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FOUNDATION FOR ANCIENT RESEARCH AND MORMON STUDIES

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Is the Book of Mormon History?

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Summary:

A dictionary will tell you that history is a systematic written account of a man or a nation. Monte Nyman suggests that we are able to understand more of what the Book of Mormon has to say if we consider it to be a spiritual history. The book contains a light touch of history, but the majority of the pages contain sacred preaching, great revelation, or prophecy. Readers of the Book of Mormon should read it to see how its teachings can be applied in their lives.

Transcript
Book of Mormon, Literature

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Is The Book of Mormon a History?

Monte S. Nyman

Often the Book of Mormon is described as a history of some ancient inhabitants of the Americas. If it were called a spiritual history that description might be appropriate, but in the traditional use of the term it is incorrect to call the Book of Mormon a history. Neither the Book of Mormon nor the Doctrine and Covenants ever refers to the Book of Mormon as a history. Now, this morning I would like to show you some of the reasons why we do not refer to the Book of Mormon as a history, and then suggest to you what we ought to suggest to people as we tell them about the Book of Mormon, or what we ought to discuss among ourselves, in our classes, or wherever.

There are a 1,021 years of the Nephite record covered in the Book of Mormon. That is covered in 500 pages. Now you are aware, I am sure, that there are 531 pages in the Book of Mormon, but if you delete the Jaredite record you will see that is almost an even 500 pages which covers the Nephites.

Now, if you look at a dictionary you will find that a history is defined as a "systematic written account of a man or a nation." And, some may say, well, doesn't that fit the story of the Book of Mormon? Isn't it an account of the Nephites, or of Lehi, or Nephi, or his family or such? Well, it is a story or an account, I would suggest, of Lehi and Nephi, a spiritual history as I said earlier; but when you look at it as a systematic account, it just doesn't fit the description.

Let me give you a few facts again, which you are pretty much familiar with, but may not have considered in this light. When you look at the 1,021 years that are covered in the 500 pages—if you look at the book of 4 Nephi, for instance, you will see that in 4 Nephi there are four pages covering from the year A.D. 34, (probably the ending of the year A.D. 34) down to and including A.D. 320. Or, if you figure that out, it is 286 years of history, or of a record of those people covered in just four pages. That is over one-fourth of the entire time period covered in just four of the 500 pages.

If you back up to the little books of Jarom and Omni, they begin in about 420 B.C. and cover down to almost 130 B.C.; we will qualify that a little bit later as we look at it, but that is about four and a half pages for a total of about 290 years. If you add those two together, you have in eight and one-half pages an account of 586 of those 1,021 years. So, is it a systematic written account? I don't believe people would argue the fact that it doesn't fit the bill.

Let me give you a little of the internal structure of the book that might illustrate what we are talking about this morning. I have a chart that I would like to share with you here (see figure 1). We will cover this in the next few minutes. You may want to follow this as we discuss the various books in the small plates of Nephi.

If you look at 1 Nephi you see twenty-two chapters, about fifty-two and a half pages. The years that are involved here are at least ten—we don't know just how many more. We know that they left Jerusalem and went down to what they called the Valley of Lemuel. They made two trips back, and as we read the Book of Mormon for the first time that may sound like it was just a day or two trip. But it was probably several weeks that they were gone. They made two trips back—one for the plates and another one to get the family of Ishmael to join them. (When I say *they* I am referring to Lehi and his group.) Anyway, how long that took them, how long they stayed there, we don't know.

But then they left and went for eight years in the wilderness. They then camped at what is known as the Land of Bountiful; and there they built a ship. So, we say at least ten or maybe several more years; we don't know how long it took. But, all of this in the book of 1 Nephi is covered in fifty-two pages, twenty-two chapters.

But, how many chapters are actually the history or the record of these people? As I have analyzed it I find that there are only ten of the twenty-two chapters that you would really call a history of the people. (Excuse me, only nine of the twenty-two chapters that are really what one would designate a historical setting.) Let me review those for you.

In chapters 1 through 5 we have the account of Lehi leaving Jerusalem under command of the Lord after he had preached to the people in Jerusalem. He went down into the Valley of Lemuel and was told by the Lord to send his sons back to get the plates. Lehi's sons return after several weeks of being absent.

Chapter 6 just tells about the two sets of plates that they have kept. This account was written, you might remember, thirty years after they left Jerusalem—the account that we are reading today.

Then chapter 7 tells us of the second expedition back to Jerusalem. So, of those seven chapters, six of them might be historical. Chapters 8 through 15 are about visions that Lehi and Nephi had while they were residing in the Valley of Lemuel. It doesn't say anything else about the historical nature of those people.

