephi 22:1–2). This device allows Nephi to return to narrative-time and to provide the explanation of the Isaiah texts he added as part of his author-voice aside.

Of course, it is possible that Nephi actually gave this speech to Laman and Lemuel. However, it is more likely that this is a literary device that allows Nephi to provide an explanation in context. There is no historical context for this discussion, particularly since Nephi is recording the events 30+ years after they occurred. There is no event that precipitates it, and there will be no denouement at the end. The author-voice context is an aside triggered by what Nephi wrote — not a question asked.

The final chapter of 1 Nephi (chapter VII/22) is Nephi’s pesher on Isaiah 48 and 49. Nephi uses his people as a literary foil to present the pesher by having them ask: “What meaneth these things which ye

295. A pesher was an interpretation of scripture. The interpretation used scripture as the base, but expanded upon its meaning. For Nephi, it would be very similar to his concept of likening the scriptures.
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? (1 Nephi 22:1). This allows Nephi to use those chapters to discuss the future he sees and has seen for his people. He emphasizes the scattering of Israel (and implicitly includes his people among those scattered) in verses 3 and 4. He teaches that there will be those among the scattered who would harden their hearts (1 Nephi 22:5, a comment on the Lamanites?). In verse 6 he notes that they would be saved by the Gentiles (perhaps, again, a commentary on the infusion of non-Israelites among the Nephites). Finally, he sees the gathering of Israel (1 Nephi 22:11–12).

As he ends his book, he admonishes his people to follow God:

Wherefore, my brethren, I would that ye should consider that the things which have been written upon the plates of brass are true; and they testify that a man must be obedient to the commandments of God.

Wherefore, ye need not suppose that I and my father are the only ones that have testified, and also taught them. Wherefore, if ye shall be obedient to the commandments, and endure to the end, ye shall be saved at the last day. And thus it is. Amen. (1 Nephi 22:30–31)

When Nephi concludes "wherefore, my brethren," it is deliciously ambiguous. This entire trope began with an aside where "my brethren" were explicitly author-voice rather than narrative-voice (thus "my people" rather than "my brothers"). To conclude the book, Nephi moves back to historical time, but uses "my brethren" as a dual function address. It works for both the narrative-voice to which he is trying to return as well as the author-voice that is, perhaps, his real focus for this prophecy of the future. It should be noted that this is the second time Nephi's vision of the future appears in his text. The first followed the vision of the Tree of Life; this second is part of a pesher on Isaiah. The third will be a much longer discourse on that same vision and based again on Isaiah. It is possible the connections he made in this spontaneous linking of Isaiah to that vision are what lead to that more complete version at the end of 2 Nephi.
Chapter 12: Book of 2 Nephi

2 Nephi Chapter I (1–2)
The first, and perhaps most important structural element in 2 Nephi is that there is a 2 Nephi at all. The text we have from the small plates of Nephi are holographic. That is, they are in the hand of the original writers. There is no Mormon standing between the original text and our final version, such as we find in the material from Mosiah to 4 Nephi (or Moroni’s treatment of Ether’s record). We have the chapters just as Nephi created them. We also have the anomaly of two separate books by the very same writer, something that never occurs again in known Nephite history.

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

Nephi opens with: “And now it came to pass that after I, Nephi, had made an end of teaching my brethren, our father, Lehi, also spake many things unto them, and rehearsed unto them, how great things the Lord had done for them in bringing them out of the land of Jerusalem” (2 Nephi 1:1). This very clearly returns to the way Nephi ended 1 Nephi. However, as I noted for 1 Nephi VII (22), that ending is more likely to have been literary than a description of an actual event. When Nephi refers to it at the beginning of his second book, he is carefully linking the two books. They are his books and respond to his reasons for creating them.\(^{296}\)

We cannot tell if Nephi began writing his second book soon after ending the first or if the link to the aside resulted from re-reading the material before beginning. Regardless of when he began writing 2 Nephi, the contents of the header strongly suggest that Nephi intended

\(^{296}\) See the section “The Break between 2 Nephi Chapters IV (5) and V (6–8),” later in this chapter.
the second book to continue along the same historical themes as did the first. I suggest that Nephi viewed the books as being conceptually divided by events pertaining to the Old World in 1 Nephi and events in the New World in 2 Nephi.

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

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

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

But behold, when the time cometh that they shall dwindle in unbelief, after they have received so great blessings from the hand of the Lord — having a knowledge of the creation of the earth, and all men, knowing the great and marvelous works of the Lord from the creation of the world; having power given them to do all things by faith; having all the commandments from the beginning, and having been brought by his infinite goodness into this precious land of promise — behold, I say, if the day shall come that they will reject the Holy One of Israel, the true Messiah, their Redeemer and their God, behold, the judgments of him that is just shall rest upon them.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2 Nephi Chapter II (3)

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

2 Nephi Chapter III (4)

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

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

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

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

There wasn’t much remaining to be said about Joseph of Egypt. Although Nephi says he will “speak concerning the prophecies of which my father hath spoken,” he really does not say anything new at all. He simply finishes by saying Lehi had said more and that the prophecies are on the brass plates. Then he ends speaking of the prophecies of Joseph and continues with the theme for the next chapter. From prophecies based on Joseph of Egypt, Lehi returned to blessings and prophecies about his sons.

One of the critical conditions of the Lord’s land of promise is the conditional nature of the promise. Lehi succinctly states: “For the Lord God hath said that: Inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments ye shall prosper in the land; and inasmuch as ye will not keep my commandments ye shall be cut off from my presence” (2 Nephi 4:4). Thus, the interesting beginning blessing is that if his sons and daughters are cursed, that they might be blessed to have the cursing removed and “be answered upon the heads of your parents” (2 Nephi 4:4). After that comes the blessings upon Laman, Lemuel, and Sam.
The historical requirement — and probably the initial function of this chapter — was fulfilled with the blessings. Nephi provides no information about when Lehi died. As Nephi writes of his father’s death, he is again reminded of his author-voice task of writing on the plates. That recognition spurs another author-voice insertion that has become known as the Psalm of Nephi (2 Nephi 4:16–35). We can see Nephi transitioning from record-keeping to a personal lament:

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

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

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

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

The essential trigger is the mention of the difference between the historical function of the large plates and the more personal function of the small plates. When Nephi says, “upon these I write the things of my soul,” he indulges in a literary inclusion that examines those things of his soul. Although constructed with poetic parallelisms, they were the result of Nephi’s competence rather than a planned text.297 This is a spontaneous entry on the plates.

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

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297. I examined the structure and parallelisms of these verses in Gardner, *Second Witness*, 2:76–85.
2 Nephi Chapter IV (5)

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

When the next chapter begins, Nephi writes:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

And we did take our tents and whatsoever things were possible for us, and did journey in the wilderness for the space of many days. And after we had journeyed for the space of many days we did pitch our tents.

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

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

And we did observe to keep the judgments, and the statutes, and the commandments of the Lord in all things, according to the law of Moses.
And the Lord was with us; and we did prosper exceedingly; for we did sow seed, and we did reap again in abundance. And we began to raise flocks, and herds, and animals of every kind. And I, Nephi, had also brought the records which were engraved upon the plates of brass; and also the ball, or compass, which was prepared for my father by the hand of the Lord, according to that which is written.

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

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

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

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

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

298. Killebrew, Biblical Peoples and Ethnicity, 149: “the existence of an ancestral enemy or enemies that cement group cohesion.”
The Break between 2 Nephi Chapters IV (5) and V (6–8)

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

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

Examining the way 2 Nephi IV (5) ends, I suggest that Nephi had reached the end of his intended content in his second book. The beginning of the end comes when Nephi wraps up the historical/political purposes he had for the small plates:

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

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

Nephi reports that he had been made king against his initial desire. The impact of that statement was not self-aggrandizing but to show that

300. This analysis suggests that, contrary to Axelgard and Spencer, Nephi did not have an overarching plan for 2 Nephi that originally included the material from 2 Nephi 6 to the end of the book. It is also contrary to Reynolds, “On Doubting Nephi’s Break Between 1 and 2 Nephi.” Reynolds notes: “In Axelgard’s case, the whole exercise ironically brings him to a general conclusion that I would strongly support for different reasons than those he advances. Nephi’s writings do constitute an inspiring whole — contrary to the prevailing academic opinion in the 1980s that 2 Nephi was a random collection of leftovers.” I see a change in the way Nephi wrote, but rather than random additions, I see them as having been triggered by previous content.
“the words of the Lord had been fulfilled.” Having mentioned prophecy and his brothers, he turns to the next fulfilled prophecy:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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301. Although Nephi says “the words of the Lord had been fulfilled unto my brethren, which he spake concerning them, that I should be their ruler and their teacher. Wherefore, I had been their ruler and their teacher, according to the commandments of the Lord, until the time they sought to take away my life” (2 Nephi 5:19), Nephi never gives an example of where that statement had been true. He had shown numerous examples of where he had been a teacher, but he was not clearly a ruler until after the separation from his brothers.
And it came to pass that we lived after the manner of happiness. (2 Nephi 5:26–27)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Although it is easy for modern readers to make a division between the historical and spiritual and therefore to see 2 Nephi 6–33 as the

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

2 Nephi Chapter V (6–8) [Reconstructed Header]
Grant Hardy noticed that the first verse of 2 Nephi 6 fits the style of chapter headers we see later in Mormon’s work. All the synoptic headers, both for books and chapters, were separated by the compositor and do not represent any marks that can be seen in the printer’s manuscript. Thus, in this case the compositor added the sentence to the text but later created chapter headers. Hardy is clearly correct that this represents a chapter header: “The words of Jacob, the brother of Nephi, which he spake unto the people of Nephi.”

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

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

Nephi’s influence on this sermon is clearly apparent in the basic construction. Jacob quotes two chapters of Isaiah in their entirety

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(Isaiah 50, 51; 2 Nephi 7, 8), and then elaborates on a meaning specifically designated as intended for his current audience: “And now, the words which I shall read are they which Isaiah spake concerning all the house of Israel; wherefore, they may be likened unto you, for ye are of the house of Israel” (2 Nephi 6:5). For Nephi’s use of liken, see 1 Nephi 19:23.

2 Nephi Chapter VI (9)

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

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

That he has spoken unto the Jews, by the mouth of his holy prophets, even from the beginning down, from generation to generation, until the time comes that they shall be restored to the true church and fold of God; when they shall be gathered home to the lands of their inheritance, and shall be established in all their lands of promise.

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

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

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

2 Nephi Chapter VII (10)

This chapter picks up on the next day and continues with the sermon, which covers the blessings that will come to those of scattered Israel. The sermon ends with Amen, and so, therefore, does the chapter.
2 Nephi Chapter VIII (11–15)–2 Nephi Chapter X (23–24)

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

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

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

2 Nephi XI (25–27)

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

Why is there so much of Isaiah as opposed to any other prophet from the brass plates? It is probable the answer lies in Nephi’s scribal training. Van der Toorn suggests that the presence of multiple copies of Deuteronomy, Isaiah, and the Psalms among the Dead Sea Scrolls is an “indication of their position in the scribal curriculum.” As one of the

307. From the Latin “he said …”. These statements create more logical divisions in Isaiah than our inherited divisions, which were added later.
308. Chapters XIII, IX, and X as Nephi wrote them. The thirteen chapters are based on the way they appear in the Bible, which Orson Pratt used as the model for dividing these chapters in 1879.
309. The chapters were originally integrated into Chapter VI.
classic texts taught in the scribal schools, Nephi would have had more experience with Isaiah than many of the other prophets.\footnote{311. Gee, “‘Choose the Things that Please Me,’” 73: “Nephi seems to indicate that he is aware of the narrative structure of Isaiah as well as its content when he says that he understands Isaiah because ‘I, of myself, have dwelt at Jerusalem, wherefore I know concerning the regions round about’ (2 Nephi 25:6).”} Specifically, Van der Toorn notes that “the Book of Isaiah, finally, taught the scribes ways in which to construe the past, the present, and the future; it provided them with a means of dealing with history and its vicissitudes.”\footnote{312. Van der Toorn, Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible, 103.} It is therefore unsurprising that this is precisely the way Nephi uses Isaiah as he likened Isaiah to his own new people in a new setting.

As John W. Welch has noted, Nephi and Jacob are the two writers who most often cite Isaiah — and are particularly those who cite large passages from Isaiah.\footnote{313. John W. Welch, “Getting Through Isaiah with the Helaman of the Nephite Prophetic View,” in Isaiah in the Book of Mormon, eds. Donald W. Parry and John W. Welch (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1998), 19.} It is interesting to note that Jacob’s citations of Isaiah come only after direction from Nephi. We do not see him citing Isaiah in the book of Jacob.

Garold N. Davis also noticed that not only are the long citations of Isaiah confined to Nephi and Jacob, but also references to the house of Israel (and the synonymous house of Jacob) are almost exclusively found in Nephi and Jacob.\footnote{314. Garold N. Davis, “Pattern and Purpose of the Isaiah Commentaries in the Book of Mormon,” in Mormons, Scripture, and the Ancient World. Studies in Honor of John L. Sorenson, ed. Davis Bitton (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1998), 279. The theme of the house of Israel returns in Christ’s sermons in 3 Nephi.} This is not a coincidence but part of the conscious selection of themes Nephi wants to emphasize.

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

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

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

1. Christ’s coming;
2. His rejection and the scattering of the Jews;
3. The day of the Gentiles; and
4. The restoration of Israel and the ultimate victory of good over evil.316

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

The interesting prophetic step is the role of the Gentiles. Just as the emphasis on the house of Israel is localized primarily in Nephi and Jacob, so too is any discussion of the Gentiles.317 A modern reader of Isaiah, Nephi, and Jacob will see in the reference to the Gentiles a foretelling of the role of a much later group of Gentile believers in Yahweh and the scriptures. However, that is not likely to have been the intended reason Nephi and Jacob would have spoken of the Gentiles. We must remember that the idea of the pesher was to liken the scriptures to the current population. The

315. Ibid., 282–83.
316. Welch, “Getting Through Isaiah with the Helaman of the Nephite Prophetic View,” 22.
events modern readers recognize were still in the far distant future for the people of Nephi. I suggest the most likely explanation is that the people of Nephi consisted of the combination of the Old World immigrants with a population already present in the New World when they arrived and who served as the Gentiles to the newly arrived Israelites.318

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

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

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

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

**Nephi’s Introduction to Isaiah in 2 Nephi**

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2 Nephi 25:1–8, with Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Verse</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Now I, Nephi, do speak somewhat concerning the words which I have written, which have been spoken by the mouth of Isaiah. For behold, Isaiah spake many things which were hard for many of my people to understand; for they know not concerning the manner of prophesying among the Jews.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 For I, Nephi, have not taught them many things concerning the manner of the Jews; for their works were works of darkness, and their doings were doings of abominations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Wherefore, I write unto my people, unto all those that shall receive hereafter these things which I write, that they may know the judgments of God, that they come upon all nations, according to the word which he hath spoken.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Wherefore, hearken, O my people, which are of the house of Israel, and give ear unto my words; for because the words of Isaiah are not plain unto you, nevertheless they are plain unto all those that are filled with the spirit of prophecy. But I give unto you a prophecy, according to the spirit which is in me; wherefore I shall prophesy according to the plainness which hath been with me from the time that I came out from Jerusalem.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verse Comment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with my father; for behold, my soul delighteth in plainness unto my people, that they may learn.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Yea, and my soul delighteth in the words of Isaiah, for I came out from Jerusalem, and mine eyes hath beheld the things of the Jews, and I know that the Jews do understand the things of the prophets, and there is none other people that understand the things which were spoken unto the Jews like unto them, save it be that they are taught after the manner of the things of the Jews.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 But behold, I, Nephi, have not taught my children after the manner of the Jews; but behold, I, of myself, have dwelt at Jerusalem, wherefore I know concerning the regions round about; and I have made mention unto my children concerning the judgments of God, which hath come to pass among the Jews, unto my children, according to all that which Isaiah hath spoken, and I do not write them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 But behold, I proceed with mine own prophecy, according to my plainness; in the which I know that no man can err; nevertheless, in the days that the prophecies of Isaiah shall be fulfilled men shall know of a surety, at the times when they shall come to pass.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Wherefore, they are of worth unto the children of men, and he that supposeth that they are not, unto them will I speak particularly, and confine the words unto mine own people; for I know that they shall be of great worth unto them in the last</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Most striking in these eight verses is the amount of repetition that has no literary function. Strangest is perhaps the end of verse 4 and the beginning of 5: “I shall prophesy according to the plainness which hath been with me from the time that I came out from Jerusalem with my father; for behold, my soul delighteth in plainness unto my people, that they may learn. Yea, and my soul delighteth in the words of Isaiah, for I came out from Jerusalem.” The delight in plainness might be a nice parallel to delighting in the words of Isaiah, except Nephi has declared that Isaiah is hard to understand — not plain.

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

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

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

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

320. Parry, Poetic Parallelisms in the Book of Mormon, 109–10 provides several places where these verses can be formatted as different types of parallels. There is clearly a lot of repetition, but the attempt to format them as though they were intentional poetic forms obscures the murky unclarity of the text.
After Nephi finishes with his prophecy in plainness based on Isaiah, he begins a new chapter — in which he again seems to repeat himself:

And now I, Nephi, make an end of my prophesying unto you, my beloved brethren. And I cannot write but a few things, which I know must surely come to pass; neither can I write but a few of the words of my brother Jacob.

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

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

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

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

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

Nephi’s Prophetic Pesher on Isaiah in 2 Nephi
John W. Welch categorized Nephi’s use of Isaiah in 2 Nephi 25–30 according to the fourfold structure he noted for the way Isaiah was used in Nephi and Jacob. He notes that “Nephi draws individual words and phrases from Isaiah 2–14 to corroborate and substantiate his now familiar four-phased prophetic view as he follows the pattern again.” Nephi also uses specific phrases to help his readers understand that the prophecy he is founding upon Isaiah was the very same true prophecy

322. Ibid., 28.
that he had seen in a vision when he desired to see his father’s vision of the tree — and to know the meaning thereof.

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

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

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

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

2 Nephi Chapter XII (28–30)

Having set the scene with the quotation of Isaiah 29, Nephi proceeds to the prophetic description of the latter days that was triggered by this
chapter. The remainder of chapter XII (28–30) consists of the religious conditions at the time the Book of Mormon will come forth. This is explicit in the description of the reaction to the Book of Mormon:

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

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

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

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

2 Nephi Chapter XIII (31)

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

The next sentence is also interesting: “And I cannot write but a few things, which I know must surely come to pass; neither can I write but a few of the words of my brother Jacob” (2 Nephi 31:1). The idea that Nephi “cannot write but a few things” is not particularly new. In 1 Nephi 17:6 he
noted that he could not write all the afflictions his family suffered in the wilderness. Jacob will note that he “cannot write but a little of my words” (Jacob 4:1). Nevertheless, it is a statement that must look to future writing, as it comes near the end of two books Nephi wrote. He is not reflecting on what he has written but on the difficulty of writing much more.

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

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

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

2 Nephi Chapter XIV (32)

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

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

Verse 8 says: “And now, my beloved brethren, I perceive that ye ponder still in your hearts; and it grieveth me that I must speak concerning this thing” (2 Nephi 32:8). This is the type of address we see in speeches to a present audience rather than in a text written to some audience in the future.
Regardless of whether it was a recorded sermon but particularly if it was, this chapter ends quite abruptly. Nephi doesn’t allow the written record to end on the dark note of his concern over his people’s problem with prayer, but the quick statement that they should pray doesn’t feel like a sufficient ending of encouragement to his people.

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

2 Nephi Chapter XV (33)

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

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

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

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

For what I seal on earth, shall be brought against you at the judgment bar; for thus hath the Lord commanded me, and I must obey. Amen. (2 Nephi 33:14–15)
Section 4: Making Mormon’s Book

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

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

Between the Nephite beginnings and the time we begin to read Mormon’s edited work in the book of Mosiah, somewhat over three hundred years have passed. What might we have missed by missing the part of the book that covered that period? Again, I suggest we are missing very little. The small plates don’t record much of what happened during those years, save for conflicts with the Lamanites. Based on the way Mormon treats war (see Part 1, “Mormon Writing about War”), he would have mentioned the conflicts but not given many details.
What great sermons might we have missed? That, of course, is impossible to know. The probable answer, however, is that we are probably missing very little. From the evidence of what Mormon extracted from the large plates, he did not have access to sermons from that account unless they were given by kings, and probably for political purposes. Thus we have Benjamin’s great sermon that certainly has religious content but which had an overarching political purpose (see the section “Mosiah chapter I (1–3)”).

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

Finally, how much text would he use to cover the time from Nephi₁’s death to the time of Mosiah₁? I speculate that he would not have used much space at all. Mormon’s themes about the destruction of the Nephites were clearly on his mind, and they begin in force only after the merger of the Nephites with the people of Zarahemla. Therefore, for Mormon’s purposes, there wasn’t a lot happening of interest until Mosiah₁ was commanded to take some of the people and flee to a new land.
Chapter 13: Book of Mosiah

Mosiah Chapter I (1–3)

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

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

Thus, the extant beginning of the book of Mosiah serves to highlight what is missing. The first extant sentence — “And now there was no more contention in all the land of Zarahemla, among all the people who belonged to king Benjamin, so that king Benjamin had continual peace all the remainder of his days” (Mosiah 1:1) — is a conclusion, not a beginning. Compare this sentence to the opening sentence of Alma

324. Washburn, The Contents, Structure and Authorship of the Book of Mormon, 34, notes that the sentence begins with and, indicating that it was a continuation
chapter II (4): “Now it came to pass in the sixth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi, there were no contentions nor wars in the land of Zarahemla” (Alma 4:1). The difference is the functional use of “now it came to pass” and “and now.” And now is used for a continuation of events, and “now it came to pass” opens new themes. The presence of and now serves to reinforce the missing beginning of the book that was lost with the book of Lehi on the 116 manuscript pages because “and now” should be linking the new text to the previous.

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

The question for the present inquiry is why this speech was on the large plates. As records of the wars and contentions, this speech would be an unusual entry. However, as an act of the King, it is perfectly suited to the material to be included on the large plates. That tells us why the speech itself was recorded, and its quality and spiritual impact testify to Mormon’s choice to include it. What is the more interesting question is why Mormon included what we have from Mosiah 1:2–17. These verses were spoken to King Benjamin’s sons, not to the people. At least on the surface, a father’s instructions to his sons would not appear to be a proper subject for the affairs of the Nephite kingdom. In this case, however, the entire discussion with his sons is absolutely political and serves to set the stage for the political significance of a speech.

