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THE BRASS PLATES: CAN MODERN SCHOLARSHIP HELP IDENTIFY THEIR CONTENTS?

A. Keith Thompson

Abstract: *The Book of Mormon contains little information about what the Brass Plates contain. Nephi said it was a larger record than the Hebrew Bible brought to America by the Gentiles. But it could not have contained the records of Old Testament prophets who wrote after Lehi's party left Jerusalem or the New Testament. We know it contained some writings from Zenos, Zenock, Neum, and Ezias, but what else could it have contained? Though the proposal from modern biblical source criticism that the Christian Bible is the product of redactors sometimes working with multiple sources is distasteful to many Christians, this article suggests this scholarship should not trouble Latter-day Saints, who celebrate Mormon's scriptural abridgement of ancient American scripture. This article also revisits the insights of some Latter-day Saint scholars who have suggested the Brass Plates are a record of the tribe of Joseph, and this may explain its scriptural content. The eight verses from Micah 5, which Christ quoted three times during His visit to the Nephites and which did not previously appear in Mormon's abridgment, receive close analysis.*

Shortly after Lehi and his family departed into the wilderness, Lehi was commanded in a dream to send his sons back to Jerusalem to obtain "the record of the Jews and also a genealogy of my forefathers ... engraven upon plates of brass" held by Laban (1 Nephi 3:2–3). When the sons returned from that mission, Lehi examined the plates of brass, and Nephi recorded the following summary of what they contained:

They did contain the five books of Moses, which gave an account of the creation of the world, and also of Adam and Eve, who were our first parents.

And also a record of the Jews from the beginning, even down to the commencement of the reign of Zedekiah, king of Judah;

And also the prophecies of the holy prophets, from the beginning, even down to the commencement of the reign of Zedekiah; and also many prophecies which have been spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah ... [and] a genealogy of [Lehi's] father; wherefore he knew he was as descendant of Joseph; yea, even that Joseph who was the son of Jacob, who was sold into Egypt, and who was preserved by the hand of the Lord, that he might preserve his father, Jacob, and all his household from perishing with famine.

And they were also led out of captivity and out of the land of Egypt, by that same God who had preserved them.

And thus my father, Lehi, did discover the genealogy of his fathers. And Laban also was a descendant of Joseph, wherefore he and his fathers had kept the records. (1 Nephi 5:11–16)

The Book of Mormon does not directly reveal a great deal more about the contents of those plates save perhaps for Mormon's editorial comment immediately before he started his account of Christ's visit to the Americas in 3 Nephi 11. In the preceding chapter, Mormon commented on the destruction on the face of his land which accompanied the death of Christ at Jerusalem as follows:

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 all 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 we not a remnant of the seed of Joseph? And these things which testify of us, are they

not written upon the plates of brass which our father Lehi brought out of Jerusalem? (3 Nephi 10:14–17)

This editorial statement seems to confirm that the Brass Plates contained records sacred to and preserved by the members of the tribe of Joseph who had escaped the Assyrian invasion of Samaria.¹ Several Latter-day Saint authors have suggested that Julius Wellhausen's 19th century "Documentary Hypothesis" regarding the Pentateuch and the proposal that there were distinct differences between Northern and Southern scripture after the Kingdom divided² corresponds with the Northern origin of the Brass Plates. Some Latter-day Saint authors even suggest that "the Brass Plates ... may have been the official scriptures of the Ten Tribes."³

While this article is written in that context, its focus is to work out if modern scholarship sheds any light on what we know about the contents of the Brass Plates from the text of the Book of Mormon and collateral comments by the Prophet Joseph Smith and his contemporaries. It

1. 1 Chronicles 9:3; 2 Chronicles 15:9. Note that many from Ephraim and Mannasseh migrated to Judah during the reign of King Asa over the Southern Kingdom. Some estimates hold that Jerusalem tripled in size after the destruction of the Northern Kingdom (Allen Kendall, "The Deuteronomic Contribution to the Brass Plates" [Student Symposium, Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT, February 19, 2016], 4). In a revisionist article in 2007, Nadav Na'aman has, however, doubted estimates that Jerusalem grew somewhere between four and fifteen times due to these refugees ("When and How Did Jerusalem Become a Great City? The Rise of Jerusalem as Judah's Premier City in Eighth-Seventh Centuries B.C.E.," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 347 [August 2007]: 21–56, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25067021>).

2. Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomena To The History Of Israel*, trans. J. Sutherland Black and Allan Menzies (Illinois: Project Gutenberg, 2003), an e-text based on the 1885 English translation, <https://archive.org/details/ProlegomenaToTheHistoryOfIsrael/mode/2up>. For examples of Latter-day Saint responses, see John L. Sorenson, "The 'Brass Plates' and Biblical Scholarship," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 10, no. 4 (1977): 31–39; https://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue_V10N04_33.pdf; and Richard G. Grant, "The Book of Mormon Brass Plates and Their Prophets," *Come to Zarahemla*, archived article available at <https://web.archive.org/web/20180903052356/https://www.cometozarahemla.org/brassplates/brass-plates.html>.

3. Andrew C. Skinner, "Nephi's Lessons to His People: The Messiah, the Land, Isaiah 48–49 in 1 Nephi 19–22" in *Isaiah in the Book of Mormon*, eds. Donald W. Parry and John W. Welch (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1998), 95; referring to Sidney B. Sperry, *Answers to Book of Mormon Questions* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1967), 43–44.

seems, for example, that some words of the Prophet Neum were on the Brass Plates (1 Nephi 19:10), but it is not certain that the prophets Neum and Nahum were the same person, as has been speculated,⁴ since the Old Testament record of Nahum's prophecies do not include a prophecy that the Messiah would be crucified, which is the principal reason Neum was referred to by the Book of Mormon prophets. This article discusses in four parts the educated speculation about the contents of the Brass Plates and suggests that more can be identified by identifying the source of other biblical allusions which already exist within the Book of Mormon text.

Because the Brass Plates may have Northern Kingdom ancestry and may assist in identifying their contents, Part I begins with a summary of the scholarship and evidence that grounds the theory of a Northern origin of the Brass Plates, including the role of modern biblical source criticism, particularly the so-called "Documentary Hypothesis" involving multiple proposed sources behind the Pentateuch.⁵ The idea that Northern Kingdom scripture emphasized the fatherhood of Elohim in preference to references to Jehovah in Southern Kingdom scripture is noted as part of the difference in focus of the theoretically different source material. But in Part II, I discuss how the Book of Mormon's focus on Jesus Christ as the Redeemer of all men influenced what earlier scripture the Book of Mormon referred to; and I explain why Isaiah received so much attention, even though he was a Southern Kingdom prophet.

In Part III, I review the scriptures which Jesus used in his ministry among the Nephites, recognizing that He specifically restored some passages they did not have — for example, two chapters of Malachi (3 Nephi 24:1). But I suggest that Christ may have restored parts of Micah even though he did not explicitly say that, since the Nephite prophets had not referred to or alluded to Micah before Christ's visit.

In Part IV, I list the Old Testament prophets and summarize the evidence as to whether their prophecies appeared on the Brass Plates or whether they were restored by Christ. In that discussion, I acknowledge other possible explanations for allusions to Old Testament prophets in the Book of Mormon. These include the possibility that the Brass Plates contained ancient source material not referred to by the Book of Mormon

4. Sorenson, *The Brass Plates and Biblical Scholarship* (Salt Lake City: New Sage Books, 1997), 33.

5. Richard Elliott Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Summit Books, 1987) and Wellhausen, *Prolegomena To The History Of Israel*.

redactors or their sources and not provided by Christ during His personal ministry. Such material would not be recognized by modern scholars if they are not familiar with it. I also acknowledge the possibility that similarities between Book of Mormon scripture and Old Testament scripture may be attributed to parallel revelation, the fact that God does reveal the same ideas to prophets in different contexts.

I conclude that there are many more connections between Book of Mormon and biblical scriptures than casual readers may have perceived and that the questions that come to mind when possible connections are perceived can be the beginning of new and independent revelation for those who search diligently.

Part I: Biblical Source Criticism and the Book of Mormon

Modern biblical scholars employing “source criticism” have explored the various sources that may have been used in creating biblical texts. Of particular importance in this field is the rise of the Documentary Hypothesis proposing that the Pentateuch was patched together by redactors from multiple related sources, giving us, for example, two versions of the Creation story in Genesis 1 and 2. Such scholarship holds that Old Testament scripture has more sophisticated theological and political origins than is apparent to casual readers. The Documentary Hypothesis holds that the literary process behind the Pentateuch involved multiple sources with a variety of inconsistencies that were redacted to give us the first five books of the Bible. Many scholars believe that this occurred in a process that likely took place after the Jews returned from their Babylonian captivity. At least four major Hebrew narrative traditions have been identified, each of which had its own agenda.⁶ John Sorenson says this view is the result of the triumph of the evolutionary view of history at the end of the 19th century.⁷ That view contradicts the fundamentalist view that the books of the Bible were dictated perfectly by God, and holds instead that they were the result of human record keeping and like all writing, they manifested the foibles and biases of the different authors. Other ways of looking at the Documentary Hypothesis and the findings of biblical source criticism focus less on the agenda and foibles of the original traditions and

6. Grant, “The Book of Mormon Brass Plates and Their Prophets.”

7. Sorenson, *The Brass Plates and Biblical Scholarship*, 31.

redactors and consider that scripture is cumulative and that prophets interpret what they receive from God in familiar cultural terms.⁸

The findings and proposals of source criticism are generally unpopular among those Christians who hold that biblical scripture is the inerrant word of God “written by ... identified author[s] who wrote as if ‘God breathed’ the words onto the page.”⁹

Scholars typically describe four separate sources for the Pentateuch; they label them J, E, D, and P. The Yahwist/Jahwist author(s) from the Southern Kingdom (“J”) wrote a narrative epic story in the tradition of Homer’s *Iliad*. God was referred to as Jehovah or Yahweh or by some derivative of those names.