THE BOOK OF MORMON RECORD
THE SMALL PLATES OF NEPHI

Author - Nephi Book	Chapters	Pages	Historical Chapters	History Pages	Years	Overall Purpose
1 Nephi	22	52½	9 (1-5, 7, 6-18)	12	10+	The Lord leads the righteous out of wickedness to a promised land Blessings and prophecies concerning the promised land
2 Nephi	33	64	1 (5)	1	30-45	
	<u>55</u>	<u>116½</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>55</u>	
Jacob (Author)	7	18½	2 (1 & 7)	2	60-70	Persuade men to come unto Christ
Enos (Author)	1	2½	9 of 27 vv.	2/3	60-70	How to attain a remission of sins
	<u>8</u>	<u>21</u>	<u>2 plus</u>	<u>2 2/3</u>	<u>124</u>	
Jarom (Author)	1	1 2/3	Overview	1 2/3	59 (420-362 BC)	To benefit the Lamanites Keep the commandments and prosper
Omni (4 Authors)	1	3	Overview	3	Over 200 years (361 to between 279 - 130 BC)	Keep the commandments and prosper
Words of Mormon	1	2	10 of 18 vv.	1	To about 130 BC	A wise purpose according to the Spirit To bridge the small plates and the large
	<u>3</u>	<u>6 2/3</u>	<u>General</u>	<u>5 2/3</u>	<u>About 290 years</u>	
Grand Total	66	144+	12 + overview	21+	About 470 years	

In chapters 16 through 18 we get the account of their leaving the Valley of Lemuel, and their traveling through the wilderness, and arriving at the sea where they build the ship. These three chapters might qualify as somewhat historical. So, nine out of the twenty-two chapters could be designated historical.

In the nineteenth chapter, Nephi introduces and quotes Isaiah, along with some other prophecies, and then comments on those to conclude that particular record. So, nine of the twenty-two chapters.

Now, even chapters 16 through 18 do not give many details. Have you ever really stopped and looked at that to see that there are really only three verses about those eight years in the wilderness? All the rest are Nephi's arguments or persuasions for Laman and Lemuel to do the things that he wants them to do. He quotes scripture to support the fact that they are able to do what they have been commanded to do, and shows them that the Israelites were able to do things that the Lord had commanded them. So, we really aren't reading a history as we read 1 Nephi.

The overall purpose which Nephi has in mind is to show that the righteous are led out of the land of wickedness into a promised land. That is what he is trying to show you—how they were able to accomplish that under the guidance of the Lord.

When we examine 2 Nephi we find that it is even less of a historical record. Again, I suspect that we never stop to think about that as we read through. In fact, most people get so bogged down in Isaiah that they skip 2 Nephi. I have heard it said that the most widely read book in the church is 1 Nephi, and that is because of the discouraging factor of trying to get through those Isaiah passages, I suppose.

In 2 Nephi we only have one chapter that tells of a historical incident. The first four chapters record the blessings that Lehi gave to his children, Ishmael's children, and the children of Zoram, the servant that went with them. There are eight of those blessings that are recorded. They include other things, of course, besides the historical fact that he gave a blessing, but he really doesn't tell you anything other than that Lehi gave the blessings. It doesn't say where they were, or how long they had been there, or whatever.

2 Nephi 5 is the historical chapter of 2 Nephi, the only one. It tells us that after Lehi's death there was a rebellion between Laman and Lemuel and Nephi and Sam and those that followed Nephi and those that followed Laman and Lemuel. And so, again, they were commanded by the Lord to leave, and to take a journey further into the wilderness, and that is the birth of the Nephite and Lamanite division of nations which is the story throughout the rest of the Book of Mormon.

Now, the twenty-eighth verse of that fifth chapter is where Nephi tells us this—thirty years after they left Jerusalem, he is commanded to keep a record, known to us today as the small plates of Nephi. And so, he said, he proceeded with that commandment. Then in verse 34 he says, we have had wars and contentions and forty years have passed away among our people. Now, of that ten year time period, all he says is that we have had wars and contentions. So that is the only thing we know about that period.

From 2 Nephi chapter 6 through chapter 31, there is not one historical statement in the book about what the Nephites did. Let me quickly analyze it with you. In 2 Nephi chapters 6 through 10 you have an account of Jacob giving a couple of sermons, probably at some kind of a conference that was held there because it is two days in succession—he says on the morrow I will continue. We don't have the full sermons, but we have most of the first day's and some of the second day's. Then, in chapter 11 we have Nephi introducing Isaiah and telling us why he wants to include it in the record.

Then for thirteen consecutive chapters, 2 Nephi twelve through twenty-four, he quotes Isaiah. From chapter twenty-five through chapter thirty he tells us the meaning of Isaiah. He says that Isaiah is difficult to understand, but he wants to speak to us as he writes this record in a manner that anyone can understand, so that we will know what Isaiah is speaking about. And so in those five chapters, which include more quotations of Isaiah, both in 2 Nephi 27 and 30, he quotes Isaiah 29 and Isaiah 11; it is all centered around the prophet Isaiah and his prophecies.

Then, in chapters 31 through 33 Nephi says that before he dies he must tell us something about the doctrine of Christ. And so in those three chapters he expounds the doctrine of Christ. In chapters 6 through 25 you do not have any historical account. And so in the last fifteen years of Nephi's writings no historical incidents are recorded; in the last twenty-five years only one historical incident—that they had wars and contentions among them.