326. John W. Welch and Stephen D. Ricks, “Introduction,” in King Benjamin’s Speech: “That Ye May Learn Wisdom,” ix. They also suggest that it might have been copied from “one of the copies that Benjamin caused to be ‘written and sent forth among those who were not under the sound of his voice,’ (Mosiah 2:8).” That suggestion is unlikely, as part of what is recorded is an extemporaneous continuation of the planned speech. Only the planned speech could have had copies prepared in advance, and the presence of the rest of the material tells us this speech was recorded after the fact.
Because the great civil conflict in Zarahemla was lost with the early part of the book of Mosiah and is known from the end of Omni and the end of Words of Mormon, it is easy to separate the story of Benjamin's speech from the political upheaval that precipitated the event. There had been a civil war. The uneasy combination of the people of Nephi with the people of Zarahemla exploded into violence. The statement that “there was no more contention in all the land of Zarahemla” (Mosiah 1:1) is the concluding statement of the missing episode of civil war; its very meaning was that there had been contention if there was, at this point, no more contention. It is an indication that the war ended and there was sufficient peace and recovery in the land that Benjamin could move to this next issue.

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

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

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

O my sons, I would that ye should remember that these sayings are true, and also that these records are true. And behold, also the plates of Nephi, which contain the records and the sayings of our fathers from the time they left Jerusalem until now, and they are true; and we can know of their surety because we have them before our eyes.

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

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

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

Benjamin explains the importance of the plates as the foundation of Nephite civilization (contrasting them with the Lamanites — here without reiterating that many Zarahemlaites had defected to become Lamanites, see Words of Mormon 1:16). Benjamin testifies that the records are true (again reinforcing the connection to the ancient source of legitimacy). Then he ends with conferring the kingdom upon Mosiah. The function of this section, and the reason Mormon included it, is to provide both the argument for legitimacy as well as provide the historical context for the naming of the people and coronation of Mosiah.2.

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

**Mosiah Chapter II (4)**

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

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

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

**Mosiah Chapter III (5)**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

> And whoso taketh upon him my name, and endureth to the
> end, the same shall be saved at the last day. (3 Nephi 27:5–6)
Mormon would have been sufficiently astute in his own cultural heritage to see the political ramifications of Benjamin’s covenant, but the connection to the more religious meaning with which he was aware was unmistakable. It is probable that both the political and religious implications were behind his inclusion of King Benjamin’s speech.

This chapter ends with a testificatory Amen.

Mosiah Chapter IV (6)

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

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

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

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

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

Although the “no contention” phrase is the ending of a section, as we saw with our extant beginning of the book of Mosiah, it needn’t create a chapter ending. In this case, I suggest that what happened is that Mormon wrote this much and then took a break from writing. This temporal break created by default a chapter ending (as seen in the discussion of the next chapter).

Mosiah Chapter V (7–8)

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

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

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

After the reunification of the people, the record of Ammon was probably copied onto the large plates (there is no indication that Mormon changes his source for this story). Therefore, Mormon skips to an account written on the plates long after the events but which would have been the next large-plate entry about those who left for Lehi-Nephi.

That hypothesis explains why Mormon might include the story of Ammon meeting Limhi, but it doesn’t explain why Mormon repeated that story in Mosiah 25:25–28 when he was taking his text from the

Record of Zeniff. It also does not tell us why Mormon’s initial discussion told enough of the story to discuss the finding of the plates of Ether and the ruins of the Jaredites. This is especially true since that information is part of what he knew he would describe later.

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

Mosiah Chapter VI (9–10) [Has Header]

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

The abrupt transition from chapter V to VI is unique in Mormon’s work. Later, when Mormon shifts from the large plates to Alma₁’s personal record (beginning in Alma 5), the transition is much smoother. When Mormon declares that he is taking much of 3 Nephi from a “shorter but true account” (3 Nephi 5:9–10), there is a much smoother transition. In this case, it isn’t only that the transition is abrupt, it is essentially absent. Mormon ended chapter V and began chapter VI, which came from a different record with a different person speaking. Only the header: “The Record of Zeniff — An account of his people, from the time they left the land of Zarahemla until the time that they were delivered out of the hands of the Lamanites,” lets the reader know that something has changed. I suggest that the header provides the narrative shift. I have noted that these headers function as narration,

³²⁸. Hardy, Understanding the Book of Mormon: A Reader’s Guide, 227 and 319n14, recognizes the repetition is “intriguing” but offers no suggestion to understand it.
opening chapters with narration even when our first verse is a quotation (see “Mormon Beginning Chapters”).

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

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

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

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

> They were a wild, and ferocious, and a blood-thirsty people, believing in the tradition of their fathers, which is this — Believing that they were driven out of the land of Jerusalem because of the iniquities of their fathers, and that they were wronged in the wilderness by their brethren, and they were also wronged while crossing the sea;

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Mosiah Chapter VII (11:1–13:14)**

Mosiah chapter VII is taken from the Record of Zeniff, but it is Mormon’s abridgment of that record rather than a copy. As with other Nephite records, the name of the record is the dynastic name, so the fact that this chapter begins with Noah as the new king did not require a change in the record name. As Zeniff’s son, Noah carried on the dynasty.

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

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

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

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

The chapter ending is obscured in modern editions. It comes in the middle of Abinadi’s sermon, as noted in the section on Mormon’s chapter endings. In this case, the chapter ends at the end of the quotation from scripture (meaning brass-plate scriptures for the Nephites). Even though there was no break in Abinadi’s explanation, the ending of the quotation triggered a chapter break. Mormon is copying at this point, so it is unclear whether Mormon added the chapter break or copied it. As noted in the section on chapter endings, the similar ending after a quotation of scripture in 3 Nephi most likely occurred because it was in the original, and Mormon simply copied it. Based on that parallel, I suggest this chapter break was also in the original from which Mormon was copying, and he similarly copied the break as well as the text.

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

Mosiah Chapter VIII (13:15–16:15)

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

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

Mosiah Chapter IX (17–21)

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

This chapter covers the sentencing of Abinadi and the cursing of Noah. It ends with the historical events that led to the bondage of Limhi’s people to the Lamanites, the story of sending a party to find Zarahemla (but instead found Jaredite remains and the plates of Ether), and the arrival of Ammon and his brethren.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Now Alma, having been warned of the Lord that the armies of king Noah would come upon them, and having made it known to his people, therefore they gathered together their flocks, and took of their grain, and departed into the wilderness before the armies of king Noah.
And the Lord did strengthen them, that the people of king Noah could not overtake them to destroy them. (Mosiah 23:1–2)

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

Nevertheless, we have the very tight connection between a section that must have come from Alma 1’s record, even though unattested, and the formal beginning of that record. I believe Mormon is signaling that he did take that information from the record he introduces in Mosiah 23. Mormon had the difficult task of telling stories that overlapped in time, and in this case, he pulls information from a separate record to insert it where it made sense in both the temporal and physical location of the story. When he returned to that separate record, it was at the later time and a different geography.

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

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

Nevertheless, they did find a land which had been peopled; yea, a land which was covered with dry bones; yea, a land which had been peopled and which had been destroyed; and they, having supposed it to be the land of Zarahemla, returned to the land of Nephi, having arrived in the borders of the land not many days before the coming of Ammon.

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

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

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

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

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

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

The sentences are certainly not identical, but they provide much of the same information. Had there been intervening text, I would have suggested a case of repetitive resumption. There is no intervening material. Mormon has been using the record of Zeniff for most of this narrative. In the end of Chapter IX, he caught up to the events he had earlier discussed. I suggest that the chapter ends when Mormon ceases to use that record for his information.

Mosiah Chapter X (22)

As noted for the end of chapter IX (17–21), there is a repetition of sentences. Rather than an insertion, I suggest that this represents the return to the use of the large plates as the source of his material. Mormon marks external sources when he uses them, but he does not make any indication when he returns to the large plates. This chapter is just such an unmarked return.

At the end of the chapter, they have successfully escaped from the Lamanites and returned to Zarahemla, where “Mosiah received them with joy; and he received their records, and also the records which had been found by the people of Limhi” (Mosiah 22:14). Note, however, the explicit mention of the plates of Ether: “the records which had been found by the people of Limhi.” Mormon is gently emphasizing the importance of these records.
Mosiah Chapter XI (23–27) [Has Header]

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The second reason for this introduction is to provide the context for the story of Alma₂ and the sons of Mosiah. Pratt separated that story into chapter 27. The original chapter ends with the conversion of the sons of Mosiah, who preach in the land of Zarahemla. This is Mormon’s narration, and he concludes the chapter with: “And thus they were instruments in the hands of God in bringing many to the knowledge of the truth, yea, to the knowledge of their Redeemer. And how blessed are they! For they did publish peace; they did publish good tidings of good; and they did declare unto the people that the Lord reigneth” (Mosiah 27:36–37). This is Mormon’s comment on the sons of Mosiah and was not on the plates. Perhaps because it was Mormon’s interjection, Mormon ended the chapter. However, I suspect the real reason was that the more important story of the sons of Mosiah did not occur in the land of Zarahemla but in the land of Nephi. Mormon ends the chapter with the end of their preaching in the land of Zarahemla and prepares his readers for the next phase of the story in the next chapter.
Mormon does a reasonable job of announcing when he is departing from the large plates to a separate source. He consistently fails to note when he returns to the large plates from that separate source. This chapter is evidence of that lack of marking. There is no indication that there is a change, but we have left the story that could have been on Alma$_1$‘s record and have returned to material that makes most sense to have been on the official plates of Nephi. Although the previous chapter ended with a discussion of the sons of Mosiah, those actions paralleled Alma$_2$, and their close connection is reason enough to see the Zarahemla preaching tour as having been reported on Alma$_1$‘s record.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

And they have been kept and preserved by the hand of the Lord, that he should discover to every creature who should possess the land the iniquities and abominations of his people;

And whosoever has these things is called seer, after the manner of old times.

Now after Mosiah had finished translating these records, behold, it gave an account of the people who were destroyed, from the time that they were destroyed back to the building of the great tower, at the time the Lord confounded the language of the people and they were scattered abroad upon the face
of all the earth, yea, and even from that time back until the creation of Adam.

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

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

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

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

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

Note that the last line of the original chapter was “And this account shall be written hereafter; for behold, it is expedient that all people should know the things which are written in this account” (Mosiah 28:19). The story is important to Mormon, and it needs to be known. Interestingly, there is no indication that Mormon himself wanted to write it. Perhaps he had imagined having Moroni write it even this early in his writing.
Mosiah Chapter XIII (28:20–29:47)

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

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

The mention of the ending of the kingship and the establishment of the church as a separate unit is important to the rest of Nephite history. The presentation of Alma2 as “the first chief judge, he being also the high priest” (Mosiah 29:42) is meant to provide the beginning of the essential separation of church and state that occurred during Mosiah2’s reign. It is also the beginning of the pattern discussed in the section “Fitting Names into Narrative Types,” Chapter 5, which posits that the names of Alma1’s lineage are used to provide the picture of a continuation of the religious line during times when the political dynastic structure was shifting.
Chapter 14: Book of Alma

Alma Chapter I (1–3) [Book Header]

When Mormon introduces a new book, he provides a synoptic header:

The account of Alma, who was the son of Alma, the first and chief judge over the people of Nephi, and also the high priest over the Church. An account of the reign of the judges, and the wars and contentions among the people. And also an account of a war between the Nephites and the Lamanites, according to the record of Alma, the first and chief judge.

What is interesting about this header is that it covers only the material in the chapter that comes from the large plates. The material taken from Alma₁’s personal record is not mentioned in the synoptic header.

Alma₁ was introduced as the first chief judge in Mosiah 29:43. We also saw the death of Mosiah₁ in Mosiah 29:45. The beginning of the book of Alma declares that it is the first year of the reign of the judges and repeats the information that Mosiah₁ had died. There is no way to know if the large plates book of Alma began with text that tied it to the end of the book of Mosiah, but Mormon clearly desires to show a continuity. Therefore, elements from the end of the book of Mosiah are repeated at the beginning of the book of Alma. Interestingly, part of the looking back provides a short eulogy for Mosiah not included in the notice of his death at the end of the book of Mosiah:

Now it came to pass that in the first year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi, from this time forward, king Mosiah having gone the way of all the earth, having warred a good warfare, walking uprightly before God, leaving none to reign in his stead; nevertheless he had established laws, and they were acknowledged by the people; therefore they were obliged to abide by the laws which he had made. (Alma 1:1)
When Mormon begins the story of Alma as chief judge, he repeats that the event occurs in “the first year of the reign of Alma” (Alma 1:2). The repetition of the first year of the reign of the judges links the looking back to the text that will now look forward into Alma’s actions.

The opening chapter begins with contention. The first incident is the need to judge Nehor for Gideon’s death. That incident allows Mormon to set the tone for the rest of his text. Beginning with this division between church and state, Mormon will trace the pressures exerted by different factions. There was obviously a Nehor, but he was not alone. His death “did not put an end to the spreading of priestcraft through the land” (Alma 1:16). The essential conflict that will continue through the end of his book is summarized in the first chapter of the book of Alma:

Nevertheless, this did not put an end to the spreading of priestcraft through the land; for there were many who loved the vain things of the world, and they went forth preaching false doctrines; and this they did for the sake of riches and honor.

Nevertheless, they durst not lie, if it were known, for fear of the law, for liars were punished; therefore they pretended to preach according to their belief; and now the law could have no power on any man for his belief.

And they durst not steal, for fear of the law, for such were punished; neither durst they rob, nor murder, for he that murdered was punished unto death.

But it came to pass that whosoever did not belong to the church of God began to persecute those that did belong to the church of God, and had taken upon them the name of Christ.

Yea, they did persecute them, and afflict them with all manner of words, and this because of their humility; because they were not proud in their own eyes, and because they did impart the word of God, one with another, without money and without price. (Alma 1:16–20)

This conflict is couched in religious terms, but notice that it remains intertwined with the political realm. In verse 17 the persecutors are constrained by law. These verses highlight not only the religious conflict but also the separation between law and church. The persecutors could exist within law but still be antithetical to the church.

Mormon’s text is not interested in the times of peace and prosperity. They are mentioned as rewards for righteousness, but the text spends
its time on the conflicts. Mormon is more concerned with warning future generations of the things that will draw them away than he is of promising rewards for faithfulness. Perhaps that stems from the ultimate lesson of separation taught by the destruction of the Nephite people, to which Mormon was a witness.

As witness to this theme, the chapter begins with Nehor and moves directly to Amlici (Alma 2–3), whose desire to become king leads to a major dissention and ends with the Amlicites joining with the Lamanites in war against the Nephites. From this point on, the most terrible wars with the Lamanites will be led by apostate Nephites or contain apostate Nephites. Another theme Mormon promotes is that the worst enemies are those who were once brothers.

The text from Alma 3:4–19 begins with history and morphs into moralizing. At the end of a battle, Mormon notes:

> And now as many of the Lamanites and the Amlicites who had been slain upon the bank of the river Sidon were cast into the waters of Sidon; and behold their bones are in the depths of the sea, and they are many.

> And the Amlicites were distinguished from the Nephites, for they had marked themselves with red in their foreheads after the manner of the Lamanites; nevertheless they had not shorn their heads like unto the Lamanites. (Alma 3:3–4)

Verse 3 sets the historical stage — there are dead Lamanites and Amlicites. Apparently, Mormon assumed there could be a problem discerning whom among the dead was Lamanite or Nephite, so he records that the Amlicites had marked themselves on the forehead to be similar to the Lamanites but had not shorn their hair so they were different. Thus Mormon indicates the criteria upon which Nephite, Lamanite, and Amlicite dead might be distinguished. The Amlicites had the hair of the Nephites but the forehead mark of the Lamanites.

That historical tidbit is turned into fulfilled prophecy. Verse 8 is the turning point: “And this was done that their seed might be distinguished from the seed of their brethren, that thereby the Lord God might preserve his people, that they might not mix and believe in incorrect traditions which would prove their destruction” (Alma 3:8). The ability to distinguish is linked to the early curse prohibiting the Lamanites and Nephites from mixing.

330. For the Amlicite/Amalekite naming issue, see the section “Fitting Names into Narrative Types,” Chapter 5.
The curse would follow any mixing, which Mormon notes in verse 9. Verse 13 repeats the information about the Amlicite mark, whereupon Mormon moralizes:

Thus the word of God is fulfilled, for these are the words which he said to Nephi: Behold, the Lamanites have I cursed, and I will set a mark on them that they and their seed may be separated from thee and thy seed, from this time henceforth and forever, except they repent of their wickedness and turn to me that I may have mercy upon them.

And again: I will set a mark upon him that mingleth his seed with thy brethren, that they may be cursed also.

And again: I will set a mark upon him that fighteth against thee and thy seed.

And again, I say he that departeth from thee shall no more be called thy seed; and I will bless thee, and whomsoever shall be called thy seed, henceforth and forever; and these were the promises of the Lord unto Nephi and to his seed.

Now the Amlicites knew not that they were fulfilling the words of God when they began to mark themselves in their foreheads; nevertheless they had come out in open rebellion against God; therefore it was expedient that the curse should fall upon them.

Now I would that ye should see that they brought upon themselves the curse; and even so doth every man that is cursed bring upon himself his own condemnation. (Alma 3:14–19)

It is interesting for the modern debate over the question of Lamanite skin color that the fulfilment of mixing with the Lamanites was a painted mark on the forehead, and nothing is said of skin pigmentation. Nevertheless, Mormon considered that a fulfillment of the curse.

The chapter ends on the fifth year of the reign of the judges. As noted in the section on “Chapters and Years,” when there is no other reason to end a chapter, beginning in Alma, Mormon uses five-year blocks as convenient historical units.

**Alma Chapter II (4)**

This chapter begins after the end of the fifth year, and in the beginning of the sixth year of the reign of the judges. Mormon simply notes that “there were no contentions nor wars in the land of Zarahemla” (Alma 4:1). As
with most statements of the absence of contentions and wars, Mormon is marking time, indicating that nothing happened that he thought was important to his thesis.

In this chapter, the division in Zarahemla’s religious community begins to change those who belonged to the church:

Now this was the cause of much affliction to Alma, yea, and to many of the people whom Alma had consecrated to be teachers, and priests, and elders over the church; yea, many of them were sorely grieved for the wickedness which they saw had begun to be among their people.

For they saw and beheld with great sorrow that the people of the church began to be lifted up in the pride of their eyes, and to set their hearts upon riches and upon the vain things of the world, that they began to be scornful, one towards another, and they began to persecute those that did not believe according to their own will and pleasure.

And thus, in this eighth year of the reign of the judges, there began to be great contentions among the people of the church; yea, there were envyings, and strife, and malice, and persecutions, and pride, even to exceed the pride of those who did not belong to the church of God. (Alma 4:7–9)

The impending mass apostasy from the church led Alma to abdicate his position in the government, “that he might preach the word of God unto them, to stir them up in remembrance of their duty, and that he might pull down, by the word of God, all the pride and craftiness and all the contentions which were among his people, seeing no way that he might reclaim them save it were in the bearing down in pure testimony against them” (Alma 4:19).

The chapter ends with an explicit division between church and state. While law had separated them, there was still a connection when the same person was the head of both church and state. This ends when Alma “delivered up the judgment-seat to Nephihah, and confined himself wholly to the high priesthood of the holy order of God” (Alma 4:20).

Alma Chapter III (5) [Has Header]
The chapter header and verses 1–2 are Mormon’s introduction. While the header implies a separate source, it is made explicit in Alma 5:2. The rest of the chapter is quoted from Alma’s personal record. Using the personal record provides Mormon with the religious content that he does not appear to get from the large plates. Thus, the content that we see
from Alma₂’s personal record is almost exclusively sermons, with a little connecting history added as needed.

Mormon is writing exemplar historiography (see the introduction to “Mormon: Writing” in Part 1). That means his history serves as the example of the lessons he wishes his readers to learn. However, Mormon is also very interested in the principles of the gospel and how one might both understand the Savior and live according to his gospel. It appears that he found, among multiple records in the Nephite archive, some records preserved that were not recorded on the large plates. There may have been many. One was the Record of Zeniff, which Mormon used because it provided needed history. Some, like the included personal records of Alma₂ and Nephi₃, contained spiritual content. Mormon also appreciated this content and made certain it was included.

What is not clear is whether or not he knew of these records before writing the book headers. The book headers do not include the information from the personal records. There are two possibilities. One is that Mormon found these separate records later and added them because they were important. The other is that Mormon, as a formality, simply wrote the headers to reflect the large plates regardless of what he intended to write. I prefer the second option. While either case might describe the use of Alma’s personal record, the entirety of 3 Nephi suggests that Mormon knew about these separate records and intended to use them from the beginning of creating his outline.

Most of the chapter quotes “the words which he [Alma₂] spake to the people in the church which was established in the city of Zarahemla, according to his own record, saying. . . ” (Alma 5:2). Not only does it make sense for Alma₂ to begin his missionary journey in Zarahemla, but it provides Mormon the opportunity to set the picture of the nature of Nephite apostasy at this time, an apostasy of heart that was sufficient that it affected those who affiliated with the church, in the capital city. It provides the essential contrast that will highlight his sermon to the people in Gideon, recorded in chapter V (7).

The sermon and the chapter conclude simultaneously. There is no testificatory *Amen*, but the sermon clearly ends and was certainly indicated as having ended on Alma₂’s record. Ending a chapter at the end of a sermon is common enough for Mormon that this could be his own chapter ending rather than one copied from Alma’s record.
Alma Chapter IV (6)

There are only 8 verses in this chapter, which Orson left just as Mormon created it. Thus we have a separate chapter dedicated to very little information. One of the reasons for a new chapter here is that rather than copying from Alma₂’s record, Mormon is narrating. The source continues to be Alma₁’s record. Mormon will quote from it again in the next chapter.

The function of this chapter is to provide Mormon’s moralizing summary of the reason why he includes Alma₂’s sermons. Certainly he agrees with the doctrine, but Mormon is still setting the stage for the nature of Nephite apostasy that will be seen in the rest of the book. His intent to moralize is clear in the beginning of verse 5 when he states: “Now I would that ye should understand...”

The chapter is Mormon’s description of the conditions and the need for the sermons, but it isn’t his testimony — that is, until the very end: “And Alma went and began to declare the word of God unto the church which was established in the valley of Gideon, according to the revelation of the truth of the word which had been spoken by his fathers, and according to the spirit of prophecy which was in him, according to the testimony of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who should come to redeem his people from their sins, and the holy order by which he was called. And thus it is written. Amen” (Alma 6:8).

When Mormon writes of what Alma₂ did, “according to the prophecy which was in him,” it triggers the declaration: “according to the testimony of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who should come to redeem his people from their sins, and the holy order by which he was called.” That served as enough of a testimony from Alma₂, that Mormon confirmed it: “And thus it is written. Amen.” Mormon’s “thus it is written” becomes his own additional testimony, sealed with Amen. The testificatory Amen created the chapter ending, short though the chapter was.