The “Elohists” rewrote the ancient history in the Northern Kingdom after the David/Solomon empire split under Rehoboam and Jereboam, and those writers referred to God as *Elohim*. The heroes of this “E” tradition include Jacob and Joseph in particular.

The “Deuteronomist” version of biblical scripture (“D”) probably originated in the book claimed to have been found in the temple early in the reign of Josiah, which led to his modernizing reforms. But those who advocate the Documentary Hypothesis hold that the book of Deuteronomy always had a reform agenda, and that agenda is said to have eventually colored the version of the old history behind the books of Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, and 1 and 2 Kings.

The “Priests” (the authors of “P”) are often said to have written during the Babylonian captivity to keep the captives on the strait and narrow path (P) and to preserve Jewish identity and culture through careful religious observation. As noted earlier, some argue for a pre-exilic origin of at least some of the material often said to be from P. There may be a complex combination of early and late material behind the P source.

Skeptics of the Documentary Hypothesis observe that none of these alleged source documents exist as distinct, ancient documents except in the minds of their hypothesizers.¹⁰ But others have been more guarded,

8. For more detail of the theory, see David Bokovoy, *Authoring the Old Testament: Genesis- Deuteronomy* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2014); and Kevin Barney, “Reflections on the Documentary Hypothesis,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 33, no. 1 (Spring 2000): 57–99; https://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue_V33N01_79.pdf.

9. Grant, “The Book of Mormon Brass Plates and Their Prophets.”

10. For example, see Stephen Smoot, “J, E, D, P and Me: Some Thoughts on the Documentary Hypothesis,” *Ploni Almoni* (blog), Feb. 28, 2014, <https://www.plonialmonimormon.com/2014/02/jedp-and-me-some-thoughts-on.html>,

recognizing that the process of reducing revelation to writing is as individual as the personalities of the prophets involved. Brigham Young, for example, who lived most of his life before Wellhausen's version of the Documentary Hypothesis was settled in 1878, observed that Moses obtained his information from those who went before him and "picked out what he considered necessary" when he compiled his canon.¹¹ While some of those who advocate the Documentary Hypothesis would take issue with the assumption that Moses's name should appear in the Pentateuch at all, it is disingenuous to deny that Brigham Young was alert to the issues that faced ancient scriptural editors.

David Bokovoy has observed that some faith-based modern scholars have suggested that the Documentary Hypothesis is dead, while reasserting the inspired unity and inerrancy of the original biblical texts beginning with Moses.¹² While Bokovoy acknowledges that recent continental scholarship has "adopted a 'Fragmentary' or 'Supplementary' Hypothesis" to explain Pentateuchal sources, those scholars are simply striving to understand Pentateuchal composition "in the most appropriate terms," which include its documentary elements.¹³ In relation to the Book of Mormon, Bokovoy suggests that the references to the five books of Moses are "clearly anachronistic" since "the concept of five Mosaic books" did not eventuate until well after the exile.¹⁴ The reference to "five" books of Moses in 1 Nephi 5:11 may be anachronistic and a result of a gloss or translation choice by Joseph Smith, but could also include a handful of earlier versions of documents related to the Pentateuch, possibly including a text related to the Book of Moses in our Pearl of Great Price. Based on textual analysis — akin to the literary analysis behind much of source criticism — Noel Reynolds's view is that the Brass Plates may well have contained material related to the Book of Moses which Joseph Smith later translated and which now forms part

referring to Kenneth Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2003), 492. Smoot also cites other scholars who object to the "conventional documentary hypothesis." These include Umberto Cassuto, R. Norman Whybray, and Latter-day Saint scholars Richard Neitzel Holzapfel, Dana M. Pike, and David Rolph Seely.

11. Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, eds. D.W. Evans, J.Q. Cannon, and Julia Young (Liverpool, UK: Albert Carrington, 1872), 14:116.

12. David Bokovoy, "The Death of the Documentary Hypothesis," *When Gods Were Men – Patheos* (blog), Jan. 29, 2014, <https://www.patheos.com/blogs/davidbokovoy/2014/01/the-death-of-the-documentary-hypothesis/>.

13. Ibid.

14. Bokovoy, *Authoring the Old Testament*, 203.

of the Pearl of Great Price in the Latter-day Saint scriptural canon.¹⁵ Bokovoy's view that the Book of Mormon concept of a personal devil and a redemptive Christ are also anachronistic before the 2nd century BC¹⁶ is also answered if a version of the Book of Moses which now forms part of the Pearl of Great Price were part of the Brass Plates.

John Sorenson has probably gone furthest in explaining the implications of the Documentary Hypothesis for Book of Mormon readers:

There appears good evidence that the Book of Mormon contains elements which are congruent with what scholars of the Old Testament distinguish as the E or Elohist source. To biblical scholars this congruence should invite serious attention to the Book of Mormon for what it may reveal to them about Old Testament sources. To Latter-day Saints, the presence of E materials in the Book of Mormon should serve as a challenge and stimulus to examine more carefully

15. Noel B. Reynolds, "The Brass Plates Version of Genesis," in *By Study and Also by Faith: Essays in Honor of Hugh W. Nibley on the Occasion of his Eightieth Birthday, 27 March 1990*, eds. John M. Lundquist and Stephen D. Ricks (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1990), 2:136–73; republished at *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 34 (2020): 63–96, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/the-brass-plates-version-of-genesis/>. Note also the recent revisitation of this scholarship in Noel Reynolds and Jeff Lindsay, "'Strong Like unto Moses': The Case for Ancient Roots in the Book of Moses Based on Book of Mormon Usage of Related Content Apparently from the Brass Plates" (Presentation, Tracing Ancient Threads in the Book of Moses Conference, Provo, UT, Sept. 18–19, 2020), <https://interpreterfoundation.org/conferences/2020-book-of-moses-conference/papers/reynolds/>. This presentation was published as Jeff Lindsay and Noel B. Reynolds, "'Strong Like unto Moses': The Case for Ancient Roots in the Book of Moses Based on Book of Mormon Usage of Related Content Apparently from the Brass Plates," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 44 (2021): 1–92, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/strong-like-unto-moses-the-case-for-ancient-roots-in-the-book-of-moses-based-on-book-of-mormon-usage-of-related-content-apparently-from-the-brass-plates/>.

16. Bokovoy, *Authoring the Old Testament*, 207–11. Bokovoy points out that references to Cain and Abel are from J and not E, posing a problem if Book of Mormon writers only had access to E sources (*ibid.*, 206). However, there is no reason to assume that the assignment of the story of Cain and Abel to J means that Northern Kingdom traditions or various materials on the Brass Plates could not have also included the basic information found in the Book of Mormon. A specific solution to concerns about the mention of Cain and Abel in the Book of Mormon is provided if something like the Pearl of Great Price version of the Book of Moses formed part of the Brass Plates.

the scriptures entrusted to them, and to participate actively and cooperatively in elucidating both the texts and their interpretations.¹⁷

The Elements in the Book of Mormon that got Sorenson's attention included Josephite rather than Jewish genealogy; the prophecies and counsel of Northern prophets who did not refer to or focus on Jerusalem or the Davidic covenant, but who did reference God's special covenants with Joseph that are not mentioned in the Old Testament; an emphasis on Egyptian tradition and language that corresponds with the experience of Joseph, Ephraim and Manasseh in that country; the use of Jacob's personal name in preference to the more nationalistic "Israel"; and the preference for derivatives of El rather than Yahweh as the name for God.¹⁸

Relying on Richard Elliott Friedman, BYU Student Allen Kendall thought it possible that the Brass Plates contained elements of the D tradition, since that tradition stemmed from northern priests centered in the original tabernacle complex at Shiloh.¹⁹ But I believe the attribution of the D source to northern priests needs further research. While priests who relocated to Jerusalem from Shiloh may have become ardent supporters of the centralization programs of successive kings

17. Sorenson, *The Brass Plates and Biblical Scholarship*, 38–39. Bokovoy (*Authoring the Old Testament*, 214) comes to a similar conclusion: "Though some of the conclusions scholars reach through Higher Criticism certainly create some challenges for the Book of Mormon's ancient claims, Latter-day Saint students should not be afraid to give these matters careful consideration. Oftentimes issues such as the book's use of Satan and its reliance on named authors are resolved through a close, critical reading of the text. Other matters, however, including the text's references to the "five books of Moses" and its advanced Christology prove more difficult. ... However, as with all scripture, the Book of Mormon's spiritual validity is a matter that transcends questions of historicity."