So are we reading a history book? We really aren't. What are we reading? Well, 2 Nephi tells us of the blessings and prophecies concerning the promised land to which they had been brought. Again, the time period isn't quite definite. We don't know just how long they had traveled, or at what point 2 Nephi begins, but the total is fifty-five years. And of those years there are fifty-five chapters written by Nephi (as we have it in our present division) and 116 pages. Ten of those chapters only are historical and only thirteen pages of the 116 are what we would call historical.

Now, we will come back in a moment to tell you what the book really is, and how we can hopefully gain the message that the Lord wants us to gain from it. But let's look at the rest of the small plates. Because, when Nephi

turns the plates over to Jacob, he tells him that he should give it just a light touch of history; that it should include *sacred preaching*, *great revelations*, and *prophesying*. That is what he was to record, and touch only lightly upon the history of his people. If you analyze that, and we will in a moment, you will see that that is exactly what is contained in the record of 1 and 2 Nephi.

But, let's look at Jacob as he follows the admonition given to him by Nephi, and we see that he does the same thing. We have in the book of Jacob seven chapters. They cover, in our present edition, eighteen and one-half pages. Only two chapters are what we would call historical chapters. In one chapter Jacob receives a commandment of the Lord to go to the temple and warn his people of the consequences of two things: *pride*, which has come among them because of their wealth and prosperity; and *immorality* that has crept among them.

Now, why did Jacob include these things? May I suggest to you that all of the four major abridgers of the Book of Mormon, who are Nephi, Jacob, Mormon and Moroni, all had seen the day in which we are living. They knew our problems, they knew what we were going to be facing, and so they selected, as Moroni says, those things that we needed to know. And where we see pride as a result of riches, and the immorality problem, we can understand why these things are in the book today.

Our present prophet, President Ezra Taft Benson has said that immorality is the sin of this generation. So has President Spencer W. Kimball. Immorality is rampant in our society. The Book of Mormon gives us this great sermon in Jacob chapters 2 and 3, to tell us the dangers and the prevention, what we need to do so that we do not become an immoral people—individually or collectively.

Again, you remember one of the great sermons of Ezra Taft Benson was about pride, and how we are affected by it, and as he says, how we will *not* be able to build Zion unless we can overcome this pride that is among us, speaking again collectively. And so we see that Jacob included this, I believe, for that reason.

In chapter 4 he tells us a little bit about the atonement of Christ, and the great blessings. His whole purpose is to persuade us to believe in Christ and overcome the problems that we will face. And so he introduces evidence that Jesus is the Christ, the stone which the builders rejected, and he goes into this lengthy allegory of the house of Israel that was recorded originally in the Old Testament by Zenos [also recorded on the brass plates]—recorded in the longest chapter in the Book of Mormon. One that, again, is quite difficult, but when you really put the time into searching you will find that it tells what is going to happen to the house of Israel.

May I suggest to you that there are seventy-seven verses in the allegory, and we are in the mid-sixties of it happening just as Zenos prophesied that it would happen. If those first sixty-five or so verses happened exactly as Zenos said, what are the possibilities of the next twelve happening the way Zenos said it would? I suggest that they are going to be the same. Therefore, we need to take heed and make sure that we understand what that prophecy is about. Recognizing that it is a little difficult to understand, Jacob stopped in chapter six to tell us, to make sure that we knew what the message was all about. And that sixth chapter—maybe we ought to stop for just a moment, and see what Jacob says, because I think that that is a great benefit to us, and sometimes we may want to skip that particular chapter.

In the sixth chapter he bears testimony that the things that Zenos had prophesied would come to pass. And then he, quoting Isaiah again, says the day will come when the Lord will set his hand a second time to recover his people. This is verse 2 of chapter 6; it is on page 132 in your Book of Mormon. And, then he goes on to say, even the last time, that the servants of the Lord shall go forth in his power to nourish and prune his vineyard, and after that the end soon cometh.

Now, this second gathering of the house of Israel—we are living in that day. This is a fulfillment of a prophecy that Jeremiah made, that the day will come when they would no longer speak of the great gathering of Israel—that Moses led the children of Israel out of Egypt; but, they would speak of the time when the Lord led the children of Israel from the land of the north and whithersoever he had scattered them. Now how many of the children of Israel came out of Egypt is a controversial point, but just say that two or three million came out (some do not believe there were nearly that many and that's not the point, but just given the benefit of the doubt we'll say there were that many that were brought out), how many of the house of Israel have been gathered in these the latter days?

We have in the Church today about 8 1/2 million people that have been gathered out from among the nations of the earth where they have been scattered. Now there will still be millions more, but my point is that the gathering of Israel, that has been prophesied here, has commenced, and the last time that the Lord will prune his vineyard, he says in this second verse, is verified for us twice in the Doctrine and Covenants, section 33:4, for instance.

And then Jacob goes on to say how blessed will be those people who participate in this gathering that is prophesied here. But then the fourth verse: "And how merciful is our God unto us, for he remembereth the house of Israel, both roots and branches; and he stretches forth his hands unto them all the day long; and they are a stiffnecked and a gainsaying people; but as many as will not harden their hearts shall be saved in the kingdom of God" (Jacob 6:4). That I find to be a very fascinating passage. He saves or he

remembers the house of Israel both roots and branches.