Alma Chapter V (7) [Has Header]

The header provides the linking information: “the words of Alma which he delivered to the people in Gideon, according to his own record.” The quoted material begins in verse 1. What we have in this chapter is a recorded sermon. There is no reason to believe that Mormon did anything other than copy it as it was entered on Alma₂’s record.

Those who settled in Gideon were the people of Limhi, who appear to have been given the name of their military leader who stood up to king Noah. These were people who had already been through a regime which witnessed the problems Mormon sets up as the threats to true Nephite
society and religion: unrighteous kingship and an apostate religion with ties to the Jaredites. The people of Limhi, now the people of Gideon, had already lived through the dominance of that government and religion, had turned their backs on it, and had embraced the Nephite gospel. As recent converts away from that system, they had not turned back to it, and therefore the sermon given to them stands as a contrast to the one Alma 2 gave in Zarahemla.

Thus this righteous people can be commended for what they have avoided and be admonished to continue to expect the coming Messiah:

But behold, I trust that ye are not in a state of so much unbelief as were your brethren; I trust that ye are not lifted up in the pride of your hearts; yea, I trust that ye have not set your hearts upon riches and the vain things of the world; yea, I trust that you do not worship idols, but that ye do worship the true and the living God, and that ye look forward for the remission of your sins, with an everlasting faith, which is to come.

For behold, I say unto you there be many things to come; and behold, there is one thing which is of more importance than they all — for behold, the time is not far distant that the Redeemer liveth and cometh among his people. (Alma 7:6–7)

At the end of the sermon is a testificatory Amen which triggers the end of the chapter.

Alma Chapter VI (8)

This chapter is a pastiche of quotation and linking narrative. Mormon is copying the quotations from Alma 2’s record, but it is Mormon’s language that ties the quotations into a storyline.

Mormon notes that “thus ended the ninth year of the reign of the judges” (Alma 8:2). This date may have been on Alma 2’s record since Alma 2 continued to be the Nephite recordkeeper. Mormon quickly describes a discourse to the people in the land of Melek without quoting anything from the sermon. We do not know what was said in Melek or any of the details. This is not because Alma 2 did not write them; he almost certainly did. However, they did not further Mormon’s purposes. Mormon is interested in moving to the story of Ammonihah.

Mormon tosses in an aside short enough that he does not consider it an interruption requiring repetitive resumption:
So that when he had finished his work at Melek he departed thence, and traveled three days’ journey on the north of the land of Melek; and he came to a city which was called Ammonihah.

Now it was the custom of the people of Nephi to call their lands, and their cities, and their villages, yea, even all their small villages, after the name of him who first possessed them; and thus it was with the land of Ammonihah. (Alma 8:6–7)

The insertion is verse 7. It is preceded by a reference to Ammonihah and ends with, “thus it was with the land of Ammonihah.” Why does Mormon insert this information? It should be clear that Mormon intended his readers understand that Ammonihah carried the name of its founder. However, no person named Ammonihah survives in our text. Perhaps it is a reference to some ancestor mentioned in the lost pages. Personally, I do not think so.

Mormon inserts this information at this point because it has a meaning relevant to the current story. Why mention the source of the name at all? It will become very obvious that Ammonihah is a city in rebellion politically and apostasy religiously. What does its name add to that story?

There are two possibilities. One, Ammonihah was a famous villain. That would show why Ammonihah was a bad place. That explanation would require that Mormon’s readers understand something about that person. I prefer the second explanation, which is that the name is intended to invoke Ammon “he being a strong and mighty man, and a descendant of Zarahemla” (Mosiah 6:3). While Mormon uses Jaredite names to indicate his black-hat characters, Zarahemlaite names can be ambiguous. In this case, Ammon is righteous. Thus, I suggest that the name Mormon assigns to the city reflects a beginning in righteousness, and the name itself was intended to draw attention to an apostasy, the city having once been righteous (using the name as the witness for the original state).

Much of this chapter is couched in dialogue. The linking narrative is heavily third person, and the quoted dialogue is first person. This might suggest that Mormon creates the narrative links and copies the quotations. Mormon will copy linking narrative in some cases later in his work with Alma₂’s record, but he will also clearly create the linking dialogue as well. The most conservative reading here is that Mormon wrote the narrative and copied the dialogue from Alma₂’s record.
Alma Chapter VII (9) [Has Header]

The header associated with chapter VII (9) has two functions. It describes content and declares the source: “The words of Alma, and also the words of Amulek, which were declared unto the people who were in the land of Ammonihah. And also they are cast into prison, and delivered by the miraculous power of God which was in them, according to the record of Alma.” Neither of these functions appears to be exclusive to this chapter.

The declaration of the source is particularly interesting because it is the same declared source as we have for Alma chapter III (5) and chapter V (7). These are not all separate sources but rather the same personal record which Alma₂ kept. The reason for the repeated headers from the same text has no clear explanation. As a usable hypothesis, I suggest they represent times when Mormon included material from the private record and then skipped other material. When he returned to the information in the source, he used a header.

This chapter (VII (9)) and the next several: (VIII (9–10), IX (12:1–13:9), and X (13:9–15)) are the focus of the material Mormon took from Alma₂’s personal record. The story of Alma and Amulek’s defense of the gospel contains much religious instruction that Mormon clearly loved but had not found in the large plates.

Interestingly, in addition to the name Ammonihah used to indicate a city in apostasy, we have Amulek, who has a very clearly Zarahemlaite mlk-name. He is set up as a converted, previously wayward soul, if not fully apostate. Amulek reveals:

Nevertheless, after all this, I never have known much of the ways of the Lord, and his mysteries and marvelous power. I said I never had known much of these things; but behold, I mistake, for I have seen much of his mysteries and his marvelous power; yea, even in the preservation of the lives of this people.

Nevertheless, I did harden my heart, for I was called many times and I would not hear; therefore I knew concerning these things, yet I would not know; therefore I went on rebelling against God, in the wickedness of my heart, even until the fourth day of this seventh month, which is in the tenth year of the reign of the judges. (Alma 10:5–6)

While the city began righteous (symbolized by the name), Amulek began unrighteous (symbolized by his mlk-name). The subtext is the contrast of the repentant Amulek and the unrepentant Ammonihah. The way one begins does not seal one’s fate but rather the choices to obey or disobey.
Alma 9:1–34 are all a quotation from Alma’s record. Even the narration is copied from Alma₂’s record. This is clear from the very first verse, which is narration but clearly Alma₂’s writing: “And again, I, Alma, having been commanded of God that I should take Amulek and go forth and preach again unto this people, or the people who were in the city of Ammonihah, it came to pass as I began to preach unto them, they began to contend with me, saying. . .” (Alma 9:1).

Alma 9:34 is difficult to assign. The Rosenvall’s have reformatted the Book of Mormon and assigned the speaker or narrator to the various verses. They assign Alma 9:34 to Mormon. Two things contraindicate that assignation. First is that 9:33 is clearly Alma (which the Rosenvall’s also recognized): “But it came to pass that the Lord did not suffer them that they should take me at that time and cast me into prison.” The first person me indicates that Alma has been speaking. Although Mormon could have inserted his own narrative here, the second contraindication is the parallel between the ending of these words of Amulek and those found in 11:46. Both these verses end chapters:

And it came to pass that Amulek went and stood forth, and began to preach unto them also. And now the words of Amulek are not all written, nevertheless a part of his words are written in this book. (Alma 9:34)

Now, when Amulek had finished these words the people began again to be astonished, and also Zeezrom began to tremble. And thus ended the words of Amulek, or this is all that I have written. (Alma 11:46)

The parallelism between the closing ideas — that Amulek had said more but that this was all that was written — is striking. In Alma 11:46 we have the important “or this is all that I have written.” Mormon does insert his authorial I at times but not in these contexts. With the quantity of copying we have in this chapter, I think we must assign these two closing verses to Alma. I also suggest therefore, the chapter break was copied from Alma’s record as well. This particular chapter break does not fit into any of the typical patterns for the way Mormon created a chapter. If Mormon was copying the entire entry up to the chapter break, and he would again begin copying after the chapter break, it would make sense that the chapter break was copied as well.

331. Rosenvall and Rosenvall, A New Approach to The Book of Mormon, Another Testament of Jesus Christ, 311.
Alma Chapter VIII (10–11)

I see Mormon continuing to copy both the quotations and the narrative. Therefore, even though the first sentence is linking narrative, I suggest it comes from Alma₂, not Mormon. Mormon continues to copy through the end of Alma 10:29, which ends a quoted discourse. In the very next verse, I see Mormon beginning to take over as the narrator. It seems reasonable for Mormon to shift modes from copying to narrating after the end of a quoted speech.

The confirmation that we have Mormon at this point comes when we see him inserting a body of material. Were he copying, it is less likely that he would have inserted new material at this point. The introduction that generates the aside is at the end of our chapter 10, and the insertion itself was separated into chapter 11.

Alma 11:1–19 are an insertion that clearly comes from Mormon. Mormon provides a discussion of wages and then information about the system of weights and measures. Mormon would understand that his future readers might not understand the values as they are listed. For Alma₂, there was no reason to explain a system of weights and measures his readers would have found very familiar. Had this inserted explanation come from Alma₂, it would be an anomaly in an ancient record. When we find that it comes from Mormon, a man who knows he is writing for a distant readership (for whom it may not be the current system), the insertion is not only understandable, but modern experience has shown how important the addition was.

Alma 10:31 introduces an important new character: “And there was one among them whose name was Zeezrom. Now he was the foremost to accuse Amulek and Alma, he being one of the most expert among them, having much business to do among the people” (Alma 10:31). Right after introducing Zeezrom, Mormon introduces the theme of Zeezrom’s desire: “Now the object of these lawyers was to get gain; and they got gain according to their employ” (Alma 10:32).

The discussion of wages, weights, and measures is bracketed by repetitive resumption:

**[Departure text]:** 10:32 Now the object of these lawyers was to get gain; and they got gain according to their employ.

**[Return text]:** 11:20 “Now, it was for the sole purpose to get gain, because they received their wages according to their employ, therefore, they did stir up the people to riotings, and all manner of disturbances and wickedness, that they might
have more employ, that they might get money according to the suits which were brought before them; therefore they did stir up the people against Alma and Amulek.”

The reason for this insertion is to explain how Mormon is using names (see “Mormon’s Interruptive Insertions”).

Mormon is back to the original text again at 11:21: “And this Zeezrom began to question Amulek, saying:” This narrative fits what Alma₂ would have done to introduce the quoted dialogue. If we put the verses together without Mormon’s interruption, we have:

And it came to pass that the lawyers put it into their hearts that they should remember these things against him. And there was one among them whose name was Zeezrom. … And this Zeezrom began to question Amulek, saying: Will ye answer me a few questions which I shall ask you? Now Zeezrom was a man who was expert in the devices of the devil, that he might destroy that which was good; therefore, he said unto Amulek: Will ye answer the questions which I shall put unto you? (Alma 10:30–31, 11:21)

That would be a very plausible quotation from Alma₂’s record. The repetition of Zeezrom’s name also forms a secondary repetitive resumption. Mormon quotes from Alma₂’s record through the end of the chapter. The final words of the chapter still quote Alma₂, and Mormon’s switch from copying to narrating will create the close of this chapter and the opening of the next: “Now, when Amulek had finished these words the people began again to be astonished, and also Zeezrom began to tremble. And thus ended the words of Amulek, or this is all that I have written” (Alma 11:46). It is Alma₂ who wrote “this is all that I have written.”

**Alma Chapter IX (12:1–13:9)**

Mormon returns to his more typical process of writing the connecting pieces between the quotations. The only difference between Alma VIII and Alma IX that might help explain the reason for changing his use of quoted material is that the place where he quotes Alma₂’s narratives came in a longer quotation of what Amulek had said. Now that Mormon returns to quoting Alma₂ from Alma₂’s record, he returns to creating the linking narratives.

In chapter 12 Mormon uses repetition for emphasis rather than resumption. As he describes the effect of Amulek’s preaching on Zeezrom, Mormon says:
Now Alma, seeing that the words of Amulek had silenced Zeezrom, for he beheld that Amulek had caught him in his lying and deceiving to destroy him, and seeing that he began to tremble under a consciousness of his guilt, he opened his mouth and began to speak unto him, and to establish the words of Amulek, and to explain things beyond, or to unfold the scriptures beyond that which Amulek had done.

(Alma 12:1)

Mormon introduces, then copies, Alma₂’s words to Zeezrom (verses 3–6). Mormon describes the effect of Alma₂’s words upon Zeezrom, linking it to Amulek, but intensifying the reaction:

Now when Alma had spoken these words, Zeezrom began to tremble more exceedingly, for he was convinced more and more of the power of God; and he was also convinced that Alma and Amulek had a knowledge of him, for he was convinced that they knew the thoughts and intents of his heart; for power was given unto them that they might know of these things according to the spirit of prophecy. (Alma 12:7)

This technique allows Mormon to give full credit to Amulek’s preaching but also to note that Alma₂ was able to intensify the effect on Zeezrom.

This chapter moves forward the story of Alma₂ and Amulek in Ammonihah but has the added advantage of some precious doctrine being taught. The combination assured that Mormon would include this information in his book.

The chapter ends with the Amen from Alma₂’s sermon. The next chapter continues with Alma₂’s speech without any narrative interruption. I suggest the lack of intervening narrative suggests that it was Alma₂ who ended a chapter after the testificatory Amen and continued with his discourse. Note that the next chapter begins with “Now, as I said. . .” (Alma 13:10). Mormon was copying Alma₂’s sermon and copied the chapter break as well as the text.

Alma Chapter X (13:10–15:19)

Although the previous chapter ended due to the testificatory Amen, the sermon is not over. Alma₂ continues, clearly without stopping. The sermon as given live would have had no pause. The break for the chapter is an artifice required by writing, not speaking.
There are some interesting notes for this chapter. In Alma 13:31 we find Mormon indicating: “And Alma spake many more words unto the people, which are not written in this book.” We can confirm this is Mormon because we find Alma2 named in the third person. However, the phrasing “spake many more words unto the people, which are not written in this book” echoes the similar endings to chapters VII (9:34) and VIII (11:46) which also mention there were more words spoken which have not been written.332 Interestingly, both those previous occasions are from Alma2 as the narrator, and both close chapters. Mormon intentionally echoes those ending statements to end a section, but not a chapter.

We rarely get dates mentioned in the material from Alma’s personal record, but in this chapter we have two. One comes at the very end of the chapter (15:19) and is part of the transition out of the record of Alma and back into the large-plate book of Alma for chapter XI. It is the other occurrence that is interesting; it occurs in Mormon’s narration at 14:23: “And it came to pass after they had thus suffered for many days, (and it was on the twelfth day, in the tenth month, in the tenth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi) that the chief judge over the land of Ammonihah and many of their teachers and their lawyers went in unto the prison where Alma and Amulek were bound with cords.” I speculate that this very precise dating was included in Alma2’s record and is here because on this day a miracle occurred, which Mormon described:

And Alma cried, saying: How long shall we suffer these great afflictions, O Lord? O Lord, give us strength according to our faith which is in Christ, even unto deliverance. And they broke the cords with which they were bound; and when the people saw this, they began to flee, for the fear of destruction had come upon them.

And it came to pass that so great was their fear that they fell to the earth, and did not obtain the outer door of the prison; and the earth shook mightily, and the walls of the prison were rent in twain, so that they fell to the earth; and the chief judge, and the lawyers, and priests, and teachers, who smote upon Alma and Amulek, were slain by the fall thereof.

And Alma and Amulek came forth out of the prison, and they were not hurt; for the Lord had granted unto them power, according

332. Because we see Alma, using the phrase, we cannot be certain if Mormon is indicating that there is no more in Alma’s book from which he is copying, or that he chose not to include more in his editing of the book of Alma.
to their faith which was in Christ. And they straightway came forth out of the prison; and they were loosed from their bands; and the prison had fallen to the earth, and every soul within the walls thereof, save it were Alma and Amulek, was slain; and they straightway came forth into the city.

Now the people having heard a great noise came running together by multitudes to know the cause of it; and when they saw Alma and Amulek coming forth out of the prison, and the walls thereof had fallen to the earth, they were struck with great fear, and fled from the presence of Alma and Amulek even as a goat fleeth with her young from two lions; and thus they did flee from the presence of Alma and Amulek. (Alma 14:26–29)

Mormon certainly intended to include their miraculous escape, and it is likely Alma had recorded the precise date, which Mormon took from Alma$_2$’s record. The tenth year also closes the chapter: “And thus ended the tenth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi” (Alma 15:19). The year causes the ending; there is no Amen, nor the end to a speech. As a chapter ending of convenience, it ends on a five-year ending.

Alma Chapter XI (16)

Mormon takes a break from using Alma$_2$’s record as his source and returns to the large plates. The first hint is that the chapter opens with a declaration of the date, something typical of Mormon’s use of the large plates (beginning with the book of Alma). The emphasis on years throughout the chapter further underscores the annalistic nature of this chapter, and that reflects on the organization of the large plates.

The opening also refocuses Mormon’s narrative away from what Alma$_2$ and Amulek preached and onto the aftermath:

And it came to pass in the eleventh year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi, on the fifth day of the second month, there having been much peace in the land of Zarahemla, there having been no wars nor contentions for a certain number of years, even until the fifth day of the second month in the eleventh year, there was a cry of war heard throughout the land.

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333. See the section “Chapters and Years” in Chapter 4.
334. The year is indicated in Alma 16:1 (eleventh), 16:9 (eleventh year), 16:12 (eleventh), and 16:21 (fourteenth year).
For behold, the armies of the Lamanites had come in upon the wilderness side, into the borders of the land, even into the city of Ammonihah, and began to slay the people and destroy the city. (Alma 16:1–2)

Mormon returns to the large plates to fill out the details of the Lamanite destruction of Ammonihah. Ammonihah thus becomes the extreme example of the Lord’s promise relative to the land. There is safety and prosperity in following God’s commands, but a cursing if the Nephites do not. Ammonihah is presented as a quintessential apostate land, and therefore it is destroyed.

Alma will discuss the destruction of Ammonihah twice. The second time will be in the story of the Anti-Nephi-Lehies. In that story, the destruction of Ammonihah is placed in a more historical context with more historical motivations. In this chapter, the destruction is clearly cast as God’s punishment. Mormon uses this event as an exemplar that makes explicit the results of God’s promise for the land. He will show both sides of the promise.335

Clearly, Ammonihah represents the dire promise that would accompany apostasy. Mormon underscores that meaning in his description of the destruction:

And thus ended the eleventh year of the judges, the Lamanites having been driven out of the land, and the people of Ammonihah were destroyed; yea, every living soul of the Ammonihahites was destroyed, and also their great city, which they said God could not destroy, because of its greatness.

But behold, in one day it was left desolate; and the carcasses were mangled by dogs and wild beasts of the wilderness. (Alma 16:9–10)

Ammonihah was a city of pride, so much that they essentially tempted God in saying it could not be destroyed. The result was that “in one day it was left desolate.”

335. Hardy, Understanding the Book of Mormon: A Reader’s Guide, 118, discusses the dual presentation of the destruction of Ammonihah and has a similar analysis: “So in Alma 8–16 and 17–25, we find two separate narrative strands that both culminate in the destruction of Ammonihah, but the explanations given in each version are different. One is spiritual (due to God’s justice), and one political (due to Lamanite aggressions in the aftermath of Anti-Nephi-Lehi conversions). Nevertheless, both seem equally valid.”
Mormon then contrasts this with the positive promise of the land. After finishing the aftermath of the destruction of Ammonihah, he turns to the positive results of those who did listen to Alma and Amulek:

And Alma and Amulek went forth preaching repentance to the people in their temples, and in their sanctuaries, and also in their synagogues, which were built after the manner of the Jews.

And as many as would hear their words, unto them they did impart the word of God, without any respect of persons, continually.

And thus did Alma and Amulek go forth, and also many more who had been chosen for the work, to preach the word throughout all the land. And the establishment of the church became general throughout the land, in all the region round about, among all the people of the Nephites.

And there was no inequality among them; the Lord did pour out his Spirit on all the face of the land to prepare the minds of the children of men, or to prepare their hearts to receive the word which should be taught among them at the time of his coming—

That they might not be hardened against the word, that they might not be unbelieving, and go on to destruction, but that they might receive the word with joy, and as a branch be grafted into the true vine, that they might enter into the rest of the Lord their God.

Now those priests who did go forth among the people did preach against all lyings, and deceivings, and envyings, and strifes, and malice, and revilings, and stealing, robbing, plundering, murdering, committing adultery, and all manner of lasciviousness, crying that these things ought not so to be—

Holding forth things which must shortly come; yea, holding forth the coming of the Son of God, his sufferings and death, and also the resurrection of the dead.

And many of the people did inquire concerning the place where the Son of God should come; and they were taught that he would appear unto them after his resurrection; and this the people did hear with great joy and gladness. (Alma 16:13–20)

Mormon noted: “And the Lamanites did not come again to war against the Nephites until the fourteenth year of the reign of the judges
over the people of Nephi. And thus for three years did the people of Nephi have continual peace in all the land” (Alma 16:12). That introduction began the discussion of what happened during that time of peace. The closing verse specifically notes the year at the end of the three years of continual peace: “thus ended the fourteenth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi.”

When Mormon closes the fourteenth year, it is obvious the next events will open the fifteenth year. Mormon is using the five-year periods, but he is flexible in how he assigns them so history will correctly fit into the pattern. What is interesting is that the next chapter will not note any years at all. We do not hear about the fifteenth year until Alma 28:1, which marks the end of the fifteenth year. It will be an eventful year.

Alma Chapter XII (17–20)

The header to Alma XII (17) indicates: “An account of the sons of Mosiah, who rejected their rights to the kingdom for the word of God, and went up to the land of Nephi to preach to the Lamanites; their sufferings and deliverance — according to the record of Alma.” Mormon explicitly returns to Alma₂’s personal record. Although the subject of the chapter is the sons of Mosiah, the information was recorded by Alma₂ and taken from his record.

This explains the first verse: “And now it came to pass that as Alma was journeying from the land of Gideon southward, away to the land of Manti, behold, to his astonishment, he met with the sons of Mosiah journeying towards the land of Zarahemla” (Alma 17:1). It is Alma₂’s record, and it begins from Alma₂’s perspective. He is journeying from the land of Gideon when he meets the sons of Mosiah.

The logistics of the situation translated into this text tell us that Mormon has subtly manipulated Alma₂’s description. It is certain that the record noted their meeting on the road. The description of their joy in finding each other is also logically part of Alma₂’s description. However, when the meeting moves directly into the long description of what happened, we are seeing Mormon shifting material to improve his own telling of the tale. It is quite unlikely that the meeting in the road led to the full details of what the sons of Mosiah did, which will occupy chapters, not sentences. Alma₂ must have written it more as it occurred, with Mormon using the meeting as the introduction to the mission stories.