And as mentioned earlier, some of Bokovoy's concerns are likely already resolved if Reynolds and Lindsay are correct in their surmise that at least something directly related to the Book of Moses in the Pearl of Great Price formed part of the Brass Plates.

18. *Ibid.*, 33–36.

19. Kendall, *Deuteronomistic Contribution*, 4, referring to Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?*, 123–24. Friedman's reason for giving the Deuteronomists a Northern origin, was the fact that Josiah's reforms included the destruction of the worship places Solomon had created for those who wanted to worship the false gods Ashtoreth and Chemosh. But Northern priests were not the only Israelites who detested that accommodation. Descendants of Judah may also have deplored the accommodation of false gods and may have had greater cause for supporting centralization, since David was the first centralizer and was their ancestor.

out of political expediency, they must have been aware of the localized worship Moses and Joshua intended when they entered their promised land without a capital city.²⁰

When he was a University of Utah student, Colby Townsend hypothesized that the Pentateuch account upon which the Book of Mormon relies came straight from Joseph Smith's King James Bible.²¹ But from what follows it will be clear that his analysis, like that of this author, is incomplete.

John Welch's suggestion that the Brass Plates were likely prepared in Jerusalem at the direction of King Josiah between 620 and 610 BC, because metal plates would not "wear out or become illegible through extensive use"²² by itself does not account for their northern orientation.

Given that the Book of Mormon is the unashamed product of redactors with an agenda,²³ the abridgements underlying the

20. In an article on the origins of the synagogue, I suggest that King David usurped priestly authority when he centralized Israelite worship at Jerusalem as part of his campaign for unity and national control. See A. Keith Thompson, "Nephite Insights into Israelite Worship Practices before the Babylonian Captivity," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 3 (2013): 155, 168. Roland De Vaux has observed that David's installation of the Ark of the Covenant at Jerusalem changed forever the focus of common Israelite worship. Hezekiah and Josiah "tried to make Jerusalem's Temple not merely the central sanctuary of the nation, but the only sanctuary in which public cult could be performed." Local sanctuaries were suppressed, including those in the former Northern Kingdom, when the sanctuary at Bethel was dismantled. See Roland De Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions* (Grand Rapids, MI: MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 336–37. Such action was not likely supported by Northern priests.

21. Colby J. Townsend, "Appropriate Adaptation of J material in the Book of Mormon" (Bachelor's Thesis, Faculty of Arts, University of Utah, 2016); https://www.academia.edu/26840035/Appropriation_and_Adaptation_of_J_Material_in_the_Book_of_Mormon.

22. John W. Welch, "Authorship of the Book of Isaiah in Light of the Book of Mormon" in *Isaiah in the Book of Mormon*, eds. Donald W. Parry and John W. Welch (FARMS, Provo, Utah, 1998), 431.

23. President Dieter F. Uchtdorf ("What is Truth?" *CEs Devotionals*, January 2013, <https://www.lds.org/broadcasts/article/ces-devotionals/2013/01/what-is-truth?lang=eng>) observed that some parts of the Nephite agenda were not constructive: "In the Book of Mormon, both the Nephites as well as the Lamanites created their own 'truths' about each other. The Nephites' 'truth' about the Lamanites was that they 'were a wild, and ferocious, and a blood-thirsty people' (Mosiah 10:12), never able to accept the gospel. The Lamanites' 'truth' about the Nephites was that Nephi had stolen his brother's birthright and that Nephi's descendants were liars who continued to rob the Lamanites of what was rightfully theirs" (Mosiah 10:12; Alma 20:13). These 'truths' fed their hatred for one

Documentary Hypothesis and other aspects of source criticism should not challenge the faith of Latter-day Saints or impede identification of the contents of the Brass Plates. Indeed, if modern scholars are able to identify scriptural material that originated in the Northern Kingdom, and if the Brass Plates and the Book of Mormon do have a Northern pedigree, then some aspects of the Documentary Hypothesis and source criticism may assist in identifying material in the Book of Mormon that came from the Brass Plates. On the other hand, one should recall that the dating often proposed for the various sources of the Old Testament are not established with certainty, and there may be reasons to question the tendency of some scholars to favor late, post-exilic dates for much of the Old Testament text and to deny the historicity of events such as the such as the Exodus, which plays a prominent role in the Book of Mormon.²⁴ Likewise, perhaps “P” includes pre-exilic material or was largely composed before the exile, as argued by Richard Elliot Friedman and others.²⁵

Part II: The Agenda of the Book of Mormon Prophets

Even though the not-so-subliminal prejudices of the Nephites in the Book of Mormon may be detected by latter-day readers,²⁶ there can be no doubt about the primary agenda of the Book of Mormon editors. When writing the specially prepared title page,²⁷ Moroni explained that the purpose of the abridgement was

another until it finally consumed them all. Needless to say, many examples in the Book of Mormon contradict both of these stereotypes. Nevertheless, the Nephites and Lamanites believed these “truths” that shaped the destiny of this once-mighty and beautiful people.”

24. On the Exodus, see James K. Hoffmeier, *Ancient Israel in Sinai: The Evidence for the Authenticity of the Wilderness Tradition* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2005), Kindle edition; and Joshua Berman, “Was There an Exodus?,” *Mosaic Magazine* (March 2, 2015), <http://mosaicmagazine.com/essay/2015/03/was-there-an-exodus/>.

25. Richard Elliott Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?*, 2nd ed. (New York: HarperCollins, 1997), 204–16. Also see Mehaheem Haran, “Behind the Scenes of History: Determining the Date of the Priestly Source,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 100, no. 3 (Sept. 1981): 321–33, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3265957>.

26. Uchtdorf, “What is Truth?” President Uchtdorf pointed, as examples, to scriptures such as Mosiah 10:12 and Alma 20:13.

27. Joseph Smith (*History of the Church* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1948], 1:71) stated that

“the title-page of the Book of Mormon is a literal translation, taken from the very last leaf, on the left hand side of the collection or book of plates, which

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

That summary affirmed Moroni's exhortation to all who would read the abridgement his father Mormon had prepared, and which Moroni had completed. Moroni prayed that latter-day readers

might come unto Christ ... and be perfected in him, [that by] deny[ing them]selves of all ungodliness, and lov[ing] God with all [their] might, mind and strength ... by his grace [they might] be perfect in Christ ... [and be] sanctified in Christ by the grace of God, through the shedding of the blood of Christ ... that [they might] become holy, without spot. (Moroni 10:30, 32–33)

Mormon's focus was the same:

I would that ye should come unto Christ, who is the Holy One of Israel, and partake of his salvation, and the power of his redemption. Yea, come unto him, and offer your whole souls as an offering unto him, and continue in fasting and prayers, and endure to the end; and as the Lord liveth ye will be saved. (Omni 1:26)

And more than 800 years earlier, when Nephi redacted his father Lehi's record and oral account into his own new "N" account, he said that "the fullness of [his] intent [was] that [he might] persuade men to come unto the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, and be saved" (1 Nephi 6:4).

Like Mormon and Moroni, Nephi did not consider that his record was just for the Lehiite remnant of Jacob. It was prepared for "as many of the Gentiles as w[ould] repent [and become] the covenant people of the Lord" (2 Nephi 30:2). For the Messiah was not only to be God's servant "to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel."

contained the record which has been translated, the language of the whole running the same as all Hebrew writing in general; and that said title page is not by any means a modern composition, either of mine or of any other man who has lived or does live in this generation."

The Messiah was also given “for a light to the Gentiles, [that he might be God’s] salvation unto the ends of the earth” (1 Nephi 21:6).

Hence Nephi’s final call and testimony, like those of Mormon and Moroni after him, “as the voice of one crying from the dust” (2 Nephi 33:13), was that all the world might “hearken unto these words and believe in Christ” (2 Nephi 33:10).

But before I review the scripture used among the Nephites by the resurrected Christ in an effort to identify what was new and what was already familiar from the Brass Plates, I review Nephi’s 1 Nephi 13 comparison of the Brass Plates and the book of Jewish scripture which he saw in vision among the Gentiles and which he saw brought to the American continent by the Gentiles of the last day.

In this contextual discussion of source criticism, one thing memorable about Nephi’s comparison is his continued use of the term *Jews* as the originators of the book of scripture he saw coming to the American continent with the Gentiles.²⁸ In 2 Nephi 33:8, which the current publishers of the Book of Mormon suggest was written as many as 40 years after his 1 Nephi 13 account, Nephi says that he uses the term *Jew* to describe “them from whence [he] came.” While it is possible that the intervening years had caused some separation in his mind, it seems more likely that he always differentiated between the descendants of Jacob/Israel who descended from the tribe of Judah, and his own ancestors who descended from Joseph. If that is so, then it may be that it is not just the Book of Mormon that Latter-day Saints should see as “the stick of Joseph” that would become one with “the stick of Judah,” as seen by Ezekiel in vision (Ezekiel 37:15–20). The Brass Plates should be recognized as providing the foundation of that “Josephite stick” and kingdom in the last days. If that is so, then a larger book of scripture encompassing the Brass Plates, the existing Book of Mormon, and the sealed and as yet untranslated portion of the gold plates will be compiled during the millennium and will comprise the whole of the stick of Joseph, which will re-establish the Josephite kingdom that will become one with the record and kingdom of the Jews in that day.

