



Type: Magazine Article

---

## Gold Plates and the Book of Mormon

Author(s): Thomas S. Ferguson

Source: *Improvement Era*, Vol. 65, No. 4 (April 1962)

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

Page(s): 233–234, 270–271

---

**Abstract:** The author reports on the discovery of two Persian gold plates. One was engraved in the 4th century B.C. in the days of Darius II and the other dates to the 5th century B.C.

# GOLD PLATES AND THE BOOK OF MORMON

BY THOMAS STUART FERGUSON

On April 5, 1961, when Dr. Argudonni, director of the Persian Museum of Antiquities in Teheran, capital of Iran, turned on the lights and pulled the draperies from the windows of the upper room which he had unlocked, Bishop Keith Garner of Menlo Park Ward and I saw a beautiful collection of recently discovered ancient artifacts of gold, including two gold tablets covered with the cuneiform script discovered at Hamadan, Persia.

These tablets are thin, and one of them has about the same dimensions as the tablets comprising the Book of Mormon—said by the Prophet Joseph to be about six inches wide and eight inches long. This tablet of gold was engraved in the fourth century BC in the days of Darius II. The other tablet is slightly larger, being eight inches wide and ten inches long, telling of Artaxerxes and dating to the fifth century BC. Artaxerxes was the son of Darius I, who conquered the entire Middle East toward the end of the sixth century BC. The museum director, to my great joy, permitted me to photograph these wonderful and priceless tablets.

Of all the ancient inscriptions which have been discovered in the Bible world—Old World homeland of the Book of Mormon nations—confirming the claim of the Book of Mormon that the ancient scribes engraved historical data on metal tablets, perhaps none is more noteworthy or remarkable than these gold tablets recently discovered in Iran.

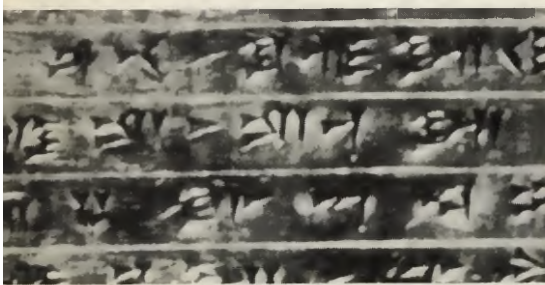
During the first week in April 1961, I visited the Persian Museum of Antiquities in Teheran, capital of Iran, with Bishop Garner, Sidney Badger, and Robert Ord, all of Palo Alto Stake, California, for the precise purpose of seeing the gold and silver tablets of Darius.\* The director of the museum, on learning of our great interest in the engraved tablets discovered in the palace of the great Persian contemporary of Nephi, King Darius, removed the tablets from the locked glass case, in which they were displayed, permitting us to handle the tablets and to photograph them.

The next day, Bishop Garner and I returned to the museum, and the director took us to the locked room containing the more recently discovered treasures mentioned above. He stated that this wonderful display would not be shown to the public until the Shah dedicated the exhibit.

The tablets of Darius I were discovered in the great palace of the Persian kings at the ruins of Persepolis, located near the present-day city of Shiraz in southern Persia. Our party went by plane from Teheran to Shiraz. It is but a short drive from Shiraz to Persepolis. Persepolis is one of the most magnificent of the ruined cities of Old Testament times. There lived the great Darius I, Xerxes, and Artaxerxes, during Book of Mormon times. The writings on gold and silver tablets of the scribes of these great Persian kings help prove the validity of the claim of the Book of Mormon that the ancients of the Bible world recorded important historical events on metal tablets.

One of the grounds for attacking Joseph Smith and the restoration of the gospel has been that the idea of a book of gold tablets is, in and of itself, absurdity.

\*See "Gold Plates in Persia," *The Improvement Era*, Vol. 43, p. 714.