Another indication that it is Mormon who is creating this narrative is the foreshadowing he uses:

And they had been teaching the word of God for the space of fourteen years among the Lamanites, having had much
success in bringing many to the knowledge of the truth; yea, by the power of their words many were brought before the altar of God, to call on his name and confess their sins before him.

Now these are the circumstances which attended them in their journeyings, for they had many afflictions; they did suffer much, both in body and in mind, such as hunger, thirst and fatigue, and also much labor in the spirit. (Alma 17:4–5)

Before he even begins, we know that this is a positive story. Although there will be afflictions, there is tremendous reward. The foreshadowing is designed for Mormon’s audience. We do not know for whom Alma₂ believed he was writing, but there was no particular reason for Alma₂ to use foreshadowing. A teller of a tale would perhaps prefer to let the tension mount. That was not Mormon’s reason for telling this story.

Alma chapter 18 begins a section that tells the story through dialog. It is probable that Mormon is copying here. Since Alma₂ had to set up the conditions of the dialog just as Mormon did, it is possible that much of chapter 17 is copied from Alma₂’s narration rather than be a new invention Mormon created from what Alma₂ wrote. It would be easier to copy. If that is the case, the dividing line between Mormon’s narration and copying Alma₂’s text would be in Alma 17:6: “Now these were their journeyings: Having taken leave of their father, Mosiah, in the first year of the judges; having refused the kingdom which their father was desirous to confer upon them, and also this was the minds of the people.” Mormon would have written “Now these were their journeyings,” and the rest would begin the copy from Alma₂’s record.

Alma₁ (whom I suggest is the writer at this point) finishes the basic story of Ammon and Lamoni in chapter XII (17–20). At the end, he sets up the next story. The final event has Lamoni and Ammon freeing Ammon’s brothers, who have been imprisoned in Middoni. This ends the acts of Ammon and Lamoni and serves to shift the narrative focus onto the brothers who had been imprisoned. Aaron, whose story occupies the next chapter, is not named as one of the prisoners at this time because the focus is still on Ammon. However, we learn in Alma 21:13 that Aaron was one of those prisoners.

This chapter ends at an end in the story, not due to any particular marker, such as a testificatory Amen or a year ending. This suggests that the division into chapters is original to Alma₂’s text and was not one Mormon created but rather one copied from his source.
Alma Chapter XIII (21–22) [Has Header]

Morman provides a chapter header to signal the shift to the story of a different son of Mosiah: “An account of the preaching of Aaron, and Muloki, and their brethren, to the Lamanites.” Although Mormon doesn’t state it explicitly, this information continues to come from the record of Alma₂. Most of the previous chapter appears to be copied from Alma₂’s personal record, including the chapter break. Mormon inserts the header but returns to copying. Although Mormon’s headers most often indicate a change in the source he is using, it indicates a change in the ultimate source of the story in this case. The original information had to come from a different source because this chapter relates information from a similar time but different place than Ammon’s story.

Even though Mormon’s header suggests a change of source, Mormon continues to copy from Alma₂’s personal record. Although the ultimate source had to be different, we have the information through Alma₂’s edited version of that story. Thus, when the new story of Ammon begins, Alma₂ places it in the context of what he had written about Ammon. He begins with the separation of the brothers to move the beginning point back in time to when the stories began to separate. Having established the common beginning, Alma₂ moves to Aaron’s story. The story briefly describes his unsuccessful mission to Jerusalem and how the brothers ended up jailed in Middoni.

At that point, Alma₂’s two stories meet. Ammon and Lamoni free the brothers from prison in Middoni. Even though this is Aaron’s story, Alma₂ gives a few comments to provide an ending to Ammon’s story before moving to the important parts of Aaron’s story (Alma 22:18–23).

Having finished Ammon’s story, Alma₂ turns to Aaron’s story: “Now, as Ammon was thus teaching the people of Lamoni continually, we will return to the account of Aaron and his brethren; for after he departed from the land of Middoni he was led by the Spirit to the land of Nephi, even to the house of the king which was over all the land save it were the land of Ishmael; and he was the father of Lamoni” (Alma 22:1).

During that story, Mormon inserts an aside into his copied text. Similar to the aside in chapter VIII (10–11), the beginning of this insertion requires some examination. The best clue to where Mormon departed from the text is found in the repetitive resumption with which he returns to the copied text. That resumption is clear in Alma 22:35: “And now I, after having said this, return again to the account of Ammon and Aaron, Omner and Himni, and their brethren.” There is a chapter break,
and then: “Behold, now it came to pass that the king of the Lamanites sent a proclamation among all his people” (Alma 23:1).

This sentence marks the textual resumption that highlights the departure point: “And it came to pass that the king sent a proclamation throughout all the land, amongst all his people who were in all his land” (Alma 22:27). There is not a clear place where text could be excised to see the before and after.

The inserted text defines the geographic scope of the land through which the proclamation was sent (Alma 22:27–34). As with the insertion about weights and measures in Alma 11, Mormon appears to realize that his readers would not understand the scope of the land throughout which the proclamation was sent. As he describes Lamanite lands, he also provides the overall layout of the lands. These verses provide some of the most important overall geographic details for the Book of Mormon lands. As an author-time insertion, it is also a description from the perspective of Mormon’s time rather than a contemporary description from the record.

When Mormon copied the sentence: “And it came to pass that the king sent a proclamation throughout all the land, amongst all his people,” it triggered the understanding that his readers would not understand geography, and therefore he writes the aside. In the very next phrase, “who were in all the regions round about,” Mormon begins to set up his inserted geography. The ending of the aside comes with the standard technique of repetitive resumption.

Mormon has stepped away from copying. He will return to copying from Alma’s record, and notes that shift with: “And now I, after having said this, return again to the account of Ammon and Aaron, Omner and Himni, and their brethren” (Alma 22:35). I suggest that the shift from his narration to copying created the reason he ended this chapter. Ending the author-time aside and then returning to copying is the only change that marks this chapter division.

Alma Chapter XIV (23–26)

The phrase that the king of the Lamanites sent out a proclamation is repeated twice:

Behold, now it came to pass that the king of the Lamanites sent a proclamation among all his people, that they should not lay their hands on Ammon, or Aaron, or Omner, or Himni, nor either of their brethren who should go forth preaching the word of God, in whatsoever place they should be, in any part of their land.
Yea, he sent a decree among them, that they should not lay their hands on them to bind them, or to cast them into prison; neither should they spit upon them, nor smite them, nor cast them out of their synagogues, nor scourge them; neither should they cast stones at them, but that they should have free access to their houses, and also their temples, and their sanctuaries. (Alma 23:1–2)

This is an intentional repetition in which the second repetition expands upon the first. The first is a general statement, and the second provides more details. The effect is to emphasize the absolute prohibition against hindering the brothers in their missionary endeavors. The specific prohibitions of Alma 23:2 likely reprise things which had already happened to them. As they note later in chapter XIV (23–26): “And we have entered into their houses and taught them, and we have taught them in their streets; yea, and we have taught them upon their hills; and we have also entered into their temples and their synagogues and taught them; and we have been cast out, and mocked, and spit upon, and smote upon our cheeks; and we have been stoned, and taken and bound with strong cords, and cast into prison; and through the power and wisdom of God we have been delivered again” (Alma 26:29).

Although there is no specific indication, it appears that Mormon returns to copying with the repeated phrase. Alma₂ is clearly speaking at the end of the chapter, and there is little internal to the chapter that would suggest a change of writer.

This chapter will tell the essential story of the Anti-Nephi-Lehies. Mormon includes their story for two reasons. He will argue that just as some of the most dangerous enemies are apostate Nephites, some of the most faithful are converted Lamanites. Providing these examples helps Mormon demonstrate through example that it is one’s personal actions in following or rejecting Yahweh’s teachings that matters to the fulfillment of the promise of the land.

We have the second report of the destruction of Ammonihah. Both come from Alma₂’s record. As noted, the first shows the destruction as Yahweh’s wrath for their unrighteousness. In this second version, the cause is Lamanites continuing to thirst for blood after slaughtering many of the Anti-Nephi-Lehies. Assuming Alma₂ as the writer, the first telling occurred before he met the sons of Mosiah on the road and therefore would reflect his interpretation of the event from his perspective after having been personally involved. The second telling was second-hand through the records of the sons of Mosiah he copied into his record at a later point.
Even though Mormon is copying the majority of this text, he does not refrain from making small adjustments that further his exemplar history. Perhaps there are many we cannot discover. One of them is evident in this chapter. In Alma 24:28 we find that “so many of their brethren were Amalekites and Amulonites, the greatest number of whom were after the order of the Nehors.” I have argued that the designation of “order of the Nehors” is Mormon’s name for this group, not one that would have been used at the time (see *The Case of Nehor* section). It is not a name that would be expected in the text Alma wrote, but it was an important part of the overall argument Mormon was building. Hence, this insertion of the name is due to Mormon and was not on the original record.

At the end of this chapter, Alma inserts a dialogue between Ammon and Aaron. While it is possible this dialog actually took place, it is also possible that it is Alma’s creation or a recreation of what had been told to him. One reason for suspecting that this is a crafted dialog is that it so nicely summarizes the whole of the missionary efforts between the two brothers whose stories were most prominent. The chapter ends with Aaron’s testificatory Amen.

**Alma Chapter XV (27–29)**

Chapter XV (27–29) is one of the most complex chapters for the assignment of the text to a particular writer. I would ascribe verses 27:1–4 to Mormon. Although Mormon had been quoting from Alma’s record, and will pick up quoting at 27:5, there is later evidence of Mormon as a main narrator. I believe the best course is to suggest Mormon as the source of most of the narration, and only the quotations come from Alma’s record.

Verses 27:5–12 is the kind of dialogue we have seen before from Alma. The very short linking narratives might be Mormon’s, but in the other examples of this type of dialogue, Mormon appears to have copied Alma’s linking narrative. I suggest that is what we have here.

Verses 27:13–14 (and probably 15a) come from Mormon. This is no longer narrative linking the quotations, but a historical narrative explaining events. Mormon has been doing most of that.

Verse 27:15b is quoted from Alma’s record. Verses 27:16–22a are Mormon’s narrative. This is evidenced by the presence of the name of Alma in the third person in verse 16, 19, and 20. Additionally, we have Mormon reacting to the meeting of Alma and the sons of Mosiah. Verses 27:18 and 19 show Mormon’s conclusion from this meeting.

Verses 27:22b–24 are quoted from Alma’s record. Verses 27:25–18:4 are Mormon’s historical narrative. We see the name Alma in the third person in verse 25, which is the best marker we have in this section.
that it came from Mormon. This section discusses the decision of the people of Nephi to allow the people of Ammon to relocate in Jershon. After relocating, a war arises with the Lamanites that has terrible consequences. Mormon ends his narration with “a tremendous battle; yea, even such an one as never had been known among all the people in the land from the time Lehi left Jerusalem” (28:2). Mormon notes that it was a time of “great mourning and lamentation” (28:4). These verses are important because their intent will be replicated in 28:9–11. This is not a case of repetitive resumption. The repetition comes because the second instance is a quotation from Alma2.

Mormon’s original intent was to end the chapter with Alma 28:1–7:

And now it came to pass that after the people of Ammon were established in the land of Jershon, and a church also established in the land of Jershon, and the armies of the Nephites were set round about the land of Jershon, yea, in all the borders round about the land of Zarahemla; behold the armies of the Lamanites had followed their brethren into the wilderness.

And thus there was a tremendous battle; yea, even such an one as never had been known among all the people in the land from the time Lehi left Jerusalem; yea, and tens of thousands of the Lamanites were slain and scattered abroad.

Yea, and also there was a tremendous slaughter among the people of Nephi; nevertheless, the Lamanites were driven and scattered, and the people of Nephi returned again to their land.

And now this was a time that there was a great mourning and lamentation heard throughout all the land, among all the people of Nephi—

Yea, the cry of widows mourning for their husbands, and also of fathers mourning for their sons, and the daughter for the brother, yea, the brother for the father; and thus the cry of mourning was heard among all of them, mourning for their kindred who had been slain.

And now surely this was a sorrowful day; yea, a time of solemnity, and a time of much fasting and prayer.

And thus endeth the fifteenth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi; (Alma 28:1–7)
The narration sees the people of Ammon “established in the land of Jershon” (Alma 28:1). Then it describes the terrible war that followed. The original end of the chapter would have closed the eventful fifteenth year. It doesn’t end because Mormon reads on in Alma₂’s record and decides to add Alma₂’s reaction to that terrible war.

Verses 28:8–29:17, which end chapter XV (27–29), are copied from Alma₂’s record. Marking the change at verse 28:8 requires working backwards from a more obvious quotation from Alma₂’s record. Verses 29:1–17 comprise Alma₂’s great “O that I were an angel” soliloquy. All of the internal evidence points to Alma₂ as the author of those verses. However, an anomaly raises a question about that understanding.

C. Robb Smith looked at the soliloquy and noted an important apparent contradiction:

While reformatting the Book of Mormon text for his Readers Edition, Hardy found more than a hundred editorial insertions and several extended comment sections that caused him to conclude “Mormon was a deliberate and conscientious editor.” I performed my own word analysis using LDS View software and examined every use of a first-person subjective pronoun in the portion abridged by Mormon (Mosiah to 4th Nephi). I found that every occurrence of the pronoun “I” or “We” is either in a clearly labeled quotation or in one of Mormon’s editorial insertions. These pronouns are used 4,325 times in the Book of Mormon. 2,243 of those are found in the abridged books with 2,095 of those in clearly labeled quotations and the remaining 148 in editorial insertions.336

With such a great consistency in noting who the speaker is when quoting, the absence of any indication of the speaker here is anomalous. Smith therefore suggests that this soliloquy must be Mormon’s text, not Alma’s.337 Smith spends the rest of his paper exploring how Mormon might be behind the phrases that appear to so clearly depend upon Alma₂’s experiences.

The absence of an introductory statement is indeed anomalous and requires an explanation. The absence is logical if this quotation is embedded within a longer text taken from Alma₂’s record. Alma₂ would have no reason to identify himself in his own record, and if Mormon

337. Ibid.
is simply copying what Alma₂ wrote, that explains the absence of the introduction to the quoted speaker. For Mormon, as he was writing there was no confusion at all because he was fully aware of the sources from which he was quoting.

The lack of clear introduction to the soliloquy tells us that the material immediately prior to the soliloquy must have been part of the quotation. Verses 28:9–12 are the easiest to ascribe to Alma₂. They not only needlessly replicate the information about the aftermath of the great war that Mormon described in 28:4–6, but important information is written in the present tense where Mormon’s descriptions were in the past tense.

[Mormon’s writing]

And now this was a time that there was a great mourning and lamentation heard throughout all the land, among all the people of Nephi—

Yea, the cry of widows mourning for their husbands, and also of fathers mourning for their sons, and the daughter for the brother, yea, the brother for the father; and thus the cry of mourning was heard among all of them, mourning for their kindred who had been slain.

And now surely this was a sorrowful day; yea, a time of solemnity, and a time of much fasting and prayer.

And thus endeth the fifteenth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi. (Alma 28:4–7; italics added to highlight past tense)

[Alma’s writing]

And this is the account of the wars and contentions among the Nephites, and also the wars between the Nephites and the Lamanites; and the fifteenth year of the reign of the judges is ended.

And from the first year to the fifteenth has brought to pass the destruction of many thousand lives; yea, it has brought to pass an awful scene of bloodshed.

And the bodies of many thousands are laid low in the earth, while the bodies of many thousands are moldering in heaps upon the face of the earth; yea, and many thousands are mourning for the loss of their kindred, because they have reason to fear, according to the promises of the Lord, that they
are consigned to a state of endless wo. (Alma 28:9–11; italics added to highlight present tense)

With a strong assignment of verses 28:9–12 to Alma₂, we may also safely assign verses 28:13–14 because only with a continuous quotation would the absence of the introduction to Alma₂ make sense.

With these verses firmly assigned to Alma₂ as the writer, we may define the beginning of the copied text. Verse 28:8 says: “And this is the account of Ammon and his brethren, their journeyings in the land of Nephi, their sufferings in the land, their sorrows, and their afflictions, and their incomprehensible joy, and the reception and safety of the brethren in the land of Jershon. And now may the Lord, the Redeemer of all men, bless their souls forever.” The beginning of the verse is in the present tense, “this is the account of Ammon,” and the sentence ends with the “safety of the brethren in the land of Jershon.”

The quoted material in chapter XV (27–29) preceding this section was about the resettlement of the people of Ammon in Jershon. This verse picks up as a conclusion to the very topic Mormon had been quoting from Alma₂’s personal record. I believe we can firmly assign all of 28:8–29:17 to Alma₂ as the writer, with the entirety being copied from Alma₂’s personal record.

**Alma Chapter XVI (30–35)**

This chapter opens with a return to the historical conditions described in Alma 28:1–7:

Behold, now it came to pass that after the people of Ammon were established in the land of Jershon, yea, and also after the Lamanites were driven out of the land, and their dead were buried by the people of the land—

Now their dead were not numbered because of the greatness of their numbers; neither were the dead of the Nephites numbered — but it came to pass after they had buried their dead, and also after the days of fasting, and mourning, and prayer, (and it was in the sixteenth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi) there began to be continual peace throughout all the land. (Alma 30:1–2)

This brings Mormon back in line with the historical timeline and he proceeds with his planned text. His next story has an interesting introduction:
But it came to pass in the latter end of the seventeenth year, there came a man into the land of Zarahemla, and he was Anti-Christ, for he began to preach unto the people against the prophecies which had been spoken by the prophets, concerning the coming of Christ.

Now there was no law against a man’s belief; for it was strictly contrary to the commands of God that there should be a law which should bring men on to unequal grounds. (Alma 30:6–7)

After this introduction, the story of Korihor begins. Compare this to the beginning of the book of Alma: “Nevertheless, they durst not lie, if it were known, for fear of the law, for liars were punished; therefore they pretended to preach according to their belief; and now the law could have no power on any man for his belief” (Alma 1:17). Both the stories of Korihor and Nehor began with the statement that there was no law against one’s belief. That must be a significant aspect of Mormon’s discussion of the two men who preached a different religion to the Nephites.

The introduction of both stories with a statement that there was no law against belief answers why such an apostate from the religion was allowed in the political arena. Regardless of the political position, Yahweh’s law did (and does) judge the religious beliefs and actions. In the story of Nehor, Alma₂ was both the Chief Judge and the High Priest. In the case of Korihor, the two functions are filled by two different men. Nevertheless: “And it came to pass that when he was brought before Alma and the chief judge, he did go on in the same manner as he did in the land of Gideon; yea, he went on to blaspheme” (Alma 30:30). The problem is not simply religion but the social upheaval that accompanied Korihor’s preaching. Thus Alma₂ responds: “Thou knowest that we do not glut ourselves upon the labors of this people; for behold I have labored even from the commencement of the reign of the judges until now, with mine own hands for my support, notwithstanding my many travels round about the land to declare the word of God unto my people” (Alma 30:32). The issue is political and social, not simply religious.

The parallels between the two stories are strong enough that they mask an important difference — each comes from a different record. Though we may easily posit Alma₂ as the writer behind both stories, one was written on the large plates and the second on Alma₂’s personal record. The charter for the large plates was clear, and there was no overarching charter for the personal record. Thus, we should discern a more political reason for the inclusion of the Nehor story. I suggest that the story of Nehor was important for setting a precedent of what fell into the newly divided political and
religious realms. When we have Korihor’s story, the context is more clearly religious, though it could not help but be socially disruptive as well.

Mormon continues as the narrator through 30:12. From this point to the end of the story of Korihor in 30:60, Mormon creates the historical narrative and quotations are taken from Alma₂’s personal record. In this case, even the short connecting narratives between quotations come from Mormon. For example, we find Alma 30:34 “and now Korihor said unto Alma” and 30:44 “But Alma said unto him” both indicating Mormon as the author.

This is important because Mormon crafts Korihor’s story to transition from it to the story of the Zoramites. Mormon makes sure that his readers know that Korihor left the city where Alma condemned him and went to “a people who had separated themselves from the Nephites and called themselves Zoramites” (Alma 30:59). Mormon then notes that while there, “he was run upon and trodden down, even until he was dead” (Alma 30:59). Although it is possible that this really occurred, the primary purpose of noting Korihor’s death was not to finish Korihor’s story, but to provide a narrative link to the Zoramite story: “Now it came to pass that after the end of Korihor, Alma having received tidings that the Zoramites were perverting the ways of the Lord...” (Alma 30:60).

Mormon is the narrator here because he needs to mold his story to his own purposes, which plausibly did not replicate the way the information was presented in Alma₂’s source. Indeed, even if neither Alma₂’s personal journal nor the large plate book of Alma told of Korihor’s demise, Mormon needed that connection to relocate his story to the city of the Zoramites.

From Alma 31:1 to the end of Alma 35 (which chapter ended chapter XVI), Mormon is the narrator. This is quite clear from the number of times Mormon refers to Alma₂ in the narration.

Mormon sets up his transition from ending his work with Alma₂’s personal record and the return to the large plates by noting the years, and that an important year-related story would be told later:

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)
With one exception, Mormon is ready to move on. That exception is that he will add Alma’s blessings to his three sons:

Now Alma, being grieved for the iniquity of his people, yea for the wars, and the bloodsheds, and the contentions which were among them; and having been to declare the word, or sent to declare the word, among all the people in every city; and seeing that the hearts of the people began to wax hard, and that they began to be offended because of the strictness of the word, his heart was exceedingly sorrowful.

Therefore, he caused that his sons should be gathered together, that he might give unto them every one his charge, separately, concerning the things pertaining unto righteousness. And we have an account of his commandments, which he gave unto them according to his own record. (Alma 35:15–16)

At the end of the three chapters recording separately the blessing to each son, Mormon will shift to the large plates. Before he does, he will finish the story of Alma and his sons in Alma 43:1–2:

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. (Alma 43:1–2)

The testificatory Amen at the end of Alma XIX (39–42) required the ending of the chapter, so the first two verses finish the story that could not be added to the end of that chapter.

**Alma Chapters XVII (36–37), XVIII (38), XIX (39–42) [Each with a Header]**

Mormon provides a separate chapter for each of Alma’s sons. The entire chapter is copied from Alma’s record, with Mormon providing a header and, I suggest, the manipulation of the names. Although the headers do not specifically indicate that they come from Alma’s personal record, when Mormon does add a chapter header, it is for information or text that will be coming from a separate record, even if that record is not explicitly mentioned in the chapter.
Chapters XVII (36–37) and XVIII (38) end with “my son, farewell.” Chapter XIX (39–42) ends with “And may God grant unto you even according to my words. Amen” (Alma 42:31). That testificatory Amen forced the ending of the chapter before the end of the story could be written. Mormon adds the ending material for the story of the blessings on Alma’s sons at the beginning of Alma XX (43–44).