There is difference of opinion among the membership of the Church, and I don't know of any official statement declaring who the roots are. The branches are quite easily identified. The branches, of course, are the Lamanites, the Jews, and the ten tribes which the allegory foretells would be transplanted, placed out in the vineyard somewhere, but eventually would be brought back to be grafted into the mother tree.

As I said, we don't have a definitive statement by any of the authorities, to my knowledge, but let me suggest to you that the mother tree is Ephraim—the covenant people or the birthright people of all of the tribes of Israel, that must be established first in order to bring back those branches.

And, that the roots—and I base this upon some of the statements of Joseph Fielding Smith and others—the roots would be the blood of Israel that was scattered among the nations of the earth and has been brought back and established today in preparation for the time when the ten tribes, the Jews, and the Lamanites will come back into the Church. The order in which I just named them, was the order in which they were taken away, and the allegory of Zenos says that they will be brought back in the reverse order of their being taken away.

Today that is happening. We have, for instance, the Lamanites coming in into the Church, not in large numbers, but in fairly large numbers. We have a large branch established in Central and South America, but there are still millions more that will come in, which also is a prophecy of Isaiah and the Savior in 3 Nephi that we won't get to today. But nonetheless we see that beginning.

We are not proselyting among the Jews. The time is not yet come for that to take place; that will come later. And the third branch, the ten tribes—we don't even know where they are for sure. Again, difference of opinion exists. But you see the allegory—the gathering of the Lamanites first, and then the Jews, and then the ten tribes, will certainly come to pass, as Jacob bears testimony that it would.

And then he continues in this little sixth chapter of explanation, to invite us to repent and come to the Lord with full purpose of heart. It is his overall purpose, stated back in chapter 1, and he gives us a warning in verse 8. "Behold, will ye reject these words?" That, as I understand it, is referring to the words of the allegory. "Will ye reject the words of the prophets?" What he is saying here, as I understand it, is that other prophets have foretold this same scattering and gathering. I refer to Isaiah and Jeremiah, and there are many others of course, Amos and Zechariah; all of the Old Testament really foretold this scattering and gathering of Israel and he is saying they told it just

as Zenos did.

And then he says, "Will ye reject all the words which have been spoken concerning Christ, after so many have spoken concerning him; and deny the good word of Christ, and the power of God, and the gift of the Holy Ghost, and quench the Holy Spirit, and make a mock of the great plan of redemption, which hath been laid for you?" (Jacob 6:8). (I was reading the rest of verse 8 here.) So, the Book of Mormon tells us (Jacob chapter 4) that there is never a prophet who spoke that did not testify of Jesus Christ. And all of these witnesses are before us, and the whole purpose of the Book of Mormon, and particularly the Book of Jacob, is to persuade men to come unto the God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and to come back into the house of Israel and be gathered with his people.

He goes on here to bear testimony that he will be at the bar of God and we will know that he was a part of this great record that was to be brought forth. Then we come to one of the short verses in the Book of Mormon, but one of the great ones. Verse 12: "O, be wise; what can I say more?" Well, how can we be wise? The eleventh verse would tell us that we repent, "enter in at the strait gate, [which is baptism] and continue in the way, which is narrow, until ye shall obtain eternal life." That is the basic message that Jacob wants to make sure that we get as we read his small book.

Now, the seventh chapter tells us about Sherem, an anti-Christ that came among them. And Jacob, the prophet of God, was able to refute his teachings and overcome that problem. A very similar incident takes place later in Alma chapter 30, which tells of Korihor. Korihor is a little more famous among Book of Mormon students than Sherem is, but they both taught basic anti-Christ doctrines. Why is it included here? It is included because, I believe, such doctrine is one of the major problems that we face, particularly in a university setting.

I taught at other universities before coming to Brigham Young University, and I saw there that the thing to do was to announce that you were now an agnostic. I don't believe that many of those young people coming in to the universities really believed what they were saying—that they really were agnostic, but that is what they said. It sweeps the university campuses and the world. Again today, the Book of Mormon is a warning, as President Benson has said; it exposes the enemy, and this is an enemy.

So, summarizing the book of Jacob we get just two historical incidents. We get the account of Jacob giving the sermon on pride and immorality, and we get Jacob's encounter with Sherem, the anti-Christ. The book identifies three major problems we face today, and will continue to face until the Lord comes for the second time.

The little book of Enos, the son of Jacob, is our next book in the Book of Mormon; and we treat these two together because the book does not separate the time period. Enos only writes one small chapter. But Jacob and Enos together cover 124 years. Now, if you analyze 124 years, and look at the incidents, how much history do we have within the book—not hardly any at all. We don't know where they are divided, as I have already said, but, let's assume that Jacob covered fifty, sixty, or seventy years. Just two incidents!

Enos doesn't even cover that much. He tells you one thing, and gives you a general overview of the conditions of the people. The incident he covers is when he went out hunting and there was converted, remembering the words of his father, the joy of the Saints. He was born again, as President Spencer W. Kimball describes it. Why did they include that little incident? My opinion is that they included that because, even if you are the prophet's son, conversion/rebirth is an individual matter. Just because you are the bishop or the stake president's son, it is not automatic that you are going to be a believer. You have to have the rebirth experience yourself. And so he tells you about that, and then goes on to the other.