When the Book of Mormon appeared in 1830 scientific archaeology was not yet born. The now-known ancient gold, silver, bronze, and brass tablets, bearing early inscriptions, had not been discovered. Scientific archaeology is said to have begun in the Jaredite homeland, Mesopotamia, in 1842. "The first excavations in Mesopotamia were those of Paul-Emile Botte at Nineveh in 1842 and Khorsabad in 1843," states the ranking British archaeologist, Glyn E. Daniel, professor at Cambridge University. Chapter three of his book, *A Hundred Years of Archaeology*, is entitled "The Birth of Archaeology: 1840-70." In that chapter, Daniel says: "The real beginnings of Egyptian excavation are not, however, with tomb robbers like Belzoni and Drouetti, but the Mariette. Mariette was sent out of Egypt in 1859 by the Louvre. . . ."

Speaking of the beginnings of excavations in Palestine, Daniel says: "Excavations began with Warren's work in and around Jerusalem in 1867-70 and the work of Petrie and Bliss at Tell el-Hesi in 1891-92."

Archaeological work in Mexico and Central America began with the explorations of John Lloyd Stephens in 1839.\* Not until the coming into use of the atomic clock—radio-carbon dating—within the last ten years, have the scholars had a knowledge of the truly great antiquity of civilization in ancient Middle America.

Dr. Franklin Harris, Jr., of the University of Utah and Dr. Ariel Crowley of Boise, Idaho, both students of the Book of Mormon, have recently compiled and published long lists of inscribed tablets discovered and made a matter of record by archaeologists. These compilations also establish that the references (Continued on page 270)

\*Victor Wolfgang von Hagen, *Maya Explorer, John Lloyd Stephens and the Lost Cities of Central America and Yucatan*, University of Oklahoma Press (1947), chapter 7.

From top to bottom: Gold plates discovered at Papantla, Vera Cruz, held by bearded man (beard of gold wire); Bishop Keith Garner holding one of two gold tablets excavated from the foundation walls of the Audience Hall (the Apadana) of the palace of King Darius of Persia; Persian Museum of Antiquities, Teheran, Iran; gold plate found in Persia (Iran), 1961, dating to fifth century, B. C., and telling of Persian king Artaxerxes. Plate is about eight inches wide and ten inches long; note that ancient script is legible. Columns of King Darius' Audience Hall are sixty feet high.

## Gold Plates and the Book of Mormon

(Continued from page 234)

within the Book of Mormon to the use of metal plates by people possessing the culture of the ancient Middle East are well founded.

In the Book of Mormon, reference is made to the twenty-four gold plates (tablets) of Ether (Mosiah 8:9), whose cultural ancestors were Mesopotamians; reference is made in the Nephite record to a set of brass tablets which existed in Jerusalem in the sixth century BC and which were brought to the New World by Lehi and his company in that century. (See 1 Nephi 5:10-12.) The Book of Mormon itself was written on gold tablets, the writings of Nephi and Jacob dating to the sixth century BC. Some of the many references to the metal tablets of the Nephites are: 1 Nephi 1:17; 6:1, 3; 9:1; 10:1; 13:23; 19:1, 3; 22:1; 2 Nephi 4:14; 5:30, 32, 33; Jacob 1:2; 3:13; 7:27; Jarom 1:14; Omni 1:8; Alma 37:5; 3 Nephi 5:10, 11; and Mormon 2:18; 6:6; 8:5.

The text of the Book of Mormon makes it clear that it is the stated purpose of the Lord to generate a spiritual revolution in the world through the book. We are beginning to understand how the attention of the world can be focused upon the Book of Mormon. Dramatic archaeological discoveries relating to it are being made. The Persian gold tablets, photographs of which accompany this article, are primary examples of such discoveries. Other recent significant discoveries include the exciting Stela 5 discovered by Dr. Matthew Stirling of the Smithsonian Institution and reported on in his report, *Stone Monuments of Southern Mexico*, Smithsonian Institution, Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 138 (1943) which monument Dr. M. Wells Jakeman recognized as portraying the scene described beginning at page 13 of the Book of Mormon—Lehi's vision of the tree-of-life.\*

Such a revolutionary role seems to be predicted for the Book of Mormon in the book itself. Here are a few interesting quotations indicating the

dynamic and powerful role which the book is destined to play on the world scene:

"And the angel spake unto me, saying: These last records, [the Book of Mormon] which thou hast seen among the Gentiles, shall establish the truth of the first, which are of the twelve apostles of the Lamb, [New Testament] . . ." (1 Nephi 13:40.)