The names of Alma’s sons are interesting. The oldest, Helaman, echoes the name of one of king Benjamin’s sons (Mosiah 1:2). Shiblon is a unit of measure (Alma 11:15) as well as a Jaredite king (Ether 1:11–12). Corianton is not otherwise attested directly in the Book of Mormon, but it is clearly related to Coriantum, a Jaredite king (Ether 1:13–14). Similarly, Coriantor was a Jaredite king (Ether 1:6–7). Of course, there is also Coriantumr, who was the last Jaredite king as well as the name of a prominent Nephite dissenter who was related to Zarahemla (1:15), and thus connected to the Jaredites through the Mulekites.

These names are probably used for teaching purposes, and may not have been the names by which the sons were known (see the section “Fitting Names into Narrative Types,” Chapter 5). Helaman was the good son. He was first-born and the first inheritor of the plates. Helaman is a good Nephite name, and Mormon uses that name to highlight his goodness/righteousness.

When Alma goes on the missionary journey to the Zoramites, he does not take Helaman. Rather, he takes his other sons, Shiblon and Corianton. This may be a foreshadowing of the way both those sons may have been affected by apostate notions. They do no (recorded) preaching on that journey and may be included for the connection to the Zoramites rather than the specifics of the mission to the Zoramites.

Shiblon is an ambiguous name. It has Jaredite connections but a more recent connection to the system of weights and measures in which it could be used as an indication of something with value (as Mormon did when he used other designations from the list in Alma 11 as the basis for names). Shiblon is basically a good son, but in Alma’s final blessing to him, note how Alma suggests that Shiblon might be spiritually ambiguous:

And now, as ye have begun to teach the word even so I would that ye should continue to teach; and I would that ye would be diligent and temperate in all things.

See that ye are not lifted up unto pride; yea, see that ye do not boast in your own wisdom, nor of your much strength.
Use boldness, but not overbearance; and also see that ye bridle all your passions, that ye may be filled with love; see that ye refrain from idleness.

Do not pray as the Zoramites do, for ye have seen that they pray to be heard of men, and to be praised for their wisdom.

Do not say: O God, I thank thee that we are better than our brethren; but rather say: O Lord, forgive my unworthiness, and remember my brethren in mercy — yea, acknowledge your unworthiness before God at all times. (Alma 38:10–14)

Right after the admonition to be diligent and temperate, Alma lists the things that might tempt Shiblon from being diligent or temperate. They are descriptions of apostasy. Apparently, Shiblon is good with the notable possibility of being tempted into apostasy. He eventually chooses the good and becomes the recordkeeper after his brother Helaman dies.

Corianton is the child who did apostatize (for a time). Notice that Alma tells Corianton that one of the things he did wrong was: “thou didst go on unto boasting in thy strength and thy wisdom” (Alma 39:2). That doesn’t seem so bad, but it is also the very thing Alma warned Shiblon about in his blessing (Alma 38:11). As the child with the most obviously Jaredite name, it is unsurprising that he was the one to cause the greatest problem and to become an actual apostate rather than only to have the potential to become one as is suggested for Shiblon.

Nevertheless, the sermons to the sons were not about apostasy but of righteousness and repentance. Helaman was righteous. Shiblon was tempted but resisted. Corianton fell away but repented and later preached the word of God alongside Helaman and Shiblon (Alma 49:30). As a moral story, the names foreshadow the nature of their experiences, with the ultimate lesson the ability to repent, even (in the case of Corianton) when there had been a major apostasy from the true way.

Alma Chapter XX (43–44)

As previously noted, verses 1–2 finish the story of Alma and his sons. This chapter returns to the large-plate book of Alma as the source. It also returns to finish the story of the eighteenth year, as foreshadowed in Alma 35:13.

The conceptual beginning of the new material coming from the large plates begins in Alma 43:3: “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.” For Mormon, the “now I return” was as much a physical act as a narrative tool. Mormon had to physically change his
relationship to a set of plates, returning to the large plates after having Alma’s record close enough to copy large amounts of text from it.

Marking the year at the beginning of a chapter is one of the traits of Mormon’s editing from the large plates, beginning with the book of Alma. Finally, war is one of the mandated subjects for the large plates. There was little emphasis on war in the material copied from Alma₂’s personal record. There was Alma₂’s lament for the aftermath of war, but there were no details. In contrast, from this point on, Mormon’s editing of the book of Alma will be heavy on details of wars and battles.

The end of this chapter is also the end of Alma₂’s writing on the plates. It is possible in the blessings to his sons that Mormon’s insertion of material from Alma₂’s personal record overlapped in time with the events of this final chapter from Alma₂’s large-plate record. These records cover the events of the eighteenth year (Alma 44:24), and Helaman₂ takes up the record after that. It is probable that Alma₂ kept both records and there were two different endings. The blessings to his sons fit a father’s dying (or nearly dying) blessing, and the entrusting of the records to Helaman₂ would be the logical forerunner to Helaman₂ being the recordkeeper, which begins in chapter XXI (45–49). Note also the finality of Alma₂’s comments to Helaman₂:

And may the Lord bless your soul, and receive you at the last day into his kingdom, to sit down in peace. Now go, my son, and teach the word unto this people. Be sober. My son, farewell. (Alma 38:15)

And now it came to pass that after Alma had said these things to Helaman, he blessed him, and also his other sons; and he also blessed the earth for the righteous’ sake. (Alma 45:15)

I suggest those blessings were Alma₂’s final recorded act, coming at the end of the eighteenth year, but Mormon included them before the events of that year to keep them with Alma₂’s personal record. Perhaps Mormon also wanted a cleaner separation between the more religious messages of those blessings and the beginnings of the stories of war.

Mormon closes the chapter with: “And thus ended the eighteenth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi. And thus ended the record of Alma, which was written upon the plates of Nephi” (Alma 44:24). Most important about this statement is that we again have text at the beginning of the next chapter that belongs with this particular event. If Alma₂ is no longer writing, he should give the task to his son. He does, but not until the beginning of the next chapter.
Alma Chapter XXI (45–49) [Has Header]

Mormon’s header introducing Helaman₂ as the recordkeeper is unusual. The rest of the times there are changes in the recordkeeper in the middle of a named book the event is noted, but is not accompanied by a chapter header. It says: “The account of the people of Nephi, and their wars and dissensions, in the days of Helaman, according to the record of Helaman, which he kept in his days.” As did his father, Helaman₂ keeps the large plates, but they are outside of the strictly political line. Helaman₂ follows his father in the church, but has no official political standing. Yet he keeps the records. The confirmation that we are dealing with the large plates is the header’s declaration that he is recording “the account of the people of Nephi, and their wars and dissensions.” That language describes the large plates.

The transfer of the task of keeping the plates is not explicit, but it is implicit in Alma₂’s question to Helaman₂: “Believest thou the words which I spake unto thee concerning those records which have been kept?” (Alma 45:2). This is made explicit in Alma 50:38: “Nevertheless, he [Nephihah] had refused Alma to take possession of those records and those things which were esteemed by Alma and his fathers to be most sacred; therefore Alma had conferred them upon his son, Helaman” (Alma 50:38).

Alma 45:1–19 focuses on Alma₂’s final acts. It is possible these events are at the beginning of Helaman₂’s record because they were not recorded in what Alma₂ wrote. It is also possible that Mormon wants to keep events in full years. Alma₂’s writings end with the end of the eighteenth year. At the beginning of the nineteenth is when the transfer or the records occurs. However, it is also the beginning of the Amalickiahite rebellion. That is the story that Mormon wants to include, and he keeps the whole year together by taking the ending of Alma₂’s life story and putting it in the chapter where the rest of the nineteenth year will be discussed.

The real focus of this chapter is the religious contention which lay at the heart of internal strife. Mormon notes that: “And it came to pass that as many as would not hearken to the words of Helaman and his brethren were gathered together against their brethren. And now behold, they were exceedingly wroth, insomuch that they were determined to slay them” (Alma 46:1–2). Right after the rejection of religious preaching, the religiously-connected political issues raise their head:

Now the leader of those who were wroth against their brethren was a large and a strong man; and his name was Amalickiah.³³⁸

³³⁸ See “Fitting Names into Narrative Types,” Chapter 5, for more information on the use of mlk-names, like Amalickiah.
And Amalickiah was desirous to be a king; and those people who were wroth were also desirous that he should be their king; and they were the greater part of them the lower judges of the land, and they were seeking for power.

And they had been led by the flatteries of Amalickiah, that if they would support him and establish him to be their king that he would make them rulers over the people. (Alma 46:3–5)

Chapter XXI (45–49) is the origin story of Amalickiah up through the end of the first Lamanite invasion he initiated. Mormon spends time on this story because it is a potent example of his contention that the most serious wars and contentions are those which may be traced to apostate Nephites. Amalickiah has a mlk-name and is therefore desirous of becoming a king. He is part of the mlk-ite division in Nephite society, and exacerbates that difference until it becomes first rebellion, and then full apostasy and dissension. Amalickiah becomes Lamanite, very clearly in this case focusing on the definition of a Lamanite as “one opposed to the Nephites.”

From a source standpoint, it also leads to the question of the source for the information in our modern chapter 47, which concerns the way in which Amalickiah obtained the kingship over the Lamanites. Mormon does not make the source explicit.

The chapter ends with the defeat of Amalickiah’s forces at the city of Noah. Mormon ends the chapter with: “And thus ended the nineteenth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi. Yea, and there was continual peace among them, and exceedingly great prosperity in the church because of their heed and diligence which they gave unto the word of God, which was declared unto them by Helaman, and Shiblon, and Corianton, and Ammon and his brethren, yea, and by all those who had been ordained by the holy order of God, being baptized unto repentance, and sent forth to preach among the people” (Alma 49:29–30).

Mormon emphasizes the year-based format that began in the book of Alma, then uses the “continual peace” to mark the lull between wars. In the lull, Mormon makes certain to note the continuation of the effort to preach the gospel. The chapter opened in the beginning of the nineteenth year and concludes with the end of the nineteenth year.

Alma Chapter XXII (50)

Although there is a topic change that influenced the change of chapters, it was also influenced by the ending of the nineteenth year (Alma 49:29) and the beginning of the more significant twentieth year (Alma 50:1). In
a Mesoamerican culture’s vigesimal system (base 20), the number 20 has much of the same connotations as the number 10 in our decimal system. Just as we have a term for a ten-year period, *decade*, the Maya had a term for a twenty-year period, *katun*. Additionally, important historical events were celebrated on five-year intervals. We will see Mormon using each of these set-numbers to make an end and beginning to chapters.

The event that ends the chapter is the change in chief judge from Nephihah to his son, Pahoran. The end of the chapter comes with the note that he “did commence his reign in the end of the twenty and fourth year” (Alma 50:40). Note that again we are at a five-year break.

**Alma Chapter XXIII (51)**

The chapter begins with “the commencement of the twenty and fifth year of the reign of the judges (Alma 51:1). Mormon creates a tie between the previous chapter and the new one by referencing an event from the end of the previous chapter. That chapter had told of the people of Morianton who had attempted to flee into the land northward. They were intercepted and brought back. In this chapter Mormon notes that the Nephites had established peace with the people of Morianton. However, “they did not long maintain an entire peace in the land” (Alma 51:2).

Once again, Mormon is more interested in conflict than in peace. In this chapter, we are introduced to the opposing factions, the king-men and the freemen. The parallel in the name is intentional. Mormon wants his readers to see these two groups as antithetical parallels. As noted in the section “Fitting Names into Narrative Types” in Chapter 5, it is possible that “king-men” is the translation of *mlk*-men. The implication is that there is a division among the Nephites that divides along the old Mulekite/Nephite lineages.

In addition to the conflict with the internal king-men, the Lamanites led by Amalickiah invade again. Teancum kills Amalickiah, which ends the war. That closing event is followed by the closing year. “And thus endeth the twenty and fifth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi” (Alma 51:37).

**Alma Chapter XXIV (52–53)**

Mormon worked within cultural standards that suggested he create his chapters in five-year increments. However, he was also constrained by the salient historical events, which may not have occurred in precise five-year blocks. The last time Mormon used the five-year block to create a chapter break, the fifth year began the new chapter. In this case, it ends the previous chapter. The concept is the same, but Mormon adapted his text to attempt to meet both requirements. In this case, the death of
Amalickiah that was discovered “on the first morning of the first month” of the twenty-sixth year (Alma 52:1) was an important beginning.

The chapter begins with Moroni’s actions, but ends with the description of the people of Ammon providing their two thousand young men as a fighting unit to assist in the war. That story comes without an easy transition within the chapter:

And now it came to pass that the armies of the Lamanites, on the west sea, south, while in the absence of Moroni on account of some intrigue amongst the Nephites, which caused dissensions amongst them, had gained some ground over the Nephites, yea, insomuch that they had obtained possession of a number of their cities in that part of the land.

And thus because of iniquity amongst themselves, yea, because of dissensions and intrigue among themselves they were placed in the most dangerous circumstances.

And now behold, I have somewhat to say concerning the people of Ammon, who, in the beginning, were Lamanites; but by Ammon and his brethren, or rather by the power and word of God, they had been converted unto the Lord; and they had been brought down into the land of Zarahemla, and had ever since been protected by the Nephites. (Alma 53:8–10)

There is no easy reason for the shift in topic, yet it is a completely different narrative thread. It did not create a chapter break at its inception, but the conclusion of the chapter comes when Mormon concludes this part of the story: “And now it came to pass that Helaman did march at the head of his two thousand stripling soldiers, to the support of the people in the borders of the land on the south by the west sea. And thus ended the twenty and eighth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi” (Alma 53:22–23). The year that closes the chapter is noted, and it is not a five-year block. Mormon followed history first, and the symbolic collection of years as a lower priority for creating a chapter break.

Alma Chapter XXV (54–55)

The chapter opens with the declaration of the year; the twenty-ninth. Mormon is linking his chapters as clearly consecutive in time. After a short introduction of a letter from the Lamanite leader Ammoron to Moroni requesting an exchange of prisoners, Mormon inserts a letter from Moroni to Ammoron. There is no header indicating a source change. As noted in the section on sources, it is difficult to know whether or not
these letters were included on the large plates, or whether the originals were kept in the archive. In order for the letters from any Nephite to have been included, a copy had to have been made for archival purposes before a letter was sent to the Lamanites. It is difficult to conceive of any scenario that would have returned those letters to the Nephites from the Lamanites. Perhaps the lack of a header may be used as a reason for suggesting the letters were copied onto the large plates.

The chapter ends after an exchange of letters that Moroni found unsatisfactory. Mormon describes the subterfuge that Moroni used to free his captives and capture the Lamanite guards. The chapter ends with the preparations for the next phase of the war, and specifically ends with “thus ended the twenty and ninth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi” (Alma 55:35).

Alma Chapter XXVI (56–58)

The chapter begins in the thirtieth year. Since Mormon is telling a continuous story, there is no particular reason to have a new chapter here, save that it allows him to create a five-year block. At this point, Mormon inserts a letter from Helaman 2 to Moroni. It will tell of events beginning four years earlier, in the twenty-sixth year (Alma 56:7). Mormon had covered the events of the twenty-sixth year in chapter XXIV (52–53). One of the events covered in that chapter is the same story with which Helaman 2 begins his letter — the story of the people of Ammon and their sons.

This repetition tells us a few things about the way Mormon is constructing his text. He is using the large plates and their strict chronological framework. As he comes to events, he notes them in the correct year. When the story becomes complicated by multiple threads of events happening at similar times in different fronts of the war, Mormon uses the timing of the main story to create the chapter breaks.

This is evident in the story of the stripling warriors. Mormon told that story in a chapter that began with the twenty-sixth year (chapter XXIV (52–53)). While the story of the formation of the stripling warriors is in that chapter, it isn’t assigned a particular date. At the end of the chapter, Mormon provides information that might be confusing. He notes: “And

339. Alternately, this may also suggest that Mormon, or Helaman 2 as the large plate historian, created the letters from what they should have said. That would not be unusual for an ancient author, similar to the recreation of dialogue that would have been impossible to record. There is no way to know whether we are dealing with a copy of the letter which was sent or the artistic license that created the letter.
now it came to pass that Helaman did march at the head of his two thousand stripling soldiers, to the support of the people in the borders of the land on the south by the west sea. And thus ended the twenty and eighth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi” (Alma 53:22–23).

Helaman, marching with the two thousand stripling soldiers comes immediately before the closing of the twenty-eighth year. That makes it appear that this story took place in the twenty-eighth year. Not until Alma 56:7 do we learn from Helaman’s letter to Moroni that they began in the twenty-sixth year. Helaman specifically says: “But behold, here is one thing in which we may have great joy. For behold, in the twenty and sixth year, I, Helaman, did march at the head of these two thousand young men to the city of Judea, to assist Antipus, whom ye had appointed a leader over the people of that part of the land” (Alma 56:9). By the end of the twenty-eighth year, the young men had already been part of the important battle in which they suffered injury but no losses (see Alma 57:4–5 for the entry of the twenty-eighth year after those events).

Mormon is working with different threads of stories. He writes the beginning of the Helaman thread as it occurs in the strict chronological framework, but the ending of that story in chapter XXIV (52–53) gives a year two years later than the events described. The end of the year comes so that Mormon can continue the Moroni thread in its correct time sequence. The entry of the letter from Helaman to Moroni is provided in the correct timeframe of the main story (Moroni’s thread), but it provides the flashback with details and the correct dates.

This dual presence of the beginning of the story of the sons of the people of Ammon raises questions about the sources that Mormon worked with. He might have had some indication of the story in the appropriate timeframe, and that was the reason he added it in the earlier chapter. However, it is also possible the story wasn’t available on the large plates, and Mormon gave a synopsis in the appropriate timeframe, and the details when the letter was received (and entered in the year received). There is currently no good way to resolve the question.

The chapter ends with the end of the letter: “And now, behold, I close mine epistle. I am Helaman, the son of Alma” (Alma 58:41).

Alma Chapter XXVII (59–60)
The previous year began with the statement that it was “in the commencement of the thirtieth year of the reign of the judges” (Alma 56:1). The beginning of this chapter (XXVII) notes that the events continue to be in the thirtieth year (Alma 59:1). This confirms that the
This chapter will begin with narration, but also include an epistle from Moroni to Pahoran, the Nephite Chief judge. The ending of that letter creates the end of the chapter.

**Alma Chapter XXVIII (61)**

This chapter consists of two letters, with minimum narration to provide context. Pahoran writes to Moroni and Moroni writes again to Pahoran. The chapter ends with the end of the letter. The fact that there are two letters in the same chapter indicates that the end of a letter was not a firm reason to end a chapter, but when the end of a letter ended a particular narrative thread, then the end of the letter became the catalyst to end the chapter.

**Alma Chapter XXIX (62)**

This chapter picks up the narrative of the action that was the result of the exchange of letters. A modern writer might have had all writers and the action that resulted from them in the same chapter. Mormon’s reasons for ending chapters were clearly different from modern expectations.

This chapter will see the end of the long thread of this war. It ends in the thirty-first year (Alma 62:39). After the detailed events of the thirty to thirty-first years, Mormon rapidly narrates the end of the conflict. It ends with Helaman’s death in the thirty-fifth year. It appears that Mormon had told the story he wanted to tell and filled in the events of the next four years to end on a fifth-year marker. That Helaman died in that year likely influenced the choice to end on the thirty-fifth rather than the thirty-fourth.

**Alma Chapter XXX (63)**

The final chapter of the book of Alma begins with the transfer of the records from Helaman to his brother Shiblon (Alma 63:1). Mormon keeps the events rolling through the years until he reached the thirty-ninth year, when Shiblon died and passed the records to his nephew, Helaman. The ending of the chapter, and book, is: “And thus ended the thirty and ninth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi. And thus ended the account of Alma, and Helaman his son, and also Shiblon, who was his son” (Alma 63:16–17).

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340. The way John Gilbert used commas in this verse might make it appear that Shiblon was Helaman’s son. He was Helaman’s brother and Alma’s son.
The book of Helaman is the dynastic record of Helaman, son of Helaman. Helaman will not become chief judge until Helaman 2:2. I believe that the events that are listed in the book of Helaman from the beginning of the book until the appointment of Helaman as the chief judge are in the book of Helaman because it was important to Mormon to start the book of Helaman at the fortieth year. Thus, the final chapter of Alma ends in the thirty-ninth year to accommodate the beginning of the new book in the fortieth year, even though Helaman was not chief judge when the beginning events are narrated. This is Mormon’s ending and not a representation of how the large plate text ended the book of Alma.
Chapter 15: Book of Helaman

Helaman Chapter I (1–2) [Book Header]

As a new book, there is a synoptic header:

An account of the Nephites. Their wars and contentions, and their dissensions. And also the prophecies of many holy prophets, before the coming of Christ, according to the records of Helaman, who was the son of Helaman, and also according to the records of his sons, even down to the coming of Christ. And also many of the Lamanites are converted. An account of their conversion. An account of the righteousness of the Lamanites, and the wickedness and abominations of the Nephites, according to the record of Helaman and his sons, even down to the coming of Christ, which is called the book of Helaman, and so forth.

Mormon must have been the author of this header, since it discusses the coming of Christ, which would not have been known to the contemporary recordkeeper. As with other books, it provides a preview of the contents. In this case, I suggest that we can see that Mormon wrote this header before he wrote the text and that he wrote it from his outline. He notes that the chapter will speak of the mission to the Lamanites and their conversion. This occurs in Helaman 5 (part of chapter II). “The righteousness of the Lamanites, and the wickedness and abominations of the Nephites” is covered in chapter 6 (also part of chapter II). Chapter III (7–10) will begin with a header suggesting it is a new source. This follows the form seen at the beginning of the book of Alma, where the synoptic header dealt only with the material from the large plates.

The fortieth year represents two katuns. That number was significant enough that Mormon elected to start the new book with that date, even though the event that created the new dynastic name came two years later. Mormon works with history but also works his history into the annalistic framework, paying attention to significant sets of years (multiples of
five, with multiples of twenty being the most important). In this case, it appears the desire to mark the culturally significant forty years altered the information transferred from the large plate text to Mormon’s plates.

The name of the books on the large plates corresponds to changes in dynasty. At the end of the book of Mosiah, we have the information about who the next ruler would be prior to the beginning of that ruler’s dynastic book (Alma). At the end of the book of Alma, however, we don’t get anything about the next ruler. The actual information associated with the next dynastic ruler, Helaman, does not appear until he is seated in the forty-second year. Thus, the first two years of the book of Helaman don’t really apply to the book of Helaman. It is probable that information was on the book of Alma on the large plates but that Mormon shifted the location of the information so he could highlight a beginning with the fortieth year.341

The book of Helaman also begins with the introduction of Kishkumen and his band, later known as Gadiantons. Kishkumen is clearly intended to be seen as a Jaredite name, and the connection between a Jaredite-descendant and a secret combination is intentional. It is a theme Mormon will develop from this point to the end of his work and which his son Moroni will also emphasize in the translation of the plates of Ether.