So, out of 124 years just three little incidents to tell us. But, those three incidents are things that are very pertinent to our life today. I guess we might say the overall purpose is how to obtain a remission of our sins.

We have already said a little bit about Jarom and Omni but we must include the Words of Mormon with that, to cover that 290 year time period. Let's again just note what they say. Jarom—just one little chapter, one and two-thirds pages—gives you an overview of what has happened. There are prophets among them; they keep the sabbath day but they have their problems; he just goes through that writing to benefit the Lamanites.

There is a great lesson to us, I believe. He knows that the Lamanites are going to go into apostasy; some of them already have, of course. But, he knows that someday they will be brought back, and he writes this letter that they may be able to benefit and, similar to what Jacob said, to come unto Christ eventually. He makes one statement that the other writers make as well. If you keep the commandments in the land you will prosper; if you don't, you won't. That theme runs throughout Jarom and Omni.

Omni has four different authors. They turn the plates over to the descendants of Jacob, and they record. Some record a little bit, some record very little. I have a little fun, occasionally, trying to analyze what this is saying. The first one, Omni, for whom the book is named, tells about his having to fight with the people to preserve them, and so on. But, I sometimes ask my students, and I ask you, did Omni wear glasses? Now, that gets their attention—got yours I notice, some of you looked up. I suggest to you that I don't know whether he wore glasses, but he did have *I* trouble!

Now, if you analyze those three verses that Omni writes, he says "I did this," "I did that," ten times!

The only reason I emphasize that is to show you that it is a different style of writing. The others don't write that way. Why is that important? Because there are four different writers in this one little chapter that is a little more than two pages long. Brother Robert Thomas, a former vice-president of BYU here, wrote an interesting paper, many, many years ago to show the difference styles of writing of each of those different authors. Could Joseph Smith have duplicated that? Could Joseph Smith have put together this, and made it look different? I suppose that is possible, but highly improbable. You might copy someone's style, but for Joseph Smith, the mere lad that he was when he translated the Book of Mormon, this is a great evidence of the book.

Now another one of my favorites in here is the writing of Chemish. Verse 9, he is the third writer, "I Chemish, write what few things I write, in the same book with my brother; for behold, I saw the last which he wrote, that he wrote it with his own hand, that he wrote it in the day that he delivered them unto me. And after this manner we keep the records, for it is according to the commandments of our father. And I make an end." What did he tell you? Well, he only tells me one thing, he did his home teaching on the last day of the month, right? Now, he had to keep the record, so he wrote a little bit and that was it. We aren't reading a history, again I emphasize.

The next writer, Amaleki, tells us that there were three different migrations of people. Had Joseph Smith written this record, would he have complicated it to bring out that there are three different migrations that came to America? Today, we have external evidences supporting that. The works of the grandson of the last Aztec king show that there were three migrations to this hemisphere. We won't take time to go into that, but what I am trying to say this morning is that we aren't reading a history book, but there is history there which is supported by the external evidences that have been brought forth since the Book of Mormon was published.

The Words of Mormon is where Mormon bridges the gap to what we know today as the abridgment of the large plates, beginning with the book of Mosiah. And here, Mormon just tells us about his being impressed with the small plates. He is writing in about A.D. 385 he is impressed with the small plates, and what he felt about them as they testified of Christ, and then the spirit whispers to him, "include this in the record." He says, I don't know why the Spirit tells me to do it, but I am putting it there. We know why today; we know that Nephi was commanded to keep two sets of plates because the Lord knew, foretold by Isaiah, that those first translated pages would be lost. Here is a record having more of the gospel, a better account from a spiritual point of view, for us to learn the gospel of Jesus Christ in these latter days.

Well, that is kind of an overview of what the Book of Mormon is *not*. Let me just give you some statistics that are on the overhead that we had. There are sixty-six chapters in the small plates covering a little more than a 144 pages. There are only twelve chapters of history, and there are only 21 pages of history out of all of those, counting some of the overviews. And the whole time period is 470 years; nearly one half of the 1,021 that is included in the whole Book of Mormon. So, we have said what the Book of Mormon is not.

Let us talk a little bit about what the Book of Mormon *is*. Here we have another overhead that tells us of the commandment that Nephi gave to Jacob as he turned the plates over to him. Mentioned earlier, he includes *sacred preaching, revelation which was great, and prophesying*. Let's go back to these plates, and look at what is on them and their benefit to us today.

As I have analyzed 1 Nephi, I find that there are eight occasions where sacred preaching is recorded (see figure 2). Let me review those with you and their significance to us:

The first one that I have identified as sacred preaching is Nephi preaching to his brethren regarding the plates. They're sent back by their father to get the plates from Laban, a very difficult assignment. And, as they get back there, Nephi faces the fact that Laman, Lemuel, tried once and then were ready to give up and get out of there. Nephi sits down and talks to them about the importance of the plates, and the importance of their fulfilling the commandments which they had been given. So, that is the first one.