"And it came to pass that I beheld the church of the Lamb of God, and its numbers were few, . . .

"And it came to pass that I, Nephi, beheld the power of the Lamb of God, that it descended upon the saints of the church of the Lamb, and upon the covenant people of the Lord, who were scattered upon all the face of the earth; and they were armed with righteousness and with the power of God in great glory. . . .

"And . . . the work of the Father shall commence, in preparing the way for the fulfilling of his covenants, which he hath made to his people who are of the house of Israel." (*Ibid.*, 14:12-17.)

"Now these things are written unto the remnant of the house of Jacob; and they are written after this manner, because it is known of God that wickedness will not bring them forth unto them; and they are to be hid up unto the Lord that they may come forth in his own due time." (Mormon 5:12.)

"And behold, they shall go unto the unbelieving of the Jews; and for this intent shall they go—that they may be persuaded that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God; that the Father may bring about, through his most Beloved, his great and eternal purpose, in restoring the Jews, or all the house of Israel, to the land of their inheritance, which the Lord their God hath given them, unto the fulfilling of his covenant;

"And also that the seed of this people [people of the Book of Mormon] may more fully believe his gospel, which shall go forth unto them from the Gentiles; . . ." (*Ibid.*, 5:14-15.)

" . . . it [Book of Mormon] shall be brought out of darkness unto light, according to the word of God; yea, it shall be brought out of the earth, and it shall shine forth out of darkness, and come unto the knowledge of the people; and it shall be done by the power of God." (*Ibid.*, 8:16.)

" . . . out of the earth shall they [the plates comprising the Book of Mormon] come, by the hand of the Lord, and none can stay it; . . ." (*Ibid.*, 8:26.)

" . . . the Lord hath shown unto me [Mormon] great and marvelous things concerning that which must shortly come, at that day when these things shall come forth among you." (*Ibid.*, 8:34.)

"And I would, my brethren, that ye should know that all the kindreds of the earth cannot be blessed unless he [the Lord] shall make bare his arm [show his strength] in the eyes of the nations.

"Wherefore, the Lord God will proceed to make bare his arm in the eyes of all nations,

" . . . in bringing about his covenants and his gospel unto those who are of the house of Israel." (1 Nephi 22:10-11.)

" . . . Nevertheless, God sendeth more witnesses, and he proveth all his words." (2 Nephi 11:3.)

"And as I spake concerning the convincing of the Jews, that Jesus is the very Christ, it must needs be that the Gentiles be convinced also that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God; . . ." (*Ibid.*, 26:12.)

" . . . I will show unto the children of men that I am able to do mine own work [produce the Book of Mormon without scholastic aid].

" . . . I will show unto the world that I am the same yesterday, today, and forever; . . .

" . . . I will proceed to do a marvelous work among this people, yea, a marvelous work and a wonder, for the wisdom of their wise and learned shall perish and the understanding of their prudent shall be hid.

" . . . I will show unto the children of men that it is yet a very little while and Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field; and the fruitful field shall be esteemed as a forest.

"And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book [Book of Mormon], and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity and out of darkness." (*Ibid.*, 27:21-29.)