The end of the chapter comes with the events of the forty-second year, which included the seating of Helaman, the death of Kishkumen, and the survival of the Gadiantons. Throughout Mormon’s text, alternative political parties are known for their first founder. For example, Alma 2:11 notes: “Now the people of Amlici were distinguished by the name of Amlici, being called Amlicites.” Similarly, we find in Alma 46:28 that those who followed Amalickiah were called Amalickiahites. The basic naming precedent suggests that we might have expected Kishkumenites — but we get Gadiantons.

Kishkumen might have been a personal name, but the fact that it is a Jaredite name makes it at least suspicious. Understanding that Mormon inserts names for narrative functions, we can recognize anyone with a Jaredite name as a person of questionable character at the very least. Further, the Book of Mormon Onomasticon provides a tempting etymology that might help us understand why Kishkumen’s band becomes Gadiantons. John W. Welch suggested that the Gad-root of Gadianton might derive from the Hebrew for band/bandits, gedud, or a gdd root. The early spelling in the original manuscript is Gaddianton, with a doubled ‘d’.342

341. It is possible that I learned this from Mark Wright.
The ending of the word parallels similar Jaredite names with an -ianton ending. A tempting textual meaning would be something like “Jaredite Robbers.” Why then would Mormon name them Gadiantons instead of Kishkumenites? Mormon wanted a generic title that could be used to cover the many times he mentions northern destroyers. The differences in the timing of their appearances tells us they could not have been a single historical group. Nevertheless, Mormon intends that his readers see them as a continuing influence with inherited ties to the Jaredites — both groups representing secret combinations that destroyed nations.

Mormon makes clear his intent for the Gadianton subtheme in the final verses of this first chapter:

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 2:12–14)

At this early point, Mormon is telling his readers that it will be the Gadiantons who will “prove the overthrow, yea, almost the entire destruction of the people of Nephi.” This becomes one of his important subthemes, beginning with the book of Helaman.343

Helaman Chapter II (3–6)

This chapter begins in the forty-third year. That is not a year that fits into the pattern of multiples of five, so something else created the ending of the previous chapter. The major event of the forty-second year was the installation of Helaman, and the chief judge, and that beginning of the new dynasty appears to have been the reason for the close of the previous chapter. Mormon’s focus on contentions and wars is underscored in the first three verses of chapter II (3–6):

And now it came to pass in the forty and third year of the reign of the judges, there was no contention among the people of Nephi save it were a little pride which was in the church, which

343. For a more in-depth analysis of the way that Mormon uses the theme of the Gadianton robbers, see Gardner, Traditions of the Fathers, 325–42.
did cause some little dissensions among the people, which affairs were settled in the ending of the forty and third year.

And there was no contention among the people in the forty and fourth year; neither was there much contention in the forty and fifth year. (Helaman 3:1–2)

When there are no contentions, Mormon simply marks the passing years. When he finally gets to a major contention, he begins the intended story of that contention. Importantly, however, Mormon inserts a significant aside before returning to the story of wars and contentions in Helaman 3:17. This insertion appears to be completely unrelated to Mormon’s topic, as rather than wars and contentions he has been setting up, it speaks of Nephites who left the land of Zarahemla and traveled north. The aside begins in Helaman 3:3: “And it came to pass in the forty and sixth, yea, there was much contention and many dissensions; in the which there were an exceedingly great many who departed out of the land of Zarahemla, and went forth unto the land northward to inherit the land.”

It might be argued that Mormon was simply following the archived years and enters this information because it was on the plates. Mormon himself tells us this isn’t the case. Mormon knows he has departed from his story. He specifically says, in verse 17, “And now I return again to mine account; therefore, what I have spoken had passed after there had been great contentions, and disturbances, and wars, and dissentions, among the people of Nephi” (Helaman 3:17). In the structure of repetitive resumption, Mormon left his narrative with “much contentions and many dissensions” and returns to “great contentions, and disturbances, and wars, and dissentions.” To make certain we know the intervening text was an aside, Mormon is explicit in telling his readers that he must return “to mine account.” Having discerned that we have an aside, we need to understand what triggered it, and why that trigger produced this particular aside. The trigger is very clearly the increase in contentions and dissentions. That marked the departure and the return. The story was therefore intended to speak of contentions and dissentions. The actual aside speaks of Nephites who travel “unto the land northward to inherit the land” (Helaman 3:3). What is most remarkable about this description is that Mormon is more detailed in his description of the land northward than in any other passage in his abridgement. The details are amazingly precise:

And they did travel to an exceedingly great distance, insomuch that they came to large bodies of water and many rivers.
Yea, and even they did spread forth into all parts of the land, into whatever parts it had not been rendered desolate and without timber, because of the many inhabitants who had before inherited the land.

And now no part of the land was desolate, save it were for timber; but because of the greatness of the destruction of the people who had before inhabited the land it was called desolate.

And there being but little timber upon the face of the land, nevertheless the people who went forth became exceedingly expert in the working of cement; therefore they did build houses of cement, in the which they did dwell.

And it came to pass that they did multiply and spread, and did go forth from the land southward to the land northward, and did spread insomuch that they began to cover the face of the whole earth, from the sea south to the sea north, from the sea west to the sea east.

And the people who were in the land northward did dwell in tents, and in houses of cement, and they did suffer whatsoever tree should spring up upon the face of the land that it should grow up, that in time they might have timber to build their houses, yea, their cities, and their temples, and their synagogues, and their sanctuaries, and all manner of their buildings.

And it came to pass as timber was exceedingly scarce in the land northward, they did send forth much by the way of shipping.

And thus they did enable the people in the land northward that they might build many cities, both of wood and of cement.

And it came to pass that there were many of the people of Ammon, who were Lamanites by birth, did also go forth into this land.

And now there are many records kept of the proceedings of this people, by many of this people, which are particular and very large, concerning them.

But behold, a hundredth part of the proceedings of this people, yea, the account of the Lamanites and of the Nephites,
and their wars, and contentions, and dissensions, and their preaching, and their prophecies, and their shipping and their building of ships, and their building of temples, and of synagogues and their sanctuaries, and their righteousness, and their wickedness, and their murders, and their robberies, and their plundering, and all manner of abominations and whoredoms, cannot be contained in this work.

But behold, there are many books and many records of every kind, and they have been kept chiefly by the Nephites.

And they have been handed down from one generation to another by the Nephites, even until they have fallen into transgression and have been murdered, plundered, and hunted, and driven forth, and slain, and scattered upon the face of the earth, and mixed with the Lamanites until they are no more called the Nephites, becoming wicked, and wild, and ferocious, yea, even becoming Lamanites.

And now I return again to mine account; therefore, what I have spoken had passed after there had been great contentions, and disturbances, and wars, and dissensions, among the people of Nephi. (Helaman 3:4–17)

I have italicized some of the more interesting details. One of the most important phrases is “because of the greatness of the destruction of the people who had before inhabited the land it was called desolate” (Helaman 3:6). The land called Desolation was “the land which had been peopled and been destroyed, of whose bones we have spoken, which was discovered by the people of Zarahemla, it being the place of their first landing” (Alma 22:30). Mormon has these peoples in what he deems Jaredite lands, and he describes the land in sufficient detail that he expected that his readers might understand that land northward as the location of the Gadiantons of Mormon’s time.344

Mormon’s aside was triggered by increasing warfare. That suggested the need to more tightly associate the increasing warfare from Helaman’s time with what Mormon saw as the increased warfare and destruction from his own time. Therefore, Mormon creates a link whereby dissenting Nephites (who were always dangerous enemies) and even Gadiantons might go north. In the north, those traditions (recorded in books) could

344. Gardner, Traditions of the Fathers, 325–42.
be “handed down from one generation to another by the Nephites, even until they have fallen into transgression” (Helaman 3:16).

The reign of Helaman3 was short. After only eleven years as chief judge, Helaman3 dies in the fifty-third year (Helaman 3:37). His son Nephi2 is seated as the chief judge. The majority of the book of Helaman has little to do with Helaman3 at all. This is another case that highlights the change of book names as dynastic changes rather than any connection between the text and the major recordkeeper in the text.

Interestingly, the book of Helaman repeats the abdication of a chief judge (Nephi2, in Helaman 5:1) who appears to retain the records and continue to write on them. In this case, the removal of the book of Helaman from the Nephite ruling line may have been Nephi2’s choice (as opposed to the chief judge’s refusal of the records with Alma2). In 3 Nephi 1:2–3 we learn that Nephi3 received “the plates of brass, and all the records which had been kept.” The cause was the increasing iniquity of the Nephite government:

For as their laws and their governments were established by the voice of the people, and they who chose evil were more numerous than they who chose good, therefore they were ripening for destruction, for the laws had become corrupted.

Yea, and this was not all; they were a stiffnecked people, insomuch that they could not be governed by the law nor justice, save it were to their destruction.

And it came to pass that Nephi had become weary because of their iniquity; and he yielded up the judgment-seat, and took it upon him to preach the word of God all the remainder of his days, and his brother Lehi also, all the remainder of his days. (Helaman 5:2–4)

Mormon emphasizes that the Nephites were “ripening for destruction” when “they who chose evil were more numerous than they who chose good.” As with Mormon’s description of Noah’s city, it is probable that those who lived in Zarahemla and its territories were happy enough with the change. After all, the majority had made the choice. Given the types of tensions that prevailed in the land of Zarahemla, it is also probable that we are seeing the ascendance of the more apostate side of the Nephite unrest.345

The shift from official Nephite political record to a record outside of the political realm also appears to shift the content of the plate record. Unlike the book of Alma where a header indicated a separate record upon which Alma$_2$ recorded his preaching, we have the same shift in content but no header in Helaman to indicate a change of source. Without any indication that Mormon changed to a different source, we must suppose he continued to use the large plates as a source for Helaman chapter II (3–6). In fact, the header for the book of Helaman strongly suggests that the material for chapter II (3–6) was contained on the large plates, since the headers appear to provide synopses for only the large plate material.

What changes in Helaman 5:5–52 is that we get a record of Nephi$_2$ and Lehi$_3$’s preaching. This type of material does not typically appear on the large plates. Mormon has entered such information from secondary sources before, but since the Nephite government was in apostasy, Nephi$_2$ appears to have begun to use the official plates as though they were a personal record.

The chapter ends with a recurrence of the theme of the Gadiantons which had closed chapter I. It also reprises the phrase from Helaman 5:2 that the Nephites were “ripening for destruction.” Here it becomes “ripening for an everlasting destruction” (Helaman 6:30). As is typical of text taken from the large plates, the chapter ends noting the year; “the sixty and eighth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi” (Helaman 6:41)

**Helaman Chapter III (7–10) [Has Header]**

The question of source in Helaman II (3–6) is made more difficult by the header at the beginning of chapter III (7–10):

> The Prophecy of Nephi, the Son of Helaman — God threatens the people of Nephi that he will visit them in his anger, to their utter destruction except they repent of their wickedness. God smiteth the people of Nephi with pestilence; they repent and turn unto him. Samuel, a Lamanite, prophesies unto the Nephites.

The presence of a chapter heading means that Mormon has changed sources. There is every reason to believe it has occurred again. The printer’s manuscript separates “The prophecy of Nephi, the Son of Helaman” as a title, with the rest of the text coming as the synoptic header below it.347

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346. I would argue that the blessings to Helaman, ’s sons in Helaman 5:5–52 is also anomalous for the type of material typically on the large plates.

I suggest this may have been the title of the text Mormon used. Since it wasn’t part of the plates, it wasn’t a “book of Nephi” but rather a separate manuscript. The Prophecy of Nephi was the title of the manuscript, much as “Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs,” or “Ladder of Jacob” were names of manuscripts considered to be Old Testament pseudepigrapha. Shifting to a new source allows Mormon to insert more material about preaching the gospel rather than simply concentrating on wars and contentions.

Another indication that this is a separate source is the presence of a long sermon. The large plates do not appear to have included such information unless they represented an act of the ruler — and Nephi₂ is not a ruler at this time. Nevertheless, this will be a somewhat problematic source because it will mix stylistic elements from the large plates with the characteristic more personal information contained on the separate records. I will revisit that question in the analysis of the next chapter.

Mormon begins with the date. Where the previous chapter “ended the sixty and eighth year,” (Helaman 6:41), chapter III (7–10) begins “in the sixty and ninth year” (Helaman 7:1), not at the beginning of it. The chapter will end with the seventy-second year (Helaman 10:19). The seventieth year is not mentioned. In this chapter, Mormon reinforces his theme of destruction by Gadiantons, both in the Nephite people of Nephi₂’s time as well as the eventual destruction in Mormon’s time. He accomplishes this by telling the story of Nephi₂’s unsuccessful preaching in the land northward:

For he had been forth among the people who were in the land northward, and did preach the word of God unto them, and did prophesy many things unto them;

And they did reject all his words, insomuch that he could not stay among them, but returned again unto the land of his nativity.

And seeing the people in a state of such awful wickedness, and those Gadianton robbers filling the judgment-seats — having usurped the power and authority of the land; laying aside the commandments of God, and not in the least aright before him; doing no justice unto the children of men;

Condemning the righteous because of their righteousness; letting the guilty and the wicked go unpunished because of their money; and moreover to be held in office at the head of government, to rule and do according to their wills, that they might get gain and glory of the world, and, moreover, that
they might the more easily commit adultery, and steal, and kill, and do according to their own wills. (Helaman 7:2–5)

Mormon’s aside in Helaman 3:3–17 took Nephite apostasy into the symbolically Jaredite lands northward. Nephi₂ preaches to those in the land northward, textually suggested to have been apostate Nephites. They refuse him, and he returns to find the Gadiantons have taken over the Nephite nation. Mormon presents the Gadianton “success” in destroying the Nephite government prior to the Savior’s arrival in Bountiful, which will become the parallel to the destruction of Mormon’s Nephites at Cumorah.

The new record allows Mormon to enter the story of Nephi₂’s direct conflict with the ruling Gadiantons. So we will not miss it, Mormon makes certain to include Nephi₂’s exclamation: “Yea, wo be unto you because of that great abomination which has come among you; and ye have united yourselves unto it, yea, to that secret band which was established by Gadianton!” (Helaman 7:25).

The chapter ends with the Lord’s blessing/discourse to Nephi₂. There is no Amen following that information, but Mormon clearly ends on the Lord’s words. Without the Amen, however, the specific ending simply provides the date: “And thus ended the seventy and first year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi” (Helaman 10:19).

**Helaman Chapter IV (11–12)**

The contents of chapter III (7–10) are what might be expected of a separate record, based on the example we have for other inserted records that were not part of the large plate tradition, such as the record of Zeniff and Alma₂’s personal record. It was a very personal record and had year markers only at the beginning and end of the chapter. Chapter IV (11–12) feels quite different. Although there is some content that must have come from Nephi₂’s personal record, most of the chapter could have come from the large plates. One of the indicators of Mormon’s use of the large plates is the prevalence of year markers. Where chapter III (7–10) had only two, chapter IV (11–12) has fifteen (from the seventy-second through the eighty-fifth).³⁴⁸ The presence of so many years suggests that we are seeing the annalistic approach most typical of the large plates.

The problem in discerning the difference is that Nephi₂ is keeping the large plates as well as (apparently) a separate record. We will see this duality.

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of records again in 3 Nephi. It is possible that Mormon gives us our answer to what is happening both here and later in 3 Nephi: “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 engraved on the plates which were called the plates of Nephi” (3 Nephi 5:9–10).

Having the plates of Nephi as a tradition, and then a book of Nephi on them can create some confusion, especially since Mormon appears to indicate that the record of Nephi₂ is somehow “shorter but true,” and yet “was engraved on the plates which were called the plates of Nephi.” Both Nephi₁ and Nephi₂ kept the large plates, and it is possible that while they created a separation in the type of content they were recording (marked with a header in the book of Helaman), they may have actually engraved the separate record onto the large plates. Since they had them available, it is a possibility that can explain the presence of the annalistic framework alongside the more personal content not typically seen when the government-related archivist kept the plates of Nephi.

Unfortunately, there is no clear way to know from what source Mormon took the events in chapter IV (11–12). It is equally possible that the material came from the large plates. The fact that the same person was recording on both and that the person was separated from the ruling line, makes the normal distinctions ambiguous.

An interesting statement raises the issue of the nature of Mormon’s copying and of recorded sermons or conversations. After the drought had effected the desired repentance, Nephi₂ prays to lift the drought. He says: “O Lord, behold this people repenteth; and they have swept away the band of Gadianton from amongst them insomuch that they have become extinct, and they have concealed their secret plans in the earth” (Helaman 11:10). The presence of the phrase “band of Gadianton” should confirm that this is not a text from an official source. If we had the record of a Gadianton-dominated government, we would not expect to see this phrase.

Additionally, this phrase highlights Mormon’s program of emphasizing the destructiveness of the Gadiantons. If Mormon did not assign that name, it was one he used for his own purposes. This raises the important question of whether or not the phrase “band of Gadianton” was written on the plates or was Mormon’s insertion. The answer is complicated if one assumes the absolute accuracy of everything in the Book of Mormon text. I suggest the evidence is that Mormon used history to support his thesis, and this is another example of where Mormon’s narrative program influences the way he reported history.
One problem of recorded dialogue in ancient records is that there was no way a live speech could have been recorded. Thus, all dialogue in the Book of Mormon is necessarily created after-the-fact. The only question is who created the dialogue. In some cases, such as Alma\textsubscript{2}’s personal record, it appears that Mormon copied much of the dialogue from what Alma\textsubscript{2} wrote. However, there are other occasions where it is equally possible that Mormon created the dialogue. The most conservative solution would be to suppose that Mormon copied dialogue when it was in his source and met his editorial needs. However, there is no reason to believe Mormon did not also create dialogue (or, as in this case, modify dialogue) to meet his editorial needs.\textsuperscript{349}

Mormon creatively ties his villains together in a fascinating series of explanations:

And it came to pass that in the eightieth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi, there were a certain number of the dissenters from the people of Nephi, who had some years before gone over unto the Lamanites, and taken upon themselves the name of Lamanites, and also a certain number who were real descendants of the Lamanites, being stirred up to anger by them, or by those dissenters, therefore they commenced a war with their brethren.

And they did commit murder and plunder; and then they would retreat back into the mountains, and into the wilderness and secret places, hiding themselves that they could not be discovered, receiving daily an addition to their numbers, inasmuch as there were dissenters that went forth unto them.

And thus in time, yea, even in the space of not many years, they became an exceedingly great band of robbers; and they did search out all the secret plans of Gadianton; and thus they became robbers of Gadianton.

Now behold, these robbers did make great havoc, yea, even great destruction among the people of Nephi, and also among the people of the Lamanites. (Helaman 11:24–27)

In verse 24, Mormon describes a number of Nephite dissenters who go to the Lamanites. They call themselves Lamanites, but they are really

anti-Nephites. The stir up trouble such that even the “real descendants of the Lamanites” were stirred to anger and to wage war with the Nephites. These apostate Nephites and the Lamanites they stirred to anger “in time, yea, even in the space of not many years, they became an exceedingly great band of robbers; and they did search out all the secret plans of Gadianton; and thus they became robbers of Gadianton.” Mormon thereby creates Gadiantons from apostate Nephites.

Mormon notes: “And it came to pass in the eighty and fifth year they did wax stronger and stronger in their pride, and in their wickedness; and thus they were ripening again for destruction. And thus ended the eighty and fifth year” (Helaman 11:37–38). If we had not been sufficiently warned that the Nephites were heading for destruction when the Gadiantons show up, Mormon makes it explicit. Then, from here to the end of the original chapter (all of our chapter 12), we have Mormon’s moralizing on the events he has been describing. Mormon lays out his vision of one of the major causes of the Nephite downfall:

And thus we can behold how false, and also the unsteadiness of the hearts of the children of men; yea, we can see the Lord in his great infinite goodness doth bless and prosper those who put their trust in him.

Yea, and we may see at the very time when he doth prosper his people, yea, in the increase of their fields, their flocks and their herds, and in gold, and in silver, and in all manner of precious things of every kind and art; sparing their lives, and delivering them out of the hands of their enemies; softening the hearts of their enemies that they should not declare wars against them; yea, and in fine, doing all things for the welfare and happiness of his people; yea, then is the time that they do harden their hearts, and do forget the Lord their God, and do trample under their feet the Holy One — yea, and this because of their ease, and their exceedingly great prosperity.

And thus we see that except the Lord doth chasten his people with many afflictions, yea, except he doth visit them with death, and with terror, and with famine, and with all manner of pestilence, they will not remember him. (Helaman 12:1–3)

He ends this inserted personal sermon by pleading:

Therefore, blessed are they who will repent and hearken unto the voice of the Lord their God; for these are they that shall be saved.
And may God grant, in his great fulness, that men might be brought unto repentance and good works, that they might be restored unto grace for grace, according to their works.

And I would that all men might be saved. But we read that in the great and last day there are some who shall be cast out, yea, who shall be cast off from the presence of the Lord;

Yea, who shall be consigned to a state of endless misery, fulfilling the words which say: They that have done good shall have everlasting life; and they that have done evil shall have everlasting damnation. And thus it is. Amen. (Helaman 12:23–26)

The testificatory Amen creates the end of the chapter.

Helaman Chapter V (13–16) [Has Header]

Chapter V (13–16) begins with a header: “The prophecy of Samuel, the Lamanite, to the Nephites.” As with other internal chapter headers, this should indicate a different source. Mormon gives us no indication of who wrote the information. Apparent from the text is that it was not Samuel. There is no indication that he wrote it or how it would have ended up in Nephite hands had he done so. Something of the prophecy of Samuel was written on some type of Nephite record, which may be discerned from the conversation between Christ and the disciples:

And it came to pass that he said unto Nephi: Bring forth the record which ye have kept.

And when Nephi had brought forth the records, and laid them before him, he cast his eyes upon them and said:

Verily I say unto you, I commanded my servant Samuel, the Lamanite, that he should testify unto this people, that at the day that the Father should glorify his name in me that there were many saints who should arise from the dead, and should appear unto many, and should minister unto them. And he said unto them: Was it not so?

And his disciples answered him and said: Yea, Lord, Samuel did prophesy according to thy words, and they were all fulfilled.

And Jesus said unto them: How be it that ye have not written this thing, that many saints did arise and appear unto many and did minister unto them?
And it came to pass that Nephi remembered that this thing had not been written.