The second one is Lehi preaching to Sariah. She accuses him of being a visionary man. His response—you are absolutely right! I am a visionary man; if I hadn't had the visions that I had, I wouldn't be doing what I am doing. But he bears testimony again to her of his being able to do what the Lord commanded him. Now that reminds us of one of the most well-known verses of 1 Nephi—1 Nephi 3:7 (maybe even the whole Book of Mormon): "I, [Nephi] will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them" to accomplish that which he has commanded. If you will back up to verse 5 of that chapter you will find that Lehi taught the same thing, and undoubtedly Nephi had learned it from his father.

So, anyway, here Lehi is telling Sariah that this is why he is here. I have had visions he tells her, I know that what we are doing is right, and then, shortly after this, it is Nephi and his brothers who show up with the plates; and at this point, Sariah then rejoices, and shall we say, is convinced that her husband is on the right track after all.

Figure 2

1 Nephi Preaching Which Is Sacred

3:15-20; 4:1-3	Nephi to his brethren regarding the plates
5:4-5, 8	Lehi to Sariah
7:8-15	Nephi to his brethren regarding returning to Jerusalem
10:2-14	Lehi concerning the Messiah, the prophet who should baptize him, and the olive tree
15:10-16:3	Nephi to Laman and Lemuel on their father's vision
17:23-51	Nephi to Laman and Lemuel concerning his ability to build a ship
19:19-21:26	Nephi cites Isaiah to all the house of Israel
22:2-31	Nephi explains Isaiah and cites other prophets to his brethren

1 Nephi Revelation Which Is Great

1:6-14	Lehi sees God, etc.
2:1-2	Lehi commanded to leave Jerusalem
3:2-4	Lehi commanded to send his sons for the plates of brass
4:10-17	The Spirit directs Nephi to slay Laban
8:2-33	Lehi's vision of the tree of life
11	Nephi's vision of Jerusalem and other cities
12	Nephi's vision of the land of promise
13-14	Nephi's vision of the nations and kingdoms of the Gentiles
16:10, 16, 25-30; 18:12, 21-22	The directions through the round ball
17:7-10, 12-14	The Lord to Nephi on building a ship

1 Nephi Prophesying

2:19-24	The Lord concerning Laman and Lemuel
3:29	An angel to Laman and Lemuel
5:18-19	Lehi regarding the plates of brass
10:17-22	Nephi concerning the power of the Holy Ghost
19:10-17	An angel and the prophets on the Messiah

Now, just not a little thing on the record. When they left Jerusalem, it says that they got three days out into the wilderness, out of the borders of the Red Sea, and that *Lehi* offered a sacrifice. Notice it was singular. When you get over to the fifth chapter, after the return of Nephi and his brothers, *they* offer a sacrifice. At this point they are seeing and recognizing the hand of the Lord that is with them. We see the affect of this preaching upon their lives and how it can affect us.

The next incident is Nephi preaching to his brethren as they are returning to Jerusalem. They are going back to get the family of Ishmael on this occasion, and it is because of the brother's reluctance that he stops and preaches to them, and again bears witness to them concerning the importance of keeping the commandments of the Lord. This is a theme that Nephi has followed all the way through. You know, the Prophet Joseph Smith said that there are precepts in the Book of Mormon that will bring us nearer to God than any other book. And those precepts are identified for us with little comments like, "Thus we see," and "I will show unto you," and similar statements. Nephi had said, in the very first chapter, "I, Nephi, will show unto you that the tender mercies of the Lord are over all those whom he has chosen, because of their faith, to make them mighty even unto the power of deliverance" (1 Nephi 1:20). And so, he gives us these precepts as he records the incidents—he was able to accomplish great things in spite of the opposition from his brethren.

In the tenth chapter we get another great preaching of Lehi. Lehi, here, prophecies and tells them concerning the Messiah. It is Nephi that is preaching and telling about his father's prophecies, reminding his brothers. Again he mentions the olive trees that, later on, Zenos teaches about as quoted by Jacob.

The fifteenth chapter—he preaches to Laban and Lemuel about the significance of the visions which he and his father have had.

In the seventeenth chapter he preaches to his brothers about how to build the ship. Using the incidents from the Old Testament—another witness of the Bible, the Doctrine and Covenants tells us—he preaches to them about how the Israelites were able to accomplish great things; and so, if the Lord has commanded them to build a ship, they can do it as well.

Then in the nineteenth chapter Nephi cites Isaiah and other prophets to tell them what is going to happen to the house of Israel. And then at the end of it he explains Isaiah to them, which I would label as preaching as well.

The second category that he is told to include (Jacob is told by Nephi) is revelation which is great. As I analyzed it there are ten great revelations in 1 Nephi.

The first one—Lehi sees God. Now, we could say a lot more about that but the very first page of the Book of Mormon the very first chapter, testifies of God and of Jesus Christ. It is interesting to me that in the twentieth chapter of the Doctrine and Covenants (given on or about the organization of the Church, April 6, 1830), one of the major purposes of the Book of Mormon, we learn in verse 17, is to prove that there is a God. It begins in chapter 1 and goes on to testify of Christ and the twelve that followed him. A great revelation is seen by Lehi here, and an angel appears to him and gives him a book and he reads it and has a further vision of the destruction of Jerusalem.