Regardless of when Ezekiel’s vision of scriptural and Israelite unity is completely fulfilled, Nephi’s vision in 1 Nephi 13 let him know that

28. For a perspective of the use of *Jew*, *Jews*, and *Judah* in Nephi’s writings, see Matthew L. Bowen, “What Thank They the Jews? (2 Nephi 29:4): A Note on the Name ‘Judah’ and Antisemitism,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 12 (2014): 111–25, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/what-thank-they-the-jews-2-nephi-294-a-note-on-the-name-judah-and-antisemitism/>.

there were two separate scriptural records or traditions, and they were compared for him by his instructor:

The book that thou beholdest is a record of the Jews, which contains the covenants of the Lord which he hath made unto the house of Israel; and it also containeth many of the prophecies of the holy prophets; and it is a record like unto the engravings which are upon the plates of brass, save there are not so many; nevertheless, they contain the covenants of the Lord which he hath made unto the house of Israel. (1 Nephi 13:23)

The angel instructor then explained to Nephi how the Jewish record became corrupted, and he placed that corruption at the doorstep, not of ancient redactors of the Pentateuch suggested in the Documentary Hypothesis,²⁹ but of redactors within the Christian church after the departure of the “twelve apostles of the Lamb.”³⁰ That corruption would be cured by the things to be written by Nephi’s seed and by “other books” that would come forth from the Gentiles to “the remnant of the seed of [Nephi’s] brethren.”³¹ Together, the two separate scriptural traditions would “make known to all kindreds, tongues and people, that the Lamb of God is the Son of the Eternal Father and the Savior of the world; and that all men must come unto him, or they cannot be saved.”³²

While verse 23 of 1 Nephi 13 is a little ambiguous as to whether the Brass Plates record or the Jewish record was larger, it seems that Nephi and his instructing angel intended us to understand that the Brass Plates contained more scripture. But it is not clear whether that was a comparison of the overall size of the Bible as carried to the New World by the Christian Gentiles (including the New Testament), or a comparison of the size of the record of the Jews as it existed, albeit uncompiled, at the time Nephi took the Brass Plates from Laban around 600 BC. Either way, the Brass Plates contained significantly more.

The comparison draws attention to how many of our current Bible’s books of scripture existed in 600 BC. Though that question will be discussed in more detail in Part IV, it is appropriate here to observe that

29. The Jewish scriptures are described as having gone “forth from the Jews in purity unto the Gentiles according to the truth which is in God” (1 Nephi 13:25), which suggests that the work of the J, E, P, and D redactors had not sullied God’s purposes as later redactions by pre-Restoration Christians would do.

30. 1 Nephi 13:26–34.

31. 1 Nephi 13:35, 39.

32. 1 Nephi 13:40.

the relative size of the Old Testament (as it existed in 600 BC) depends on whether or not we attribute the records of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles (and the books of Joshua and Judges) to scribes working on earlier materials during the Babylonian captivity. The “Jewish Old Testament” canon in 600 BC certainly excluded parts of Jeremiah and Deuteronomy,³³ as well as the entire books of Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Obadiah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. But there are other uncertainties, since the authorship of Isaiah is such a vexed question for non-Latter-day Saint biblical scholars who do not accept that prophets can be inspired with noncontextual information.³⁴

33. Jeremiah had not been exiled or killed before Lehi’s departure, though he was imprisoned (1 Nephi 7:14), and he continued to write. Deuteronomy was likely edited a number of times for different purposes, even after the exile. It is therefore likely that the version of Deuteronomy we have in the King James Bible is different from the version of Deuteronomy featured on the Brass Plates.

34. Although there are no quotations in the Book of Mormon from so-called Third Isaiah (chapters 56–66), the quotations to Second Isaiah are controversial for some, since the Book of Mormon’s attribution of those chapters to the original Isaiah would be anachronistic if non-Latter-day Saint scholars are correct that the original Isaiah wrote only chapters 1–39. But since the Book of Mormon features many prophets seeing events well beyond their immediate context (for example, Jacob and Nephi knew the name of Christ more than 500 years before He was born), scholarly criticism of Isaiah because he could not have known the personal name of Cyrus, King of Persia, 250 years ahead of time, is simply another example of failing to exercise faith in transcendence of any kind. See, for example, John W. Welch, “Authorship of the Book of Isaiah in Light of the Book of Mormon,” in *Isaiah in the Book of Mormon*, 433. Other non-Latter-day Saint scholars have suggested that the appearance of Cyrus’s name in the Isaiah text may be the simple result of interpolation by a later scribe. But that explanation for the appearance of Cyrus’s name in Isaiah has not been universally accepted and does not explain the many other places in Old Testament scripture where prophets are said to have foreseen events or people well beyond their context, including the birthplace of Christ (Micah 5:2), the name of Josiah (1 Kings 13:1ff, though some critics also argue that this is a scribal interpolation after the fact), and the subjugation of Tyre by the Babylonians (Ezekiel 26:2ff and Zechariah 9:1ff. Yet note here that the less than complete fulfilment of Ezekiel’s prophecy of Tyre’s destruction, an example of a prophecy seemingly thwarted due to the free-will actions of those involved, does not mean he was not a “true prophet.” See Daniel C. Peterson, “P.T. Barnum *Redivivus*,” *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 7, no. 2 [1995]: 49–50, <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1246&context=msr>). For more detail on the consequences for the authorship and interpretation of the Book of Isaiah, see, for example, Tremper Longman III and Raymond B. Dillard, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 301–20.

Though the Book of Mormon editor redactors acknowledged they had faults which they did not recognize,³⁵ they still wrote to persuade the latter-day world that Jesus Christ was the Son of God sent by the Father as the Promised Messiah to redeem all men from the consequences of sin and physical death. To the extent that the Book of Mormon editor redactors and their source prophets shared this vision, they likely used only material from their existing scriptural canon (the Brass Plates) when it contributed to that goal.

In the parts of this article which follow, we cannot often detect allusions to an unknown text when the Book of Mormon authors and editors have not identified that text. But some allusions to known biblical texts can be identified, and they may confirm the existence of the relevant texts on the Brass Plates.

However, even strong allusions to earlier texts after Christ's visit do not confirm the existence of those texts on the Brass Plates, since Christ gave the Nephites new scriptures,³⁶ and it is not clear if the Nephite recorders acknowledged all He gave them.³⁷ Though I will identify the texts Jesus used or alluded to in the Nephite record of His resurrected ministry in Part III, the purpose of the following parts will be to identify Old Testament scripture held by the Nephites before Christ's coming. If Mormon (writing in the 4th century AD) referred to scriptures to which his earlier source writers did not have access, those references could undermine my analysis, but his editorializing is generally easy to identify and does not appear to interfere with the task of identifying the contents of the Brass Plates.

Part III: The Scripture that Jesus Used During His Nephite Ministry

Christ's primary texts during His Nephite ministry were His own Sermon on the Mount, chapters 52 and 54 of Isaiah, and Micah 5:8–15. The post-1830 editors of the Book of Mormon have added many helpful

35. Moroni recognized that he did not write as well as the brother of Jared, but recorded that he was instructed that his work would nonetheless achieve the Lord's purposes (Ether 12:23–29). At other places, he recognized that there might be faults in his work, but he did not know of any (Mormon 8:16–17), which idea he repeated when he wrote his title page abstract of the work as a whole. Compare also the concern with a possible mistake in 3 Nephi 8:1–2.

36. 3 Nephi 23:6; 24, 25, where the provision of new scripture is very clear.

37. For example, he gently reproveth them for their failure to record Samuel's prophecy that many would rise from the dead at the time Christ was resurrected (3 Nephi 23:6–13).

footnotes that highlight allusions to other scriptures, but those references do not present as Christ's primary reference material, since He did not refer to them directly.³⁸

The Nephite restatement of Christ's Sermon on the Mount has occasioned analysis for other reasons, including criticism because it is so similar to the King James Bible version. While that discussion does not contribute to this analysis of the known contents of the Brass Plates, it is significant to note that Stanford Carmack's recent work on Book of Mormon grammar raises other possible reasons for the similarity.³⁹

Christ's quotations from Isaiah likewise do not greatly assist identification of the contents of the Brass Plates, since they came from sections of that prophet's work which had already been quoted by others.⁴⁰ Earlier reference to Isaiah chapters in the Book of Mormon text is also a strong argument for the presence of all the so-called First (chapters 1–39) and Second Isaiah (40–55) chapters on the Brass Plates. The current Book of Mormon footnote references to the so-called Third Isaiah chapters (56–66) are unhelpful in identifying neither their

38. *En passant*, since Christ is the source of all scripture, it is theoretically impossible to identify earlier sources from his word. That observation raises the question of how prophets interpret and translate the revelations they receive, which is beyond the scope of this article, in part because Christ quoted several earlier prophets he had inspired when he ministered among the Nephites.