And it came to pass that Jesus commanded that it should be written; therefore it was written according as he commanded. (3 Nephi 23:7–13)

We learn that something of the record of Samuel was kept on records Nephi 1 had been keeping. Since the chapter containing the prophecy of Samuel appears in the book of Helaman, it must have been recorded on some record Nephi 2 kept and passed to his son Nephi 3. That record appears to have contained many essentials but missed the fulfillment of the prophecy of the dead rising from the graves. Christ commanded that it be written, and it was edited into the record after the fact. The record that Samuel said it is found in Helaman 14:25. Christ did not require that the prophecy be added but rather the fulfilment of the prophecy. Therefore, what Mormon enters into his story may have been the very story that was on the plates. As with the prophecy of Nephi, it is possible it was entered onto the large plates but under a header to separate it from the normal records kept on the large plates.

The marking of the year (eighty-sixth year, Helaman 13:1) suggests, as it did for the prophecy of Nephi, that it may have been added into the large plates. At the very least, Mormon made sure to continue the dating because he is arriving very close to the time of Christ’s birth. The marking of the years is important to show how the timing of Christ’s birth fulfilled both Lehi’s 600-year prophecy and Samuel’s five-year prophecy.

After recording Samuel’s prophecy and providing the information that he escaped the Nephites who tried to capture him, Mormon closes the story with “and thus were the affairs of the people; and thus ended the eighty and sixth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi” (Helaman 16:8–9). There is no chapter break with the end of Samuel’s sayings. Mormon completes the basic history running quickly through the eighty-seventh, eighty-eighth, and the eighty-ninth year. For the ninetieth year Mormon sets up the early chapters of 3 Nephi by describing the increasing denial of prophecy:

That it is not reasonable that such a being as a Christ shall come; if so, and he be the Son of God, the Father of heaven and of earth, as it has been spoken, why will he not show himself unto us as well as unto them who shall be at Jerusalem?

Yea, why will he not show himself in this land as well as in the land of Jerusalem?
But behold, we know that this is a wicked tradition, which has been handed down unto us by our fathers, to cause us that we should believe in some great and marvelous thing which should come to pass, but not among us, but in a land which is far distant, a land which we know not; therefore they can keep us in ignorance, for we cannot witness with our own eyes that they are true. (Helaman 16:18–20)

Mormon ends the book: “And thus ended the ninetieth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi. And thus ended the book of Helaman, according to the record of Helaman and his sons” (Helaman 16:24–25). Only Helaman, and Nephi, kept the records, but Lehi is included as an important player in some of the stories. Perhaps the reference is to his presence in the stories rather than imply more than the two recordkeepers.
Chapter 16: Book of 3 Nephi

3 Nephi I (1–2)

The book of Nephi, son of Nephi, who was the son of Helaman, son of Helaman, who was the son of Alma, son of Alma, and named for Nephi the son of Lehi is the culmination of Mormon’s structural art. In this chapter he pulls his various threads together to highlight his essential message. The first structural way in which he indicates this is his message is that this particular book of Nephi was probably never a book on the large plates. Where Mormon has allowed the organization of the large plates to dictate the structure of his own work up to this point, he departs from the model and creates a different type of entry.

The next way in which Mormon indicates this is something new and important comes in the first verse: “Now it came to pass that the ninety and first year had passed away and it was six hundred years from the time that Lehi left Jerusalem; and it was in the year that Lachoneus was the chief judge and the governor over the land” (3 Nephi 1:1). We learn several things in this verse. First, the record is still coming from outside the political line. Neither Nephi, or Nephi, were part of the government. Telling his readers that Lachoneus is the chief judge not only places the story in its correct political timeline, it emphasizes that it is a story that comes from outside of the political line.

Next, Mormon makes certain the story takes place in the correct Nephite year for prophecy but ties it to the older method of counting. Mormon is telling us this is something that fulfills prophecy, and while it occurs within the dating of the current calendar, it transcends its own time. Mormon foreshadows the coming of the Messiah by noting that it was 600 years from the time Lehi left Jerusalem. He does not tell his

350. I am rephrasing the title and the header, which I suggest was the original title. See the section “Mormon’s Named Books and Their Sources” in Chapter 3.
351. Discussed in the section “Mormon’s Named Books and Their Sources,” Chapter 3.
readers what this means, apparently assuming they will understand the reference (reinforcing the probability that the prophecy was in and emphasized in the lost book of Lehi). The meticulous counting of years will culminate in fulfilled prophecy in this book.

Finally, Mormon has been pursuing multiple themes as he created his story. The essential religious message has been the redeeming mission of Christ, which will be displayed in dramatic fashion. He has also been telling a tale of Nephite fluctuation between righteousness and apostasy. The themes of excessive pride and the destructiveness of those who apostatize are also emphasized before the signs of Christ’s birth, and then after a brief righteous respite, there is a return to full apostasy prior to the signs of Christ’s death and his subsequent appearance — a visible atonement after the physical devastation of the land. Of course, Nephites are not destroyed unless the Gadiantons are involved, and Mormon makes certain we know they are the entity responsible for the demise of the Nephite government.

Following the lead of Hollywood movies, we may suggest that 3 Nephi is “based on actual events.” Mormon, however, is not content to have the events speak for themselves. He puts words in their mouths, carefully lines them up on the set, and tells the essential story his way, and for his purposes.

Mormon set up the Nephite apostasy at the end of the book of Helaman. At the beginning of the book of 3 Nephi, we have Christ’s first redemptive act, one accomplished by his birth in the 92nd year of the reign of the judges: “Now it came to pass that there was a day set apart by the unbelievers, that all those who believed in those traditions should be put to death except the sign should come to pass, which had been given by Samuel the prophet” (3 Nephi 1:9). The threat was death, but Christ provided life by fulfilling the prophecy on the eve of the day set for the believer’s execution.

There was a respite for a while, when they “began to have peace in the land” (3 Nephi 1:23). As with all times of continual peace in the Mormon’s text, it didn’t last long. The very next year (93rd) “did also pass away in peace, save it were for the Gadianton robbers, who dwelt upon the mountains, who did infest the land” (3 Nephi 1:27). The 94th year saw many Nephite dissenters join with the Gadiantons (3 Nephi 1:28). Interestingly, the Lamanites also join with the Gadiantons, but once again, apostate Nephites lead the Lamanites astray: “And there was also a cause of much sorrow among the Lamanites; for behold, they had many children who did grow up and began to wax strong in years, that they became for themselves, and were
led away by some who were Zoramites, by their lyings and their flattering words, to join those Gadianton robbers” (3 Nephi 1:29).

Mormon records a shift in the way the Nephites recorded time in 3 Nephi 2:8 when “the Nephites began to reckon their time from this period when the sign was given, or from the coming of Christ.”352 The rest of the chapter describes the increasing tensions with the Gadiantons and the eventual breakout of war.

This chapter does not end with any of the typical markers of Mormon’s chapters. There is no date that closes it. There is no sermon with an Amen. There is nothing that appears to have created the need to end the chapter, save that the next chapter will begin with Mormon quoting a letter that Lachoneus, the chief judge, received from the leader of the Gadiantons, Giddianhi. It would appear that Mormon used that event and quoted letter as a beginning, and that decision necessarily required that this chapter end before the discussion of the letter.

3 Nephi II (3–5)

Chapter II (3–5) opens with a quoted letter from the leader of the Gadiantons to Lachoneus. It is followed by the letter Lachoneous writes to Giddianhi. As with the letters between Captain Moroni and Pahoran (Alma 60–61), these letters might have been kept on their original perishable medium. However, it is also possible they were included on the large plates. This suggests that while Mormon is creating his own book of Nephi, he nevertheless consults the large plates for this, even though we cannot know the name of the book from which he took the information.353 Perhaps the physical requirement of returning to the large plate source influenced the beginning of the chapter with the information taken from the large plates. Although Mormon typically notes when he uses a different source, he does not mark the return to the large plates.

352. Mark A. Wright noticed that the Nephites continued to use the reign of the judges as the basis for their calendar until they arrived at a full 100 years. Only then did they change their calendar, and then it was backdated to the time of the signs of Christ’s birth. Dr. Wright has a publication pending that elaborates on this topic.

353. Based on the discernible tradition, it should have been named for the political dynasty begun with Nephi₂’s abdication. That would suggest a book of Cezoram (see Helaman 5:1). However, the plates of Nephi remained with Nephi₂ and his son, Nephi₃. That might then suggest that Nephi₃ continued to keep the record in the book of Helaman. That would suggest that when Mormon indicated that the book of Helaman had ended, that it was intended to be Mormon’s end of the use of that record and not the termination of the information in the record.
Much of the chapter is taken up with the Gadianton war. The Nephites are not only victorious, but Mormon also makes certain to declare they were victorious through their righteousness. As a result of the war:

… there was not a living soul among all the people of the Nephites who did doubt in the least the words of all the holy prophets who had spoken; for they knew that it must needs be that they must be fulfilled.

And they knew that it must be expedient that Christ had come, because of the many signs which had been given, according to the words of the prophets; and because of the things which had come to pass already they knew that it must needs be that all things should come to pass according to that which had been spoken.

Therefore they did forsake all their sins, and their abominations, and their whoredoms, and did serve God with all diligence day and night. (3 Nephi 5:1–3)

Mormon intended to close this chapter on the high note of the Nephite victory over the Gadiantons, and by extension, over evil influences. As he finishes with the basics of the war, he counts off years: “And thus had the twenty and second year passed away, and the twenty and third year also, and the twenty and fourth, and the twenty and fifth; and thus had twenty and five years passed away” (3 Nephi 5:7). Perhaps the proliferation of years, and particularly the noting of empty years, is an indication that he is consulting the large plates for this information.

The next chapter (III, 6–7) begins on the 26th year (3 Nephi 8:1). I suggest that Mormon hit the five-year marker and paused. I further suspect that the five-year marker would have created the end of the chapter in any case, but it also triggered both an aside where Mormon looks at the purpose for which he has been writing, and perhaps looking forward to chapter IV (8–10) when Christ will appear.

Mormon reiterates that “this book cannot contain even a hundredth part” of the record (3 Nephi 5:8). That is a statement that is associated with Mormon’s author-time insertions (see the section on Narrator-voice and Author-voice in Part 1), and it signals one here as well.

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. (3 Nephi 5:9–10)

Thinking of the inability to write all of the available details, Mormon notes that “there are records which do contain all the proceedings of this people.” He notes that he is not using the greater account, but the “shorter but true account” of Nephi. Given the evidence of both the wars and contentions and the marking of the years, it appears that Mormon has consulted the large plates, which would typically fit the description of the records on which there are more details. I suggest that Mormon is looking forward here to the record of Christ’s visit rather than back to the historical information he has just written. The “shorter but true account” is a comment that best fits his desire for a testimony of the Savior’s appearance in Bountiful: hence the description that it is a “true account,” not suggesting that the other account is untrue.

Does the suggestion that Mormon “therefore…” 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” mean that he took them from the large plates? That would seem to be contradicted by his statement that he was, rather, using the “shorter but true account.” The solution is the problem of naming that began with Nephi, son of Lehi. Nephi wrote two records, both called “plates of Nephi.” It would appear that in this case, there was also a separate record written by Nephi, also called the “plates of Nephi(,” indicating a book that was on plates, but not on the large plates — or perhaps later copied on to the large plates.

And behold, I do make the record on plates which I have made with mine own hands. (3 Nephi 5:11)

The mention of plates completes Mormon’s transition from narrator-voice to author-voice. Mormon’s thought processes are now firmly fixed on his own task and the reasons he is writing this story on plates he made with his 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. (3 Nephi 5:12–13)
In our current Book of Mormon, this is our introduction to the man Mormon, who is creating the work we are reading. As I noted in what must have been on the lost 116 pages, there must have been some early introduction to Mormon that laid out who he was and what he was doing. In this case, it is a different type of introduction. Coming at the end of the section describing the righteous Nephites who believed in Christ and approaching the time when Mormon will describe the Savior’s appearance in Bountiful, this becomes an introduction of Mormon as “a disciple of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.”

Mormon indicates that he is named for the land of Mormon, which links him explicitly to “the first church which was established” among the Nephites. This connection to an antiquity of the gospel tradition will be reinforced later when Mormon declares that he is “a pure descendant of Lehi” (3 Nephi 5:20).

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. (3 Nephi 5:14–17)

Mormon is at the end of a long line of righteous recordkeepers. He ties his work to theirs by indicating that he (Mormon) writes not only “according to the will of God,” but also to “the prayers of those who have gone hence, who were the holy ones.” Mormon indicates that he was commanded to write the small account of the long Nephite history from Lehi to Mormon’s own day. To do so, he made his record from the historical accounts to which he will add the things he himself has seen (which are recorded in the book of Mormon).

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. (3 Nephi 5:18–19)
Mormon assures his readers that he has created a “just and true record.” When he indicates that he makes “and end of my saying, which is of myself,” he means this aside. He then intends to return to writing of “the things which have been before me,” indicating events in time and or the records physically present before him.

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 5:20)

Although he intended to return to history, he doesn’t. He is still in the mode of reflecting on his current task of writing rather than on the time about which he has been writing. The reference to being a “pure descendant of Lehi” is interesting from a genealogical/historical viewpoint. Perhaps he could have traced descendence through one thousand years, but even if he could not, the function of the statement is to tie him to Lehi. Just as he tied himself to the first church in the land of Mormon, he ties his presence at the end of the Nephites to the beginning of the Nephites. He testifies that Yahweh was there at the beginning and has been with the Nephites whenever theyrighteously followed his teachings.

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.

Yea, and surely shall he again bring a remnant of the seed of Joseph to the knowledge of the Lord their God.

And as surely as the Lord liveth, will he gather in from the four quarters of the earth all the remnant of the seed of Jacob, who are scattered abroad upon all the face of the earth.

And as he hath covenanted with all the house of Jacob, even so shall the covenant wherewith he hath covenanted with the house of Jacob be fulfilled in his own due time, unto the restoring all the house of Jacob unto the knowledge of the covenant that he hath covenanted with them.

And then shall they know their Redeemer, who is Jesus Christ, the Son of God; and then shall they be gathered in from the
four quarters of the earth unto their own lands, from whence they have been dispersed; yea, as the Lord liveth so shall it be. Amen. (3 Nephi 5:21–26)

Standing at the end of the Nephite nation, Mormon returns to the promise that separation from the house of Jacob would not be permanent. Yahweh would return the righteous to the house of Jacob from the four corners. Mormon testifies that one of the functions of his writing is to help with that spiritual gathering of Yahweh’s children back into their rightful inheritance.

3 Nephi III (6–7)

The chapter begins in the 26th year with the Nephites returning to their lands. As noted for the previous chapter, the end of the 25th year is probably an intended chapter break. When Mormon had no other reason to break, he used five-year increments. However, this new chapter is also required because of the testificatory *Amen* which ended the previous chapter.

The marking of the years suggests and the more secular nature of the content confirms that Mormon took this information from the large plates. However, it is a different process than what we have previously seen, as I believe that the book of Nephi (son of Helaman₃) was not a large-plate book. It was created as a named book expressly to cover the important information about the arrival of the expected Messiah, Yahweh, who comes to earth. Mormon’s symbolic history has the destruction of a righteous people preceding the arrival of the Messiah. It happened prior to Christ’s birth as well as prior to Christ’s appearance in Bountiful. Although also secular history, it is told here — and marked off from the secular account here — to place it in its sacred location as part of the conditions for the coming of the Messiah.

This time, the destruction is complete: “And the people were divided one against another; and they did separate one from another into tribes, every man according to his family and his kindred and friends; and thus they did destroy the government of the land” (3 Nephi 7:2). The final half of the chapter begins the preparation for the coming of the Savior with Nephi₃ preparing those who would listen.

The book doesn’t end with any typical marker. This chapter ends not because something inside the text or some external year required it to end. It ended so the next chapter could begin and could be a unified whole.
3 Nephi IV (8–10)

Even if Mormon took the years and some general events from the large plate record prior to this chapter, he clearly notifies his readers that this chapter is due to the author of the “shorter but true account” (3 Nephi 5:9). Although Mormon does not explicitly name him, we understand it was Nephi’s personal record: “And now it came to pass that according to our record, and we know our record to be true, for behold, it was a just man who did keep the record — for he truly did many miracles in the name of Jesus; and there was not any man who could do a miracle in the name of Jesus save he were cleansed every whit from his iniquity” (3 Nephi 8:1). This is further underscored when Nephi is the subject of the end of the previous chapter.

The chapter begins with the terrible destructions at the time of Christ’s death in the Old World. It ends with Yahweh declaring “I am Jesus Christ the Son of God” (3 Nephi 9:15), along with other declarations that Yahweh makes from the heavens.

Mormon ends the chapter with his own testimony of what occurred, and what will occur in the next chapter:

And now, whoso readeth, let him understand; he that hath the scriptures, let him search them, and see and behold if all these deaths and destructions by fire, and by smoke, and by tempests, and by whirlwinds, and by the opening of the earth to receive them, and all these things are not unto the fulfilling of the prophecies of many of the holy prophets.

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?

And it came to pass that in the ending of the thirty and fourth year, behold, I will show unto you that the people of Nephi who were spared, and also those who had been called Lamanites, who had been spared, did have great favors shown
unto them, and great blessings poured out upon their heads, insomuch that soon after the ascension of Christ into heaven he did truly manifest himself unto them—

Showing his body unto them, and ministering unto them; and an account of his ministry shall be given hereafter. Therefore for this time I make an end of my sayings. (3 Nephi 10:14–19)

Mormon makes certain his readers understand that what he had described and the event to come were the fulfillment of prophecy. The chapter ends with the declaration that he was ending his sayings. This does not mean he is not going to narrate the next chapter but that this author-voice has ended, and he returns to narrator-voice.

3 Nephi V (11–13:24)

Mormon is taking this account from the personal, non-large-plate account of Nephi. He will certainly be copying when we see him record Christ’s words, but at this point he is generating the narrative (confirmed with the third-person “Nephi” in 3 Nephi 11:18). We also see a designation of the “people of Nephi” both in the first verse and in the header. As I suggested in the section on Mormon’s subtle manipulation of names, I believe this is a new people named for Nephi, but where Mormon has intentionally used the name Nephi to tie the first beginning with this new beginning. It also ties the original people of Nephi to their spiritual progeny, who are also called the people of Nephi to demonstrate the continuation of the religious inheritance.

In this chapter, the God of the Nephites, Yahweh, fulfills the promise to personally descend from heaven to earth:

For behold, did not Moses prophesy unto them concerning the coming of the Messiah, and that God should redeem his people? Yea, and even all the prophets who have prophesied ever since the world began — have they not spoken more or less concerning these things?

Have they not said that God himself should come down among the children of men, and take upon him the form of man, and go forth in mighty power upon the face of the earth? (Mosiah 13:33–34)

The essential teaching in the New World, as in the Old, is the explanation of the shift from the law of Moses to the law of Christ. The best expression of that in the New Testament is found in the Sermon on the
Mount in Matthew, and that teaching is repeated here, clearly replicating the majority of what is found in the Matthean version of the sermon.

The chapter ends in the middle of the record from Matthew 6. After the statement that “ye cannot serve God and mammon” (Matthew 6:24, 3 Nephi 11:24), there is a chapter ending in Mormon’s text that does not occur in Matthew. The chapter ends in the Book of Mormon because there is a shift in audience. The words to one group end at the end of chapter V (3 Nephi 11–13:24). The new chapter will have Christ addressing a different audience, a point not clear in Matthew 6.

The book of 3 Nephi has several examples of Orson Pratt’s changes to match Book of Mormon chapters more closely to the Bible’s when they clearly overlapped. Although Orson typically kept chapter beginnings and endings intact, he split the larger chapters into smaller ones when he needed to match the chapters from the Bible. Sometimes, that process required him to create a new chapter in the middle of the original one. We see this first in 3 Nephi with chapter V (3 Nephi 11–13:24); it will occur again.

3 Nephi VI (13:25–14)

The beginning of the chapter is:

And now it came to pass that when Jesus had spoken these words he looked upon the twelve whom he had chosen, and said unto them: Remember the words which I have spoken. For behold, ye are they whom I have chosen to minister unto this people. Therefore I say unto you, take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? (3 Nephi 13:25)

The italicized text is the only difference creating the chapter division in what otherwise is a continued recounting of the Matthean text. The focus shifts from the general body to the specific chosen twelve. There is no similar chapter division when the focus returns to the larger body: “And now it came to pass that when Jesus had spoken these words he turned again to the multitude, and did open his mouth unto them again, saying: Verily, verily, I say unto you, Judge not, that ye be not judged” (3 Nephi 14:1). When the quotation of Christ’s words ends, the chapter ends.

3 Nephi VII (15–16)

The chapter division is between quoted material and a return to narrative. Consistent with Mormon’s typical editing pattern, the end of a quotation
ends a chapter, and narration picks up in the new chapter. That was not the model from Matthew. The end of the chapter corresponds with the end of Matthew’s quotation of Christ’s sermon. Matthew chapter 7 ends: “And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes” (Matthew 7:28–29). That was added by the Matthean narrator. In Matthew, narration continued after the quotation, whereas Mormon used that conceptual division to create a new chapter. Thus, while the English text is clearly modeled on Matthew, the chapter construction is not.

Early in this chapter, the narrator says: “And now it came to pass that when Jesus had spoken these words, he said unto those twelve whom he had chosen” (3 Nephi 15:11). When Mormon copies heavily from a private record, as he did with Alma 2, there are times when he appears to copy the narration from the original author. It is probable that we have that condition here. The narrator of this short statement is likely Nephi 3 rather than Mormon. More interestingly, this is a shift in focus away from the general population and toward the twelve, the very same shift in focus that created the division between chapters V (3 Nephi 11–13:24) and VI (3 Nephi 13:25–14). Where that shift created a chapter break, this one does not.

Perhaps one of the reasons there is no chapter break is that while we do have Christ’s words, it is not Christ quoting his words. The sections that recall the Matthean sermon so precisely are treated as quotations, where the material Christ speaks to the Nephites that does not find parallel in the Matthean text is not treated as a quotation of outside material. Perhaps that distinction is reflected in the statement at the beginning of this chapter: “Behold, ye have heard the things which I taught before I ascended to my Father” (3 Nephi 15:1). Christ himself indicated that he had been quoting an outside source — not Matthew, but himself in another context. Christ’s appearance as a resurrected mortal underscored the longtime understanding that the Nephites had been separated from the house of Israel in the Old World. By quoting what he said in the Old World, Christ is reiterating their essential equality with the saints in the Old World.

At the end of this chapter, Christ specifically quotes Isaiah 52:8–10. At the end of that quotation, the chapter ends.