He gets another revelation to leave Jerusalem in chapter 2. In chapter three he gets a revelation sending his sons back to Jerusalem to get the plates of brass. All of those center around Lehi and the great revelations which he received. And again, the Book of Mormon tells us that we too, and that twentieth section sustains the fact, can have revelation in this day and age, as well as in ages of the past. Nephi teaches the same thing in chapter 10.

In the fourth chapter, Nephi gets a revelation to take the life of Laban. This becomes a detriment to some people, to think that Nephi would slay another man—and Nephi is a prophet. There is a great lesson to be learned from this, I believe. The prophet Joseph Smith taught that faith unto salvation is to know that the course you pursue is the will of the Lord. Nephi did not seek this opportunity to slay Laban. But, he knew that what the Lord had commanded him was what he had to do. Now again, most of us can quote the verse that says that it is better that one man perish than a whole nation dwindle in unbelief. But, if you will look at the preceding verse instead of the one that follows the commandment to slay Laban, you will see that there were three offenses that Laban had committed against the brothers. And then if we go to section 98 of the Doctrine and Covenants, and read what we call today the law of retaliation, you will see there that the Lord says that three times you hold up the standard of liberty to them, and then the Lord will deliver them into your hands. This is what I taught my servant Nephi, he says, as well as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. So, there is a great tie-in to see the principle of faith that is involved here; and through revelation Nephi is willing to do those things that the Lord commanded him to do.

Following this, Nephi has a vision of Jerusalem (excuse me we skipped the vision of the tree of life which Lehi and Nephi saw). This great vision shows the different classes of people and their reaction to the word of God. In the fifteenth chapter Nephi tells us that if we will lay hold of the word of God, it can lead us through the fiery darts of the adversary to the kingdom of God with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and so forth. That is a great lesson that would take an hour in itself.

But then we go into a series of visions that is shown to Nephi. He sees

Jerusalem. He sees a virgin, beautiful above all other virgins, that is carried away by the Spirit and comes back with a son in her arms, and the Spirit again bears witness that it is the Son of the Eternal Father. Here we get one of the early evidences that the Book of Mormon is a second witness of Jesus Christ, a witness of the virgin birth and of the Son of the Eternal Father.

Then we have a vision of the Savior's visit to the Nephites in the same time period. Following his ministry in Jerusalem, his earthly ministry, he came and ministered among the Nephites and there, again, that chapter bears witness of Jesus Christ, fulfilling a promise, incidentally, that had been given to Nephi earlier.

And then he sees a vision (taking two chapters) about the nations and kingdoms of the Gentiles.

The thirteenth chapter tells us about the rise of the great and abominable church in the meridian of time. He sees that because of plain and precious parts that have been taken away from the Bible, the Spirit moves a man, that we have had identified through revelation as Columbus, to come and discover America—really a prototype of the restoration of the gospel in the latter-days, here shown to Nephi in this great vision.

And then in the fourteenth chapter we see the downfall of that great and abominable church. And we have witness born to us of the greatness of the revelation written in the New Testament called the book of Revelation given to the apostle named John. I mentioned earlier that one of the purposes of the Book of Mormon was to prove that the holy scriptures are true. In the biblical world today the authorship of the book of Revelation is greatly questioned. The Book of Mormon bears witness that it really was John the apostle who wrote it. And that Nephi did not write it because John had been so commissioned. Well, one of the great revelations of all time as well is here in these chapters of 1 Nephi.

Two more revelations—we have the revelation given to them through the curious round ball (later named the Liahona in the book of Alma), where they were able to receive revelation almost daily. It changed from time to time, and they were able to read it as it led them through the wilderness.

And then the tenth revelation, as I analyze it, is Nephi's revelation on how to build the ship; not built after the manner of man, but built according to the workings of the Lord. We don't need to speculate too much about what the ship looked like, but we do need to recognize that it came by revelation, and the Lord provided it for them. It was able to bring them to the Americas.

The last category—prophesying. In this category I see that there are five prophecies that are included in 1 Nephi. First of all, the Lord prophesied

concerning Laman and Lemuel—that as much as they will rebel, Nephi will be appointed a teacher and a prophet among them. We have another prophecy of an angel to Laman and Lemuel in the third chapter of 1 Nephi. We have a prophecy of Lehi that the plates of brass will never be dimmed by time. Alma makes the same prophecy, or perhaps he is quoting Lehi in the thirty-seventh chapter of Alma. Someday we will have the brass plates come forth and verify the plain and precious parts that have been lost in the Bible, and the many other incidents that the biblical record has lost.

The fourth one is Nephi's prophecy about the power of the Holy Ghost and its eternal nature, and then the angel told Nephi concerning the birth of Christ that is going to take place in the meridian of time.

Each of the other books (our time is running short today) have similar things. Maybe, just quickly, we could mention some of these.