39. See the articles Stanford has published with *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* about Book of Mormon grammar and syntax since 2014 (a listing is at <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/author/stanfordc/>). Some commentators on the site have observed that Carmack's insights, coupled with a better understanding of what Joseph Smith did when he translated the Book of Mormon (including particularly statements that the words he recited to his scribes appeared on his seer stone in his hat until they had been recorded) suggest that the words that God gave Joseph Smith in the translation fit an earlier time period more than it did Joseph's native language. Such involvement may account for the prominent use of King James Bible language, particularly if one or more of those transcendental participants in the translation process had previously been involved in translation of the Holy Bible into English.

40. Though Isaiah 54, which he quoted in full in 3 Nephi 22, had not been referenced by earlier Book of Mormon prophets, earlier prophets had quoted extensively from chapter 52 (which he quoted in full in 3 Nephi 20) and chapter 55. Isaiah 52:1–2 is quoted in 2 Nephi 8:24–25; Isaiah 52:7 in 1 Nephi 13:37 and in Mosiah 15:14–18; Isaiah 52:10 in 1 Nephi 22:10–11. Isaiah 55:1–2 is quoted in 2 Nephi 9:50–51 and Isaiah 55:1 is quoted again in 2 Nephi 26:25; there are also various references to Isaiah 53 (for example, Mosiah 14 and Mosiah 15:10). And Moroni quoted Isaiah 54:2 in the second to last verse of the Book of Mormon.

authorship nor their presence on the Brass Plates, since Christ may have provided them to the Nephites, even though Mormon's text does not say so in our current translation.⁴¹

But the eight repeated verses from Micah raise different questions. Not only are they in part repeated and expanded twice on the second day of Christ's Nephite ministry,⁴² but Christ does not identify the words of Micah as material the Nephites did not already have.⁴³ While this may suggest that Micah's words did appear on the Plates of Brass, it is odd that they are not quoted, referred to, and, arguably, not even alluded to in the earlier part of our current Book of Mormon.⁴⁴

The absence of references to Micah before Christ's ministry is striking for two reasons. First, it is reasonable to think the emphasis of Nephite writers on so-called E materials from the Pentateuch and their proposed Northern Kingdom affinities would have made Micah's prophecies about the latter-day ascendancy of the remnant of Jacob a natural focus of their prophesying, even though Micah lacked any obvious Northern Kingdom connections.⁴⁵ And second, if Micah's fifth chapter appeared

41. That is, if they were remiss once in including reference to scripture or prophecy provided to them (3 Nephi 23:9–13, esp. 12), then it is possible that they overlooked such records on other occasions, however improbable that may be after correction from Jesus Christ himself.

42. 3 Nephi 20:15–21; 21:11–21.

43. Contrast 3 Nephi 24:1, where Christ expressly said He was giving them scriptures which the Nephites did not have.

44. The author has surveyed the footnote references to Micah in the current Book of Mormon before Christ's visit. There are three in 1 Nephi, ten in 2 Nephi, one in Jacob, three in Mosiah, two in Alma, and two in Helaman. None of them are explicit references to words uttered by Micah, and in each case the thought cross-referenced by the footnotes can be (and several times has been) linked to additional prophets. For example, Micah is not the only source of the idea that the possessions of others may be consecrated for the gain of the house of Israel (2 Nephi 2:2 and 2 Nephi 32:9, both footnoted to Micah 4:13), or that prophets can be filled with the Holy Spirit (1 Nephi 17:47 and Alma 24:9, both footnoted to Micah 3:8). But there is a certain unique resonance between Micah's idea that some wicked people plan evil deeds while pondering in their beds (Micah 2:1), and the idea in Mosiah 13:1 that some people spend all their time devising iniquity. Perhaps Micah or redacted parts of Micah did appear on the Brass Plates, but it remains surprising that Micah's words in chapter 5:7–15 were not referenced or even alluded to before Christ's visit in 3 Nephi 16, 20, and 21, even though Mormon referred to them afterwards in Mormon 5:24.

45. Micah was a Judahite prophet who lived between about 740 and 696 BC. He thus prophesied before Lehi's party left Jerusalem; would have been aware of the destruction of the Northern Kingdom by the Assyrians; and was a contemporary

on the Brass Plates, one would have expected Alma₂ to have made reference to Bethlehem as the place of Jesus's birth in Alma 7 rather than the more generic "land of Jerusalem," which he chose in Alma 7:10. Of course it is possible that the Northern Kingdom roots and influences on the Book of Mormon writers or their lack of Davidic ancestry may have occasioned the omission of a reference to the Messiah's Davidic lineage and the specific Davidic place of birth; but again, that seems unlikely, given the Nephite prophets' near obsession with all the details they could obtain about the coming Messiah's life, death, and resurrection. I include below two tables (Table 1 and Table 2) to help readers identify where Christ quoted or alluded to Micah in His teaching at Bountiful. In Table 1 I identify the passages where the quotes were given. In Table 2 I show the extended quotation from 3 Nephi 21 and Micah 5 side-by-side.

Christ's quotations from Malachi are less remarkable, since unlike Micah, Malachi prophesied great things about the future of Israel but only after the departure of the Lehite colony around 600 BC. Thus no one suggests that Malachi could have had a place on the Brass Plates, and Christ expressly confirmed the contrary.⁴⁶

Table 1. Related passages in the Book of Mormon and Micah.

Book of Mormon Passage	Related Passage in Micah	Notes on the Relationship to Micah
3 Nephi 16:15	Micah 5:8	An allusion, referring to members of the House of Israel being among the Gentiles and treading them down.
3 Nephi 20:16–17	Micah 5:8–9	Fairly close quotation of the KJV.
3 Nephi 20:18–19	Micah 4:12–13	Fairly close quotation of most of the KJV passage.
3 Nephi 21:12–18	Micah 5:8–14	Fairly close quotation of the KJV, with some changes.
3 Nephi 21:21	Micah 5:15	Fairly direct use but with some changes.
Mormon 5:24	Micah 5:8	An allusion to remnants of the House of Israel being among the Gentiles as a lion, tearing in pieces, and none can deliver.

of Isaiah, Amos, and Hosea. But though his prophecies were directed toward Jerusalem and the Northern Kingdom, he was born southwest in Moresheth-Gath. He prophesied not only of the destruction of both the Israelite kingdoms and their capitals; more memorably he was quoted from the mouth of the resurrected Savior to the Nephites, and he prophesied of the restoration of remnants of both in triumph over the Gentiles in the latter days.

46. 3 Nephi 24:1.

If the words of Micah, or at least chapter 5, were not a part of the Brass Plates record, why not? And does the answer to that question suggest reasons for the presence or absence from the Brass Plates of other scriptural material that did exist by 600 BC?

Micah lived southeast of Jerusalem in the 8th century BC and may have been politically unpopular in Jerusalem. He was a contemporary of Isaiah, and these two prophets either had access to the same source material, or they quoted from one another.⁴⁷ They both prophesied of the last days and they both prophesied about the remnant of Jacob in those days; and both anticipated the Messiah's Davidic lineage. While there is no obvious reason why Micah's writings should not have appeared on the Brass Plates, perhaps Micah's references to the Messiah's Davidic ancestry and birthplace were omitted to conform to Northern Kingdom traditions related to the E source for the Pentateuch. But that does not explain the absence of references to the remnant prophecies later in Micah chapter 5, which would surely have appealed to all the Nephite prophets, including Nephi and Jacob. The reference to the "mountain of the Lord's house" prophecy from Isaiah 2, which Jacob quoted in 2 Nephi 12, would surely also have benefitted from reemphasis if Micah's adjustments⁴⁸ were added.

Table 2. Related verses in 3 Nephi 21 and Micah.

3 Nephi 21	Micah 5
12 And my people who are a remnant of Jacob shall be among the Gentiles, yea, in the midst of them as a lion among the beasts of the forest, as a young lion among the flocks of sheep, who, if he go through both treadeth down and teareth in pieces, and none can deliver.	8 And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the Gentiles in the midst of many people as a lion among the beasts of the forest, as a young lion among the flocks of sheep: who, if he go through, both treadeth down, and teareth in pieces, and none can deliver.

47. The most striking example of their use of the same material comes by comparison of Isaiah 2 and Micah 4. Though the Isaiah passage about the "mountain of the Lord's house" in the last days is more familiar, Micah used almost exactly the same words in four of his verses with variations that respond to reflection.

48. Micah 4:2–4. The Micah reference adds that the God of Israel who will judge among the nations at that day will "rebuke strong nations afar off," which rebuke would have confirmed to the Nephites the idea that his rulership would extend back across the oceans to the old world from which their fathers had come. And verse four amplifies the pastoral peace in which all people would live, since "every man under his fig tree" would live unafraid.