3 Nephi VIII (17–18)
The previous chapter ended with a quotation. As with similar situations, Mormon attached what might have been the concluding narrative onto the beginning of the next chapter. Chapter VIII (17–18) begins when
what Christ did after quoting Isaiah. It was clearly what Christ had intended to be the end of that day’s sermon:

Behold, now it came to pass that when Jesus had spoken these words he looked round about again on the multitude, and he said unto them: Behold, my time is at hand.

I perceive that ye are weak, that ye cannot understand all my words which I am commanded of the Father to speak unto you at this time.

Therefore, go ye unto your homes, and ponder upon the things which I have said, and ask of the Father, in my name, that ye may understand, and prepare your minds for the morrow, and I come unto you again.

But now I go unto the Father, and also to show myself unto the lost tribes of Israel, for they are not lost unto the Father, for he knoweth whither he hath taken them. (3 Nephi 17:1–4)

It was the people who changed that plan. The end of the chapter occurs when this intended ascension to the Father finally occurs: “And while they were overshadowed he departed from them, and ascended into heaven. And the disciples saw and did bear record that he ascended again into heaven” (3 Nephi 18:39).

3 Nephi IX (19:1–21:21)

One of the important changes to the nature of chapter changes in 3 Nephi is the number of times events create the chapters rather than some structural principle. This is likely due to the fact that so much of the book is spent on three days of Christ’s visit. That event is sometimes broken on structural events, but at times it is at natural event-based breaking points. The ascension of the Savior to heaven at the end of the previous book and the aftermath among the people is one such event-based division. Even though event-based, the division still looks to a particularly final event (in this case Christ’s ascension), and details of the immediate aftermath are at the beginning of the next chapter. One might think the end of the day might have been the cause, but the chapter ending was related to something more important than the mundane waning of the day.

One verse in this chapter alludes to information that must have been available on either the large plates or upon Nephi’s personal record in a section Mormon did not use. Mormon records: “And it came to pass that on the morrow, when the multitude was gathered together, behold,
Nephi and his brother whom he had raised from the dead, whose name was Timothy, and also his son, whose name was Jonas, and also Mathoni, and Mathonihah, his brother, and Kumen, and Kumenonhi, and Jeremiah, and Shemnon, and Jonas, and Zedekiah, and Isaiah — now these were the names of the disciples whom Jesus had chosen — and it came to pass that they went forth and stood in the midst of the multitude” (3 Nephi 19:4).

This is the only mention of Timothy or of any of the rest of the listed names. The issue is that the mention of this incident suggests it was available history. However, it is not included elsewhere in Mormon’s text. Thus, it appears that Mormon makes mention of it here because Timothy is among the chosen disciples even though it wasn’t an event he cared to describe. This has implications for the story of Aminadi, who interpreted the writing on the wall (Alma 10:2). That was also a unique reference and, parallel to this verse, may not have implied the story had been previously told.

I analyzed the ending of this chapter as one of the anomalous chapter breaks in Part 1. I suggest it represents a chapter break copied from Nephi’s original document rather than representing one Mormon added.

3 Nephi X (21:22–23:13)

Whether entered by Nephi or Mormon, the chapter ended with the end of the quotation from Micah (see the discussion in the section on the Anomalous Chapter Endings in Part 1). The beginning of chapter X (3 Nephi 21:22–23:13) continues the theme of the future of the house of Israel. The beginning of this chapter is the antithetical parallel to 3 Nephi 21:20. That verse notes: “For it shall come to pass, saith the Father, that at that day whosoever will not repent and come unto my Beloved Son, them will I cut off from among my people, O house of Israel” (3 Nephi 21:20). This is contrasted at the beginning of this chapter with: “But if they will repent and hearken unto my words, and harden not their hearts, I will establish my church among them, and they shall come in unto the covenant and be numbered among this the remnant of Jacob, unto whom I have given this land for their inheritance” (3 Nephi 21:22).

The Savior quotes from Isaiah 54, which Orson Pratt separated into a different chapter to have it align with the structure of the chapter in the Bible. Unlike many other internal quotations, the ending of the quotation does not end this chapter. Again, I suggest this indicates the chapter division is being copied from the original source and is not of Mormon’s creation. Perhaps the reason there is no chapter break is that the next speaker is the Savior himself, saying: “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” (3 Nephi 23:1).

The end of the chapter is event-based. The recorded incident is Christ’s review of the Nephite scriptures. The fulfillment of Samuel’s prophecy that many would rise from their graves had not been written, and the Savior “commanded that it should be written, therefore, it was written according as He commanded” (3 Nephi 23:13).

The statement that “it was written according as He commanded” serves as the end of the incident. The next event begins in the next chapter, although Orson Pratt moved the first verse of the next chapter to the end of 3 Nephi 23, probably to more completely set off the quotation of Malachi.

3 Nephi XI (23:14–26:5)

This chapter has narrative that bookends the quotation of Malachi chapters 3 and 4. The bookend narrative emphasizes the value of the scriptures, which is intended to include the citations of Micah and Malachi which were unavailable on previous Nephite records, but which were commanded to be written onto the records:

And now it came to pass that when Jesus had expounded all the scriptures in one, which they had written, he commanded them that they should teach the things which he had expounded unto them.

And it came to pass that he commanded them that they should write the words which the Father had given unto Malachi, which he should tell unto them. And it came to pass that after they were written he expounded them. And these are the words which he did tell unto them, saying (3 Nephi 23:14–24:1)

Chapters 3 and 4 of Malachi are written into the text.

And now it came to pass that when Jesus had told these things he expounded them unto the multitude; and he did expound all things unto them, both great and small.

And he saith: These scriptures, which ye had not with you, the Father commanded that I should give unto you; for it was wisdom in him that they should be given unto future generations. (3 Nephi 26:1–2)

The chapter ends with Christ expounding “all things, even from the beginning until the time that He should come in his glory” (3 Nephi 26:3).
The chapter ends because Mormon realized that he intended to create an author-voice aside. Rather than include it as an interruption, he closed the chapter, and begins the next chapter with the aside.

3 Nephi XII (26:6–27:22)

Mormon begins this chapter with an author-voice aside triggered by what he has been recording:

And now there cannot be written in this book even a hundredth part of the things which Jesus did truly teach unto the people;
But behold the plates of Nephi do contain the more part of the things which he taught the people.
And these things have I written, which are a lesser part of the things which he taught the people; and I have written them to the intent that they may be brought again unto this people, from the Gentiles, according to the words which Jesus hath spoken. (3 Nephi 26:6–8)

As noted, the declaration that “there cannot be written in this book even a hundredth part” is typically part of an “I, Mormon” insertion. We have that declaration of the author in 3 Nephi 26:12: “Therefore, I Mormon, do write the things which have been commanded me of the Lord.” Another typical element of the “I, Mormon” insertions is a mention of the plates upon which he was writing, and something about the task he was about:

But behold the plates of Nephi do contain the more part of the things which he taught the people.
And these things have I written, which are a lesser part of the things which he taught the people; and I have written them to the intent that they may be brought again unto this people, from the Gentiles, according to the words which Jesus hath spoken.
And when they shall have received this, which is expedient that they should have first, to try their faith, and if it shall so be that they shall believe these things then shall the greater things be made manifest unto them.
And if it so be that they will not believe these things, then shall the greater things be withheld from them, unto their condemnation.
Behold, I was about to write them, all which were engraven upon the plates of Nephi, but the Lord forbade it, saying: I will try the faith of my people. (3 Nephi 26:7–11)

This insertion also likely signals that Mormon is returning to narrative mode rather than copying directly from Nephi’s record.

The end of the chapter appears to be event-driven, but there is not a clear reason for the break between chapters. Mormon is copying Christ’s words, and although he was creating the narrative that led up to the copying, perhaps the chapter break was on the original and Mormon copied it along with Christ’s words. The next chapter also begins with copied words of Christ, which may support this hypothesis.

3 Nephi XIII (27:23–29:9)

Christ continues to be interested in the keeping of the records. The chapter begins:

Write the things which ye have seen and heard, save it be those which are forbidden.

Write the works of this people, which shall be, even as hath been written, of that which hath been.

For behold, out of the books which have been written, and which shall be written, shall this people be judged, for by them shall their works be known unto men. (3 Nephi 27:23–25)

Christ’s final act was to fulfill the hearts’ wish of the disciples: “he touched every one of them with his finger save it were the three who were to tarry, and then he departed” (3 Nephi 28:12). Mormon ends the history he is recording with a fast summary of what happened with these disciples (3 Nephi 28:13–23). It is unclear from which source Mormon took this synopsis. It might have been the personal record of Nephi, or perhaps this information was on the large plates. Mormon does not make it clear. What is clear is that Mormon is finished with the most important part of his record, the presence of Yahweh/Christ among the Nephites. The summary of the miracles and missionary successes of the disciples is designed to lead into the events Mormon will record in 4 Nephi. Before he moves to the new book, however, he inserts himself again in his author-voice: “And now I, Mormon, make and end of speaking concerning these things for a time” (3 Nephi 28:24).

From that initial insertion to the end of the chapter, we have Mormon speaking in author-voice. At the end of his most important book,
Mormon gives his feelings about what he has written. Remembering that Mormon declared he was “a disciple of Jesus Christ, the Son of God” (3 Nephi 13), this becomes an apostolic testimony not only of Christ but of the importance of Christ’s gospel to all humankind.

I suspect the end of the chapter was created by Mormon’s intent for the final chapter of this most important record. He had already given much of his feelings for the importance of Christ, but in the next chapter he provides a direct prophetic testimony to his readers.

3 Nephi XIV (30)

The entirety of the chapter (2 verses, 130 words) is Mormon’s witness to the future. It encapsulates his intent for writing his entire work: “That he may be numbered with my people which are the house of Israel” (3 Nephi 30:2).
Chapter 17: Book of 4 Nephi

The book of 4 Nephi returns to the structure typical of the large plate records. In the first verse we have: “And it came to pass that the thirty and fourth year passed away, and also the thirty and fifth, and behold the disciples of Jesus had formed a church of Christ in all the lands round about” (4 Nephi 1:1). There are more years per verse than in any other book — 29 years are specifically mentioned. Time races through 4 Nephi — often with empty years (4 Nephi 1:6, 14).

Mormon does tell us there is a book of Nephi on the large plates: “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” (4 Nephi 1:21). There are two records indicated, the “plates of Nephi,” and “the book of Nephi, which is this book.” The structure of the large plates continues after the re-formation of the people of Nephi after Christ’s appearance. There is a “plates of Nephi,” meaning the overall record. Recorded on those plates and as part of the larger record-keeping tradition is a specific book named for Nephi. As I have noted, I believe this was the large plate record of Nephi 3 who became ruler of the people after Christ’s visit. I also suggest that the people were renamed “the people of Nephi” specifically to provide continuation.

Mormon manipulates time in 4 Nephi as he transforms his large plate source into his desired summation of the time between Christ’s appearance and Mormon’s own eponymous book. Where Mormon has previously shown a tendency to follow five-year markers if there were no other reasons for dividing chapters, there is only one chapter in 4 Nephi. In the first 100 years, Mormon only marks a five-year period one time, the thirty-fifth year. That happens in the very first verse. From that point to the 100-year mark, there are no listed years which can be fit into multiples

354. The years listed are: 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 41, 42, 49, 51, 52, 59, 71, 72, 79, 100, 110, 194, 200, 201, 230, 231, 244, 250, 260, 300, 305, 320.
of five years. Mormon notes the years 39 and 41 but skips the 40th year. He marks years 49 and 51 but not 50. There is no 60, 78, 80, nor 90.

This changes dramatically after the 100-year mark. After the year 100, ten of the 14 listed years are divisible by five. I suggest that given the empty years and the repeating pattern of empty years, that Mormon is using the years to divide a spiritual history from the developing recorded history.

The 100th year is an important benchmark in the Nephite spiritual history:

even an hundred years had passed away, and the disciples of Jesus, whom he had chosen, had all gone to the paradise of God, save it were the three who should tarry; and there were other disciples ordained in their stead; and also many of that generation had passed away.355

And it came to pass that there was no contention in the land, because of the love of God which did dwell in the hearts of the people. (4 Nephi 1:14–15)

The disciples who had known Christ are all gone by the 100th year. Nevertheless, righteousness continues. Then, in the 200th year:

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.

And now, in this two hundred and first year there began to be among them those who were lifted up in pride, such as the wearing of costly apparel, and all manner of fine pearls, and of the fine things of the world.

And from that time forth they did have their goods and their substance no more common among them.

355. Mormon appears to have all the disciples, save the three who chose to tarry, die in the 100th year. It is not beyond Yahweh’s miracles to have all of them survive that long and die in the same year. However, it is equally probable, and given the nature of what Mormon is doing in 4 Nephi, even more likely that this is meant to show the miraculous and not to represent history.
And they began to be divided into classes; and they began to build up churches unto themselves to get gain, and began to deny the true church of Christ. (4 Nephi 1:22–26)

This “I, Mormon” insertion does not follow the typical “I, Mormon” pattern. We have Mormon’s author-voice, but nothing about the plates or his writing process. I suggest this is because he is barely consulting the source material. The book of 4 Nephi is what Mormon wants his readers to understand of a long period, and he is paying much less attention to history than he has in any other book. Thus he didn’t need to speak of what he is doing while writing because the entirety of the book is due to his specific desire to set up his own history.

In 3 Nephi, Mormon speaks briefly of the lives of the disciples after Christ’s departure:

But this much I know, according to the record which hath been given — they did go forth upon the face of the land, and did minister unto all the people, uniting as many to the church as would believe in their preaching; baptizing them, and as many as were baptized did receive the Holy Ghost.

And they were cast into prison by them who did not belong to the church. And the prisons could not hold them, for they were rent in twain.

And they were cast down into the earth; but they did smite the earth with the word of God, insomuch that by his power they were delivered out of the depths of the earth; and therefore they could not dig pits sufficient to hold them.

And thrice they were cast into a furnace and received no harm.

And twice were they cast into a den of wild beasts; and behold they did play with the beasts as a child with a suckling lamb, and received no harm.

And it came to pass that thus they did go forth among all the people of Nephi, and did preach the gospel of Christ unto all people upon the face of the land; and they were converted unto the Lord, and were united unto the church of Christ, and thus the people of that generation were blessed, according to the word of Jesus. (3 Nephi 28:18–23)

In 3 Nephi, these verses appear to apply to all the disciples, and their preaching sets the stage for the generally righteous Nephites we see early in 4 Nephi.
Then, in 4 Nephi, *after* all the disciples save the three have died:

And again, there was another church which denied the Christ; and they did persecute the true church of Christ, because of their humility and their belief in Christ; and they did despise them because of the many miracles which were wrought among them.

Therefore they did exercise power and authority over the disciples of Jesus who did tarry with them, and they *did cast them into prison*; but by the power of the word of God, which was in them, the prisons were rent in twain, and they went forth doing mighty miracles among them.

Nevertheless, and notwithstanding all these miracles, the people did harden their hearts, and did seek to kill them, even as the Jews at Jerusalem sought to kill Jesus, according to his word.

And they did *cast them into furnaces of fire*, and they came forth receiving no harm.

And they also cast them into *dens of wild beasts*, and they did *play with the wild beasts even as a child with a lamb*; and they did come forth from among them, receiving no harm.

Nevertheless, the people did harden their hearts, for they were led by many priests and false prophets to build up many churches, and to do all manner of iniquity. And they did smite upon the people of Jesus; but the people of Jesus did not smite again. And thus they did dwindle in unbelief and wickedness, from year to year, even until two hundred and thirty years had passed away.

And now it came to pass in this year, yea, in the two hundred and thirty first year, there was a great division among the people. (4 Nephi 1:29–35)

The italicized phrases indicate the repeated events, which repeat in the same order. This suggests that Mormon took the events from a record but that he is using them for his own interests. It also highlights that the events listed for the end of 3 Nephi were not included in the record from which he took 3 Nephi, as they occurred long after Nephi₃ had died.

The critical turning point is the year 200 (4 Nephi 1:22). Whereas righteousness had prevailed until that time, the Nephites immediately begin to fall away at this important half-baktun, 200-year period.

It is difficult to fit some of the history of 4 Nephi into a reasonable historical framework. The text covers nearly 300 years but mentions only four recordkeepers. One of them, Ammaron, is the previous
recordkeeper’s brother, not his son. That gives each of the named people a remarkably long life. It is made much longer if the Nephi of 4 Nephi is Nephi₃, as I have suggested.

Nephi₃’s death comes in the year 110, which would be incredibly long. However, it isn’t much longer than the other disciples who die after the year 100 (4 Nephi 1:14). The timing continues to be problematic when Nephi₃’s son Amos₁ keeps the record for 84 years. If we use Mormon’s age when he took the task of record-keeping at 24 (Mormon 1:3), then Amos₁ was aged, indeed. His son Amos₂ kept the record 111 years before he died and gave them to Ammaron (in the 305th year, 4 Nephi 1:47). In contrast to the longevity of Amos₁ and Amos₂, Ammaron kept them for only 15 years. It appears Mormon wrote the history to correlate the remarkable time of righteousness with extended lives. Mormon is fitting people into a pattern rather than worrying about the confines of secular history.

It is possible part of Mormon’s manipulation deals with the four centuries from the birth of Christ. Mormon lists four record-keepers, symbolically one for each of the centuries, although he does not line them up so precisely. Since the numbers do not appear to reflect a historical reality, a conceptual combination of the number of recordkeepers and the specific years assigned to them may have all worked to Mormon’s designs for the book of Nephi, who is the son of Nephi — one of the disciples of Jesus Christ.

Another possible manipulation of years occurs with the 231st year:

And now it came to pass in this year, yea, in the two hundred and thirty and first year, there was a great division among the people.

And it came to pass that in this year there arose a people who were called the Nephites, and they were true believers in Christ; and

356. One hundred ten years would be 5\(\times\)20+2\(\times\)5. This number fits into the five-year pattern. The ability of the year to fit into the mathematical system may or may not be significant but given the artificiality of the use of years in 4 Nephi, I consider it more likely than not.

357. Eighty-four years is possibly an artificial number. Understanding that Mesoamerican used a base 20 mathematical system, and that the number 4 was considered the number of perfection, 84 years might be seen as 4\(\times\)20+4. That number would suggest that there is more happening with the years than a precise recording of the recordkeeper’s lives.

358. Mormon doesn’t give the elapsed time of 111 years but rather the year in which the event occurred. That was in the year 305. That number, in Mayan terms, would be one and a half katuns plus a hotun.
among them there were those who were called by the Lamanites — Jacobites, and Josephites, and Zoramites; (4 Nephi 1:35–36)

This is precisely 200 years after a similar dissolution of the Nephite people: “And it came to pass in the thirty and first year that they were divided into tribes, every man according to his family, kindred and friends” (3 Nephi 7:14). Having precisely 200 years between the two breakdowns into tribes is too coincidental to not have been specifically manipulated.

The book of 4 Nephi ends with Ammaron’s hiding the records. This is the event that will lead Ammaron to seek Mormon, the story which begins Mormon’s eponymous book.
Chapter 18: Book of Mormon

Mormon I (1–3)

When Mormon begins his book of Mormon, he is no longer consulting a record. He doesn’t need to, as he is the source. This is an autobiography, but it begins with the declaration of the author and his ability to accurately portray the information: “And now I, Mormon, make a record of the things which I have both seen and heard, and call it the Book of Mormon” (Mormon 1:1).

The chapter ends with an address to his audience. In the main body of his work, this would be considered an author-voice insertion, but since Mormon is writing all this in his own lifetime, it is an intentional shift from immediate past to distant future: “therefore I write unto you, Gentiles” (Mormon 3:17). The chapter ends with the end of his purpose for writing, that “I could persuade all ye ends of the earth to repent and prepare to stand before the judgment-seat of Christ’ (Mormon 3:22).

Mormon writes three chapters. In each, he begins with history and ends with an exhortation to his future audience.

Mormon II (4–5)

Opening his second chapter, Mormon returns to the model of years. These events occur in the 363rd year. It is possible Mormon kept the more formal large-plate version of Nephite history, and refers to it in order to associate the years with the events. It is certain he would remember the events but may or may not have remembered the years with precision. Marking the years suggests he at least consulted a record created more contemporaneously with the past events.

As with the first chapter, Mormon ends this chapter addressing his future audience, beginning in Mormon 5:8 “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.”
The ending statement in chapter II (Mormon 4–5) repeats the theme of the need of the Gentiles (Mormon 5:22) to repent from chapter I (Mormon 1–3): “Therefore, repent ye, and humble yourselves before him, lest he shall come out in justice against you — lest a remnant of the seed of Jacob shall go forth among you as a lion, and tear you in pieces, and there is none to deliver” (Mormon 5:24).

**Mormon III (6–7)**

Mormon picks up the story of the end of his people after the events in Mormon 5:7 when the only Nephites who survived escaped faster than the Lamanites could pursue. This is Mormon’s last chapter: “and now I finish my record concerning the destruction of my people, the Nephites” (Mormon 6:1). After finishing the story of the destruction, Mormon writes his poignant reaction:

> O ye fair ones, how could ye have departed from the ways of the Lord! O ye fair ones, how could ye have rejected that Jesus, who stood with open arms to receive you!

> Behold, if ye had not done this, ye would not have fallen. But behold, ye are fallen, and I mourn your loss.

> O ye fair sons and daughters, ye fathers and mothers, ye husbands and wives, ye fair ones, how is it that ye could have fallen!

> But behold, ye are gone, and my sorrows cannot bring your return.

> And the day soon cometh that your mortal must put on immortality, and these bodies which are now moldering in corruption must soon become incorruptible bodies; and then ye must stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, to be judged according to your works; and if it so be that ye are righteous, then are ye blessed with your fathers who have gone before you.

> O that ye had repented before this great destruction had come upon you. But behold, ye are gone, and the Father, yea, the Eternal Father of heaven, knoweth your state; and he doeth with you according to his justice and mercy. (Mormon 6:17–22)

Immediately after this lament for the lost Nephites, Mormon turns to his future audience: “And now, behold, I would speak somewhat unto the remnant of this people who are spared, if it so be that God may give
unto them my words, that they may know of the things of their fathers; yea, I speak unto you, ye remnant of the house of Israel; and these are the words which I speak” (Mormon 7:1). The shift in audience provided Orson Pratt with the conceptual division to create a new chapter for this final admonition. For Mormon, his final words hinged on the sadness for what was lost and the hope that salvation might yet come for those who remained, the “remnant of this people who are spared” (Mormon 7:1).

Mormon understands that in addition to his record, the remnant of his people will receive the Bible from the Gentiles (Mormon 7:8). He finishes his record linking the two testimonies of Christ:

> 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 7:9–10)

The phrase “this is written” indicates the Book of Mormon. The phrase “that ye may believe that” refers to the Bible. Believing the Book of Mormon strengthens the belief in the Bible. Believing the Bible can strengthen the understanding of the Book of Mormon.
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