In 2 Nephi there are five great preaching sermons (see figure 3): Lehi to his sons; Nephi bearing his soul; Jacob and Nephi concerning Isaiah; and then, of course, the last one, Jacob or Nephi on the doctrine of Christ. (We mentioned those briefly before.)

Great revelations in 2 Nephi: there are eight, what we might call today patriarchal blessings that are given here by Lehi to his sons, including reference to Joseph who was sold into Egypt, and the prophecies currently lost from the Bible, concerning a choice Seer of the latter days that is undoubtedly the prophet Joseph Smith. There are eight different things that Jacob said that fit Joseph Smith. Most people can quote one of them—that his name would be Joseph and so would his father's name. But there are seven others that are very significant that Joseph fulfilled. Joseph Smith would not have been able to do all of those things and write them into the Book of Mormon had they not been prophecy and the Lord bringing them about. Now, there are other things that could be said there, but there are also a lot of things here: Lehi about his own son, Joseph, and other prophecies that are there.

Let me conclude our discussion this morning with a couple of thoughts. In fewer than twenty-eight pages the record from the book of Jacob to the book of Mosiah covers about 421 of the total 1,021 years. This is about forty-one percent of the entire time period of the Nephite record, written on less than six percent of the pages. Seventy-five percent of these pages contain preaching which was sacred, revelation which was great, or prophesying (see figure 4). It is a light touch of history, but it is a great source for us to learn about these three things and how they can affect our lives.

Since this was the pattern set for writing on the Nephite record, should it not also be our pattern for studying, teaching, and applying its precepts to our lives and to the lives of those whom we teach as we fulfill our assignments

Figure 3

2 Nephi Preaching Which Is Sacred

1:1-5, 12b-27	Lehi to his sons
4:15-25	Nephi bares his soul
6-10	Jacob to the people
11	Nephi introduces Isaiah
31-33	Nephi speaks concerning the doctrine of Christ

2 Nephi Revelation Which Is Great

1:28-4:11	The patriarch Lehi 's blessings to his posterity and Zoram:
1:28-29	To Laman and Lemuel
1:30-32	To Zoram
2	To Jacob
3	To Joseph
4:3-7	To the sons and daughters of Laman
4:8-9	To the sons and daughters of Lemuel
4:10	To the sons of Ishmael
4:11	To Sam
12-24	Nephi quotes Isaiah (includes many prophecies)

2 Nephi Prophesying

1:6-12a	Lehi concerning the land of promise
3:5-21	Joseph of Egypt concerning his seed
3:23-25	Lehi to his son Joseph
5:21-25	Nephi concerning the Lamanites
25-30	Nephi interprets Isaiah and prophecies of the last days (includes more of Isaiah)

Figure 4

Preaching Which Is Sacred

Jacob	1:2-8	Nephi's instructions to Jacob concerning the plates
	2:1-3:12	Jacob's sermon in the temple
Enos	1:26	Enos' life
Jarom	1:2-11	Jarom teaches us of his people
Omni	1:6-7	Omni teaches us of his people
	1:25-26	Amaleki teaches us of Christ
WofM	1:17-18	King Benjamin and the prophets establish peace

Revelation Which Is Great

Enos	1:1-18	The conversion of Enos
Omni	1:12-22	Mosiah leads his people to Zarahemla
WofM	1:3-8	Mormon includes the small plates of Nephi

Prophesying

Jacob	4:4-6:13	Jacob prophesies of Christ and quotes Zenos' prophetic allegory
Jacob	7:3-19	Jacob debates Sherem
Enos	1:26-27	Enos' life

here in the Church? Should we not learn and teach what the Book of Mormon itself teaches concerning sacred preaching, the great revelations, and the prophesying?

When I first began teaching the Book of Mormon thirty some years ago, I taught much about the external evidences and what others had said about it. Today, I can hardly find time to teach what the Book of Mormon itself is saying. I think we need to emphasize the book (I am not opposed—don't get me wrong, I still appreciate and look at those things today), but I think the concentration of our teaching must be on what the Book of Mormon teaches and how we can apply that into our lives. I believe this is what Nephi and Jacob, and Mormon and Moroni, and the Lord intended for us to do in these latter days as we teach the Book of Mormon.

Two and a half years after the Book of Mormon had been published, the Lord said he was displeased with the Saints because they were not using the Book of Mormon as he had intended. (That is section 84 of the Doctrine and Covenants.) You are undoubtedly well aware of that because we have had another prophet raised up in these last several years, President Ezra Taft Benson, to testify again that we are not using the Book of Mormon the way the Lord had intended.

And so, our challenge today is to do as this revelation says: let me just read the verse: "They shall remain under this condemnation until they repent and remember the new covenant, even the Book of Mormon and the former commandments which I have given them, not only to say, but to do according to that which I have written" (D&C 84:57). Notice, *not only to say but to do*. To read the Book of Mormon, to see what it says to us, those precepts, those great revelations, and prophesyings, and then apply them to our lives. We are a part of the covenant people of the house of Israel in these later days. May we use the Book of Mormon—I bear witness to you that it is true. I know that these precepts will bring us to God. It has done more for my life than any other book that I have ever read. May we use it, I pray, in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.'