3 Nephi 21	Micah 5
13 Their hand shall be lifted up upon their adversaries, and all their enemies shall be cut off.	9 Thine hand shall be lifted up upon thine adversaries, and all thine enemies shall be cut off.
14 Yea, wo be unto the Gentiles except they repent; for it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Father, that I will cut off thy horses out of the midst of thee, and I will destroy thy chariots;	10 And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord, that I will cut off thy horses out of the midst of thee, and I will destroy thy chariots:
15 And I will cut off the cities of thy land, and throw down all thy strongholds;	11 And I will cut off thy cities of thy land, and throw down all thy strong holds:
16 And I will cut off witchcrafts out of thy land, and thou shalt have no more soothsayers;	12 And I will cut off witchcrafts out of thine hand; and thou shall have no more soothsayers:
17 Thy graven images I will also cut off, and thy standing images out of the midst of thee, and thou shalt no more worship the works of thy hands;	13 Thy graven images also will I cut off, and thy standing images out of the midst of thee; and thou shalt no more worship the work of thine hands.
18 And I will pluck up thy groves out of the midst of thee; so will I destroy thy cities.	14 And I will pluck up thy groves out of the midst of thee; so will I destroy thy cities.
19 And it shall come to pass that all lyings, and deceivings, and envying, and strifes, and priestcrafts, and whoredoms, shall be done away.	
20 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;	
21 And I will execute vengeance and fury upon them, even as upon the heathen, such as they have not heard.	15 And I will execute vengeance in anger and fury upon the heathen, such as they have not heard.
22 But if they repent and hearken upon 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;	
23 And they shall assist my people, the remnant of Jacob, and also as many of the house of Israel as shall come, that they may build a city, which shall be called the New Jerusalem.	

The best reason for Micah's possible omission from the Brass Plates record that presents itself to me is that the custodians and recorders on the Brass Plates included only material they considered Josephite in its focus and teaching. Isaiah and Jeremiah did not exclude the descendants of Joseph from their exposition of Israel's destiny, but other Judahite prophets, including Micah, may have had that reputation.

What case can be made for the presence of the writings of other Old World prophets on the Brass Plates?

Part IV: What Scriptures Did the Brass Plates Contain?

I have already explained why Micah chapter 5 may have been missing from the Brass Plates, and I have said the likely reason is that Micah was too Jewish in emphasis for the tastes of those charged with maintaining the Brass Plates record in Laban's custody.

Some other Old Testament books certainly did not appear on the Brass Plates. Malachi was not there, because Christ said so in 3 Nephi 24:1 and because we know historically that he lived nearly two hundred years after Lehi and his party left Jerusalem and the Old World.

The words of many other Old Testament prophets could not have been included in the Brass Plates record for the same reason — that is, because those books were not composed until after Lehi's party departed around 600 BC. As mentioned above, those include some parts of Jeremiah and Lamentations, as well as all of Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Ezekiel, Daniel, Obadiah, Haggai, and Zechariah. But did the Brass Plates contain Joshua, Judges, and both books of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles, and if so, how close was the Brass Plates version of those books to that familiar to modern Latter-day Saints from the King James Bible?

Kevin Barney suggests that the books of Moses on the Brass Plates may have been there in a different configuration than we are familiar with today.⁴⁹ He makes that suggestion for two reasons. First, in several places in the Book of Mormon the reference is to “the books of Moses” rather than to “the five books of Moses,” and even where there is now reference to “the five” books of Moses, he suggests that Joseph Smith may have added the number “five” because he felt he independently knew there were five books of Moses, and he was justified in being more specific.⁵⁰ Second, he notes that the version of the Ten Commandments

49. Barney, “Reflections on the Documentary Hypothesis,” 74.

50. Ibid. Barney even suggests that Joseph's original dictation may have only stated “books of Moses” or “words of Moses” without the number “five” each time

which Abinadi quoted to the priests of King Noah varies a little from our King James version in Exodus 20.⁵¹ We ought not be surprised, since there is variation between the version of the Ten Commandments familiar to modern-day Protestants and Catholics. Barney's point is that there may have been separate E (Brass Plates?), P (Exodus 20), and D (Deuteronomy 5) versions of the Ten Commandments, and we do not know which version Abinadi memorized, presumably with the Brass Plates as his source.

It also seems to me that the Brass Plates contained some version of Joshua and Judges, since the Nephites were familiar with the history canvassed by those books, and because King Mosiah₂ appears to have reflected on the difference between kingdoms and judicial republics in the light of the Brass Plates record, before he recommended a form of judicial republic to his composite Nephite/Mulekite people in Mosiah 29.

We know that the Brass Plates also contained at least four other books of (Northern-sourced?) scripture which were unknown to the Jews, or which they chose not to include in their scriptural canon: Zenos, Zenock, Neum, and Ezias. The Nephite prophets quoted them to highlight aspects of the Messiah's life and redemptive mission.⁵² The Nephite prophets did not focus on Messiah's Davidic ancestry in those references, but it is possible that Jewish nationalism (perhaps related to the traditions behind the J source) may explain why those scriptures did not appeal to those who compiled the Jewish scriptural canon. Specifically, it is unlikely that the Jews would have appreciated hearing northern E prophets declare that the Israelite Messiah would be raised on a cross and crucified by adherents who relied on the J source and associated traditions.⁵³

when Moses' records were referred to (1 Nephi 5:11; 19:23; 22:20 and Helaman 8:13). Barney's reasoning acknowledges that the earliest edition of the Book of Mormon refers to "five books of Moses" in 1 Nephi 5:11 but observes that the reference in 1 Nephi 19:23 is only to the "books of Moses"; and the first edition referred only to the "book [singular] of Moses." Barney thus speculates that Joseph may have added the number "five" as a "translator's gloss," since he "knew" that there were five books of Moses.

51. Ibid., 75.

52. Zenos: 1 Nephi 19:10, 12, 16; Jacob 5 and 6; Alma 33:13, 15; 34:7; Helaman 8:19, 15:11; 3 Nephi 10:16. Zenock: 1 Nephi 19:10; Alma 33:15; 34:7; Helaman 8:20. Neum: 1 Nephi 19:10. Ezias: Helaman 8:20.

53. Note, however, that Isaiah's references to Messiah's Davidic genealogy were not edited out of Nephi's quotations of Isaiah 11 in 2 Nephi 21. Further, even though Isaiah certainly prophesied about the suffering Messiah in chapters 50 (2 Nephi 7)

Table 3 summarizes the contents of the Brass Plates using our existing King James version of the Old Testament as the comparator.

Table 3. Summary of the contents of the Brass Plates.

Book of Scripture	Included in the Brass Plates	Comment
Genesis	Yes	Likely an “E” version, which included more material about Joseph than KJV.
Exodus	Yes	Likely an “E” version, in which the Ten Commandments were expressed differently than in Deuteronomy; ⁵⁴ Moses at Meribah incident treated more favorably. ⁵⁵
Leviticus	Yes	An “E” version?
Numbers	Yes	An “E” version? Note the difference between the “P” tradition of the Meribah incident. ⁵⁶
Deuteronomy	Yes	Again, the account of the Ten Commandments is different from the accounts in Exodus 20 and 34. ⁵⁷
Joshua	Yes	A Northern Kingdom version?
Judges	Yes	A Northern Kingdom version?
Ruth	Probably not	Likely from a Southern Kingdom document that establishes Christ’s Davidic ancestry.
1 Samuel	Perhaps	A Northern Kingdom version? ⁵⁸

and 53 (Mosiah 14), unlike Zenock and Neum (1 Nephi 19:10), he did not prophesy that his offering for our sins would include death by crucifixion.

54. Barney, “Reflections on the Documentary Hypothesis,” 75. The theory is that the Brass Plates version of the Ten Commandments derived from an original E source elaborated by the P tradition in Exodus 20 and by the D tradition in Deuteronomy 5.

55. Ibid. Barney notes that the Book of Mormon account of “the incident at the waters of Meribah” follows the favorable account of “the E text of Exodus 17:6” rather than the “anti-Moses” account in Numbers 20:1–13, where Moses is said to have been denied entry to the promised land because he struck the rock instead of speaking to it in more precise accordance with the Lord’s instruction.

56. Ibid.

57. Ibid., 90.

58. In his study of Nephi’s allusion to and use of the story of David and Goliath to legitimate his leadership of the Nephite colony, Ben McGuire notes that scholars have identified two major sources for the story in 1 Samuel 17: a shorter and earlier source version in some early Septuagint manuscripts, and the lengthier version in the Masoretic Hebrew text. Nephi alluded only to 1 Samuel 17:4–7, 11, 32, 34–37, 45–46, 51, and 54, and thus did not use any of the longer and likely later text for the David and Goliath narrative. See Ben McGuire, “Nephi and Goliath: A Case Study of Literary Allusion in the Book of Mormon,” *Journal of the Book of Mormon and*

Book of Scripture	Included in the Brass Plates	Comment
2 Samuel	Perhaps	A Northern Kingdom version?
1 Kings	Perhaps	A Northern Kingdom version?
2 Kings	Perhaps	A Northern Kingdom version?
1 Chronicles	Probably not	This is history told from a Southern Kingdom perspective.
2 Chronicles	Probably not	This is history told from a Southern Kingdom perspective.
Ezra	No	Composed after Lehi's departure.
Nehemiah	No	Composed after Lehi's departure.
Esther	No	Composed after Lehi's departure.
Job	Probably not	Job's assurance of a glorious resurrection was not shared by the wicked priests of King Noah. ⁵⁹
Psalms	Probably	Dating the Psalms is difficult; some clearly post-date the exile and were not included. ⁶⁰
Proverbs	Probably	Some may have been included; for example, Lehi appears to have quoted from Proverbs 22:6 in 2 Nephi 4:5. ⁶¹
Song of Solomon	Probably not	Joseph Smith noted in the JST that this book is not inspired, ⁶² and there do not appear to be any obvious quotes from or direct allusions to this work in the Book of Mormon.

other Restoration Scripture 18, no. 1 (2009): 28, <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1535&context=jbms>.