In the dialogue between the Lord and Moroni set forth in chapter 12 of the book of Ether, the Lord makes it clear that the time would come when the ridicule and mocking of the Book of Mormon will come to a halt. The Lord will "show" to the critics that they have been wrong:

Moroni: "And I said to him: Lord,

\*Stela 5, Izapa, Chiapas, Mexico, A Major Archaeological Discovery of the New World, University Archaeological Society, Provo, Utah, Special Publications, No. 2 (1958).

the Gentiles will mock at these things, because of our weakness in writing; for Lord thou hast made us mighty in word by faith, but thou hast not made us mighty in writing; . . .

"And thou hast made us that we could write but little, because of the awkwardness of our hands. . . .

". . . I fear lest the Gentiles shall mock at our words.

"And when I had said this, the Lord spake unto me, saying:

Lord: "Fools mock, but they shall mourn; and my grace is sufficient for the meek, that they shall take no advantage of your weakness [in writing]; . . .

"Behold, I will *show* unto the Gentiles their weakness [regarding the book] . . . (Italics added.)

Moroni: "Wherefore, I know by this thing which thou hast said, that if the Gentiles have not charity [toward the Book of Mormon], because of our weakness, that thou wilt prove them, . . ."

Lord: "If they have not charity it mattereth not unto thee, thou hast been faithful; wherefore, thy garments shall be made clean. . . .

Moroni: "And now I, Moroni, bid farewell unto the Gentiles, yea, and also unto my brethren whom I love, until we shall meet before the judgment-seat of Christ, where all men shall know that my garments are not spotted with your blood.

"And then shall ye know that I have seen Jesus, and that he hath talked with me face to face, and that he told me in plain humility, even as a man telleth another in mine own language, concerning these things;

"And only a few have I written, because of my weakness in writing." (See Ether 12:23-40.)

Powerful evidences sustaining the book are accumulating, not the least of which are the gold plates found in Iran.

#### CLEANING TIME

BY PAUL ARMSTRONG

*With Springtime come,  
Those weekends now are here  
When winter's dirt  
And husbands disappear.*



**BOB AND SUE, like thousands of their elders, have learned the truth about the "lying allure of liquor."**

HAVE YOU seen through the glamorous haze thrown up by the alcohol advertisers? HAVE YOU learned enough of the truth about liquor to want to have no part of it?

"IF YOU DON'T DRINK," says the Preferred Risk Mutual Insurance Co., "WHY HELP PAY FOR THE ACCIDENTS OF THOSE WHO DO?" Preferred Risk, America's first automobile insurance company, for non-drinkers only, now makes it possible for you to stop paying for the drinker's accidents — and to save money at the same time.

If you are a non-drinker,\* we invite you to investigate, and insure with Preferred Risk. Save money — and put your automobile insurance where your heart is — with the thousands of others who say, "No Thanks — we don't drink." For full details, including an explanation of Preferred Risk's merit reduction plan for claim-free drivers, return this coupon now.

\*IMPORTANT — Non-drinker means TOTAL abstainer. The occasional social drinker is not eligible.

#### ACT NOW—USE THIS COUPON

Please send me complete information about your auto insurance for total abstainers. I understand there is no obligation. IE 4-62

Name \_\_\_\_\_ My auto insurance expires: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_ Month \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Day \_\_\_\_\_  
Occupation \_\_\_\_\_ Year \_\_\_\_\_

Age \_\_\_\_\_ Age of principal driver of auto \_\_\_\_\_ Age of youngest driver \_\_\_\_\_

Make of Car \_\_\_\_\_ Year \_\_\_\_\_ No. Cylinders \_\_\_\_\_

Body type & Model (Series) \_\_\_\_\_

Use of Car: ☐ Pleasure ☐ Business ☐ To and from work \_\_\_\_\_ miles one way.

Marital Status of Principal Driver: ☐ Married with \_\_\_\_\_ children  
☐ Single, living at home ☐ Single  
☐ Send me free copy of Christian Herald article.



**PREFERRED RISK MUTUAL INSURANCE COMPANY**

150 South 4th East, Dept. 660

Salt Lake City, Utah

Phone EM 4-1931

America's First Total Abstainer's Automobile Insurance Co.

William Plymat, President