59. Mosiah 18:2. For further detail on what the Book of Mormon peoples understood about the doctrine of resurrection and when they knew it, see A. Keith Thompson, "The Doctrine of Resurrection in the Book of Mormon," *Interpreter, A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 16 (2015): 101–29, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/the-doctrine-of-resurrection-in-the-book-of-mormon/>.

60. John Hilton III, "Old Testament Psalms in the Book of Mormon" in *Ascending the Mountain of the Lord: Temple, Praise and Worship in the Old Testament* (2013 Sperry Symposium), ed., Jeffrey R. Chadwick, Matthew J. Grey, and David Rolph Seely (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2013), 307n6, <https://rsc.byu.edu/ascending-mountain-lord/old-testament-psalms-book-mormon>. Note that there are no explicit references to the Psalms in the Book of Mormon, but John Hilton III identifies "43 phrases that have strong connections between the Book of Mormon and Old Testament Psalms."

61. Note that some of the proverbs were added during the reign of Hezekiah, King of Judah. These may not have appeared on the Brass Plates, particularly if they favored J traditions and sources.

62. Note that Dana M. Pike discussed Joseph Smith's statement that The Song of Solomon is not inspired in detail; in Dana M. Pike, "Reading the Song of Solomon as a Latter-day Saint," *Religious Educator* 15, no. 2 (2014): 91–113, <https://rsc-legacy>.

Book of Scripture	Included in the Brass Plates	Comment
Isaiah	Yes	Note that the Book of Mormon contains no direct quotes from so-called Third Isaiah, chapters 56–66.
Jeremiah	Yes, part	Jeremiah continued to live and write after Lehi's departure from Jerusalem. His words after that date could not be on the Brass Plates.
Lamentations	Perhaps	Ditto.
Ezekiel	No	Composed after Lehi's departure.
Daniel	No	Composed after Lehi's departure.
Hosea	Perhaps	Though Hosea was a Northern Kingdom prophet before the Assyrian invasion, there are no direct quotes from his writings in the Book of Mormon. ⁶³
Joel	Probably not	Though Moroni quoted one of his prophecies to Joseph Smith in September 1823, Joel was a Southern Kingdom prophet, and there are no direct quotes from his writings in the Book of Mormon. ⁶⁴
Amos	Probably not	Though Amos was a Southern prophet, he ministered to the Northern Kingdom before its destruction, so the absence of direct quotes from him in the Book of Mormon is surprising. ⁶⁵

byu.edu/es/node/7588. He also discusses why the words of Song 6:10 appear three times in the Doctrine & Covenants (D&C 5:14; 105:31; and 109:73).

63. Critics observe that the phrases “as the chaff that is driven before the whirlwind” (Hosea 13:3, cf Mosiah 7:30) and “I will hedge up thy way” (Hosea 2:6, cf 2 Nephi 4:33) are evidence of Book of Mormon plagiarism, though they are explicable on other idiomatic grounds (e.g., “Finding the Bible in the Book of Mormon,” *MormonThink*, <http://www.mormonthink.com/mormonstudiesbible.htm>). For similar reasons, the existence of these phrases in the Book of Mormon, does not provide an adequate foundation for a confident assertion that the Brass Plates contained Hosea's writings.

64. Again, *MormonThink*'s “Finding the Bible in the Book of Mormon” can identify phrases from Joel about earthquakes and darkened sun, moon and stars. But references to calamitous natural phenomena are not unique to Joel even in the Bible. For example, there are references to the quaking of the earth in Exodus 19:18; 1 Samuel 14:15 and Nahum 1:5; and there are references to darkened skies in Exodus 10:15; Ecclesiastes 12:2, in multiple places in Isaiah, and in Ezekiel 30:18 and Amos 8:9.

65. But there is another sense in which the lack of any references to Amos in the Book of Mormon is not surprising. And that is because the Northern chroniclers may not have appreciated a negative message from a Southern prophet. On the other hand, Nephi₄ in the Book of Mormon chose the name Amos for his son; and

Book of Scripture	Included in the Brass Plates	Comment
Obadiah	No	Probably composed after Lehi's departure, and he prophesied to the Edomites rather than to Israel.
Jonah	Probably not	Though Jonah was a northern prophet, he did not prophecy to Israel.
Micah	Perhaps in part	For reasons explained above in the text, it is doubtful that Micah 5 was present on the Brass Plates. ⁶⁶
Nahum	No	A southern kingdom prophet, Nahum prophesied the destruction of Nineveh and the Assyrian civilization, which had destroyed the Northern Kingdom. ⁶⁷
Habakkuk	Probably not	He was a Jewish prophet around the time of Lehi's departure.
Zephaniah	Probably not	He was a Jewish prophet around the time of Lehi's departure.
Haggai	No	He prophesied in Jerusalem after Judah returned from the Babylonian captivity.
Zechariah	No	He prophesied in Jerusalem after Judah returned from the Babylonian captivity.
Malachi	No	Christ restored two chapters from His writing during his Nephite ministry.
Zenos	Yes	1 Nephi 19:10, 12, 16; Jacob 5, 6, Alma 33:33; 34:7
Zenock	Yes	1 Nephi 19:10; Alma 33:15; 34:7
Neum	Yes	1 Nephi 19:10
Ezias	Yes	Helaman 8:20

While some of this analysis shares the same speculative methodology as biblical source criticism, the related scholarship, which has recognized different narrative traditions behind the Hebrew Bible, is relevant to understanding what the Brass Plates contained, and why some of it was

his grandson, who was the primary historian during the golden age of 4 Nephi, also bore that name.

66. See notes 50 to 56 and supporting text.

67. John Sorenson wonders if Nahum and Neum (from 1 Nephi 19:10) are the same (Sorenson, *The Brass Plates and Biblical Scholarship*, 33). But he does not press the suggestion perhaps because Neum's prophecy that Christ would be crucified does not fit the Ninevite context of Nahum's known prophecies. However, note that some historians consider that crucifixion as a form of capital punishment probably derived from the Assyrian impalement punishment (F.P. Retief and L. Cilliers, "The History and Pathology of Crucifixion," *National Library of Medicine* 93, no. 12 [2003]: 938–41, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/14750495>.)

different from the Old Testament scripture that has come to us through the Jews. But source criticism is not the only explanation of why the scripture provided in the Book of Mormon has a “familiar spirit.” There are at least four other possible reasons for that similarity, some highly speculative.

Other Possible Reasons Why the Book of Mormon Contains Scripture from the Old World

First, even though the Book of Mormon record says that the Mulekite party did not bring scripture with them,⁶⁸ there may have been other Israelite emigrations to the New World which did bring records. While John Sorenson has shown that there were hundreds and possibly thousands of undocumented ocean voyages between the Old and New Worlds before Columbus, voyages that transported flora and fauna between the two worlds,⁶⁹ the absence of anything equivalent to the genetic evidence left by transplanted flora and fauna means that we cannot advance this hypothesis.

A second hypothesis that explains the similarity between Old and New World scripture that we can do nothing to advance is the idea that undocumented Old World prophets could have given other Old World scriptural material to New World prophets, material that is not recorded in the existing Nephite abridgement. Nicholas Frederick identifies additional possibilities when he suggests the term “biblical interaction” rather than mere “allusion” to explain intertextuality in the Book of Mormon. His “other possibilities” include deliberate interactions with angelic messengers at various stages in the translation process, including at the time when the Book of Mormon authors were engraving their records.⁷⁰

A third hypothesis explaining similarity is that since God’s fixed ordinances, covenants, and commandments are intended for all of his children, it ought not surprise us if we find other separated groups who had those same ordinances, covenants, and commandments revealed through their own prophets.⁷¹

68. Omni 1:14–18 (17).

69. John L. Sorenson and Martin H. Raish, *Pre-Columbian Contact with the Americas across the Oceans*, 2nd ed. (Provo, UT: Research Press, 1996).

70. Nicholas J. Frederick, “Evaluating the Interaction between the New Testament and the Book of Mormon: A Proposed Methodology,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 24 (2015): 22.

71. Alma 29:8.

But a fourth possible reason for similarity between portions of the Old Testament and the Book of Mormon leads us back to the contents of the Brass Plates. And that is the insight that the Brass Plates may contain some material related to early sources of the Pentateuch and other writings, perhaps with particular influence from Northern Kingdom traditions. The Book of Mormon's emphasis on "remnant prophecies" seems to underscore this possibility. For not only did Jesus quote and explain Micah's remnant prophecy to the Nephites three times during his ministry among them,⁷² but Lehi, Nephi, and Jacob used remnant prophecies to reassure their people that they were not forgotten by the Lord.⁷³ In a similar spirit but much more dramatically, Captain Moroni used a lost remnant prophecy of Jacob to motivate the Nephites to defend their homes, family, and native lands from Lamanite aggression⁷⁴ when the future seemed as lost as Joseph's when he was sold as a Midianite slave⁷⁵ and languished as a prisoner in an Egyptian prison.⁷⁶ While there are other references to a remnant of Jacob in the current Old Testament,⁷⁷ there is no trace of Captain Moroni's quote from Jacob.⁷⁸

But Jacob's prophecy about the remnant of Joseph's coat is not the only Book of Mormon reference to source material older or more complete

72. 3 Nephi 16:11–5; 20: 15–19; 21:12–13. Note that Christ also referred in 3 Nephi 15:12 to the legacy of the Lehiite peoples as a remnant of Joseph. Mormon similarly used remnant prophecies in 3 Nephi 5:23–24; 10:16–17.

73. 1 Nephi 10:14; 13:38–39; 15:13–14; 19:24; 2 Nephi 20:20–22; 21:11; 28:2; 30:3–4.

74. Alma 46:23–27.

75. Genesis 37:18–28, 36.

76. Genesis 39:20–41:37.

77. See my summary of Old Testament remnant prophecies in "What of the Remnant of Jacob/Israel," *Interpreter, A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* (forthcoming).

78. Alma 46:23–27. The prophecy attributed by Captain Moroni to Jacob before his death reads: "Even as this remnant of garment of my son hath been preserved, so shall a remnant of the seed of my son be preserved by the hand of God, and he taken unto himself, while the remained of the seed of Joseph shall perish, even as the remnant of his garment. Now behold, this giveth my soul sorrow; nevertheless, my soul hath joy in my son, because of that part of his seed which shall be taken unto God." John Tvedtnes has shown that aspects of this Book of Mormon addition to the story of Joseph's coat are confirmed in nonbiblical sources that have been uncovered since the Book of Mormon was translated. See John Tvedtnes, "Ancient Texts in Support of the Book of Mormon," in *Echoes and Evidences of the Book of Mormon*, eds. Donald W. Parry, Daniel C. Peterson, and John W. Welch (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 2002), <https://archive.bookofmormoncentral.org/content/ancient-texts-support-book-mormon>.

than the Hebrew Bible. The allegory of Zenos is another detailed passage re-recorded in Jacob 5, but Nephi and Alma also quoted that prophet directly,⁷⁹ and Zenock was variously paraphrased by Nephi₁,⁸⁰ Alma₂,⁸¹ Nephi₂,⁸² and Mormon,⁸³ and the content of prophecies by Neum and Ezias were referred to by Nephi₁⁸⁴ and Nephi₂.⁸⁵ Robert Millet also suggests that additional material was available to the Book of Mormon peoples from the Brass Plates that is not found in the Bible.⁸⁶ That material includes more detail about the fall of Lucifer, the creation, the Fall, and the Atonement, and Abraham's knowledge of the Messiah.⁸⁷ While this material may have been referred to by Zenos, Zenock, Neum, and Ezias, it seems more likely, in light of what Joseph Smith learned during his translation of the Bible, along with the revelation of the books of Moses and Abraham, that the additional material which Millet suggests was part of a more complete original version of the first of the five books of Moses (Genesis) which the Brass Plates contained.

Conclusion

In this article, I have explained how concepts and findings from modern source criticism, including the Documentary Hypothesis, may help explain why the Book of Mormon focuses on the Josephite ancestry of Lehite colony rather than the Jewish ancestry of the Mulekites. That is because biblical source criticism suggests that variant versions of ancient records were kept and redacted by Israelite groups with different interests. For example, the Northern and Southern Kingdoms appear to have kept their own records (E and J respectively, for the Pentateuch), but so apparently did the priests who may have kept scriptural records during the Babylonian captivity (P), and the temple priests who discovered the

79. 1 Nephi 19:11–17; 22:15–20 and Alma 33:3–11.

80. 1 Nephi 19:10.

81. Alma 33:15–17. Alma₂ also quoted Zenock directly in Alma 33:11: “Thou art angry, O Lord, with this people, because they will not understand thy mercies which thou hast bestowed upon them because of thy Son.”

82. Helaman 8:18–20.

83. 3 Nephi 10:14–16.

84. 1 Nephi 19:10.

85. Helaman 8:18–20.

86. Robert Millet, “The Brass Plates: A Witness of Christ,” *Ensign* (Jan. 1988), <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/ensign/1988/01/the-plates-of-brass-a-witness-of-christ>.

87. *Ibid.*

“book of the law” that was used to justify King Josiah’s reforms late in the 7th century BC (D).

I then suggested that while we understand the reason why the Book of Mormon prophets used scripture that focused on the coming and mission of Jesus Christ as the Messiah, when He ministered to the combined descendants of Lehi at Bountiful, He emphasized their identity as a remnant part of the House of Israel, confirming that the Father’s covenants with the ancient patriarchs were extended to them and that they were not forgotten. But He went much further. He referred to their latter-day destiny in the Father’s plans, and He explained that destiny by quoting the words of the Israelite Prophet Micah on three separate occasions: on the second and third occasions, implying that Father had asked Him to tell them again on the second day of His ministry but with even more emphasis. I suggest that even though He did not say those words were missing from their canon, since there are no references or obvious allusions to Micah’s prophecies before Christ quoted them, it seems likely the Nephites did not have Micah’s words before Christ ministered to them in person.

That insight provided context for a book-by-book discussion of what parts of the Old Testament may have been present on the Brass Plates the descendants of Lehi brought with them. But I concluded that analysis with the observation that there were other reasons why the Book of Mormon may have included scriptural material that has a “familiar spirit.” Those reasons included that there may have been other physical contact between the Old and New Worlds which transmitted scripture between them and which is not documented in the Book of Mormon; that unknown scriptural material may have been provided to the new world prophets miraculously, as, for example, by angelic ministers; and that God reveals His ordinances and truths to all men, sometimes in parallel and sometimes as a onetime dispensation.

In his abridgement of the Book of Ether, Moroni explained that the Lord withholds spiritual truth from unbelievers, but that belief manifest by repentant and sanctified individuals and nations unlocks spiritual truth and entitles them to further revelation.⁸⁸ Even if access to the sealed portion of the Book of Mormon and the Brass Plates themselves is denied until the Millennium,⁸⁹ Moroni teaches that those who search

88. Ether 4:1–12 (7).

89. Bruce R. McConkie, “The Bible, a Sealed Book,” (presentation, *A Symposium on the New Testament*, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT, 17 August 1984), <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/>

and ponder with sincere hearts will receive personal revelation that unfolds meaning and can answer their questions ahead of those who do not exert that effort.⁹⁰

That principle applies to our study of the Book of Mormon. When we feast upon these words as prophets have admonished,⁹¹ inspired questions come to our minds.⁹² My concluding suggestion is therefore that a deeper awareness of the likely content of the Brass Plates will improve the insight of diligent Book of Mormon readers because they better understand the scriptures that inspired those prophets.⁹³

[Editor's Note: Comments made shortly after the original electronic publication of this paper identified several errors in need of revision. These should have been caught pre-publication. We apologize for the unfortunate gap in our editorial process and are grateful to those who assisted us in recognizing the errors so that needed corrections could be made in this revised version of the paper. We strive for high-quality peer review and editorial processes that will continue to make such errors a rare exception. —J. Lindsay]

[Author's Note: It is apparent that some readers have misunderstood the point of my paper, so I've made a few minor changes to hopefully clear up any ambiguity on the part of readers. I apologize for any confusion that my word choices may have caused. That being said, let me state that I am fully aware of the history and purpose of the Documentary Hypothesis approach to the Pentateuch. The focus of this article, though, is *not* the Documentary Hypothesis, but the ideas *behind* the Documentary Hypothesis. The point is that the concepts underlying the Documentary Hypothesis — that ancient authors selected from existing materials to compile later works and that they made selections to suit their agendas — are not unfamiliar and should not be unfamiliar to Book of Mormon readers. All authors, all redactors, and all editors are human and, as humans, make human choices and can make human mistakes. To assert

teaching-seminary-preservice-readings-religion-370-471-and-475/the-bible-a-sealed-book?lang=eng.

90. Moroni 10:3–5.

91. 2 Nephi 31:20; 32:3.

92. “Ask Inspired Questions,” The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/teaching-in-the-saviors-way/part-4-invite-diligent-learning/ask-inspired-questions?lang=eng>.

93. 2 Nephi 25:5.

that any theory of textual development — whether the hypothesis be documentary, supplementary, fragmentary, neo-documentary, or any other human conception thousands of years after the fact — is somehow neutral or natural or self-evident is less academic than apologetic and, most of all, very human.]

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