



Type: Journal Article

---

## Labor Diligently to Write: The Ancient Making of a Modern Scripture, Chapters 14 & 15

Author(s): Brant A. Gardner

Source: *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship*,  
Volume 35 (2020), pp. 271-328

Published by: The Interpreter Foundation

---

**Abstract:** No abstract available.

# INTERPRETER



A JOURNAL OF LATTER-DAY SAINT  
FAITH AND SCHOLARSHIP

Volume 35 · 2020 · Pages 271 - 328

## **Labor Diligently to Write: The Ancient Making of a Modern Scripture**

Brant A. Gardner

Offprint Series

© 2019 The Interpreter Foundation. A 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.



This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/> or send a letter to Creative Commons, 444 Castro Street, Suite 900, Mountain View, California, 94041, USA.

ISSN 2372-1227 (print)  
ISSN 2372-126X (online)

The goal of The Interpreter Foundation is to increase understanding of scripture through careful scholarly investigation and analysis of the insights provided by a wide range of ancillary disciplines, including language, history, archaeology, literature, culture, ethnohistory, art, geography, law, politics, philosophy, etc. Interpreter will also publish articles advocating the authenticity and historicity of LDS scripture and the Restoration, along with scholarly responses to critics of the LDS faith. We hope to illuminate, by study and faith, the eternal spiritual message of the scriptures—that Jesus is the Christ.

Although the Board fully supports the goals and teachings of the Church, The Interpreter Foundation is an independent entity and is neither owned, controlled by nor affiliated with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, or with Brigham Young University. All research and opinions provided are the sole responsibility of their respective authors, and should not be interpreted as the opinions of the Board, nor as official statements of LDS doctrine, belief or practice.

This journal is a weekly publication of the Interpreter Foundation, a non-profit organization located at [InterpreterFoundation.org](http://InterpreterFoundation.org). You can find other articles published in our journal at [Journal.InterpreterFoundation.org](http://Journal.InterpreterFoundation.org). You may subscribe to this journal at [InterpreterFoundation.org/annual-print-subscription](http://InterpreterFoundation.org/annual-print-subscription).

# LABOR DILIGENTLY TO WRITE: THE ANCIENT MAKING OF A MODERN SCRIPTURE

---

**Brant A. Gardner**

[Editor's Note: We are pleased to present the sixth installment from a book entitled *Labor Diligently to Write: The Ancient Making of a Modern Scripture*. It is being presented in serialized form as an aid to help readers prepare for the 2020 *Come Follow Me* course of study. This is a new approach for *Interpreter*, and we hope you find it helpful.]

## **Chapter 14: Book of Alma**

### **Alma Chapter I (1–3) [Book Header]**

When Mormon introduces a new book, he provides a synoptic header:

The account of Alma, who was the son of Alma, the first and chief judge over the people of Nephi, and also the high priest over the Church. An account of the reign of the judges, and the wars and contentions among the people. And also an account of a war between the Nephites and the Lamanites, according to the record of Alma, the first and chief judge.

What is interesting about this header is that it covers only the material in the chapter that comes from the large plates. The material taken from Alma<sub>2</sub>'s personal record is not mentioned in the synoptic header.

Alma<sub>2</sub> was introduced as the first chief judge in Mosiah 29:43. We also saw the death of Mosiah<sub>2</sub> in Mosiah 29:45. The beginning of the book of Alma declares that it is the first year of the reign of the judges and repeats the information that Mosiah<sub>2</sub> had died. There is no way to know if the large plates book of Alma began with text that tied it to the end of the book of Mosiah, but Mormon clearly desires to show a continuity.

Therefore, elements from the end of the book of Mosiah are repeated at the beginning of the book of Alma. Interestingly, part of the looking back provides a short eulogy for Mosiah not included in the notice of his death at the end of the book of Mosiah:

Now it came to pass that in the first year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi, from this time forward, king Mosiah having gone the way of all the earth, having warred a good warfare, walking uprightly before God, leaving none to reign in his stead; nevertheless he had established laws, and they were acknowledged by the people; therefore they were obliged to abide by the laws which he had made. (Alma 1:1)

When Mormon begins the story of Alma<sub>2</sub> as chief judge, he repeats that the event occurs in “the first year of the reign of Alma” (Alma 1:2). The repetition of the first year of the reign of the judges links the looking back to the text that will now look forward into Alma<sub>2</sub>'s actions.

The opening chapter begins with contention. The first incident is the need to judge Nehor for Gideon's death. That incident allows Mormon to set the tone for the rest of his text. Beginning with this division between church and state, Mormon will trace the pressures exerted by different factions. There was obviously a Nehor, but he was not alone. His death “did not put an end to the spreading of priestcraft through the land” (Alma 1:16). The essential conflict that will continue through the end of his book is summarized in the first chapter of the book of Alma:

Nevertheless, this did not put an end to the spreading of priestcraft through the land; for there were many who loved the vain things of the world, and they went forth preaching false doctrines; and this they did for the sake of riches and honor.

Nevertheless, they durst not lie, if it were known, for fear of the law, for liars were punished; therefore they pretended to preach according to their belief; and now the law could have no power on any man for his belief.

And they durst not steal, for fear of the law, for such were punished; neither durst they rob, nor murder, for he that murdered was punished unto death.

But it came to pass that whosoever did not belong to the church of God began to persecute those that did belong to the church of God, and had taken upon them the name of Christ.

Yea, they did persecute them, and afflict them with all manner of words, and this because of their humility; because they were not proud in their own eyes, and because they did impart the word of God, one with another, without money and without price. (Alma 1:16–20)

This conflict is couched in religious terms, but notice that it remains intertwined with the political realm. In verse 17 the persecutors are constrained by law. These verses highlight not only the religious conflict but also the separation between law and church. The persecutors could exist within law but still be antithetical to the church.

Mormon's text is not interested in the times of peace and prosperity. They are mentioned as rewards for righteousness, but the text spends its time on the conflicts. Mormon is more concerned with warning future generations of the things that will draw them away than he is of promising rewards for faithfulness. Perhaps that stems from the ultimate lesson of separation taught by the destruction of the Nephite people, to which Mormon was a witness.

As witness to this theme, the chapter begins with Nehor and moves directly to Amlici (Alma 2–3), whose desire to become king leads to a major dissention and ends with the Amlicites joining with the Lamanites in war against the Nephites.<sup>330</sup> From this point on, the most terrible wars with the Lamanites will be led by apostate Nephites or contain apostate Nephites. Another theme Mormon promotes is that the worst enemies are those who were once brothers.

The text from Alma 3:4–19 begins with history and morphs into moralizing. At the end of a battle, Mormon notes:

And now as many of the Lamanites and the Amlicites who had been slain upon the bank of the river Sidon were cast into the waters of Sidon; and behold their bones are in the depths of the sea, and they are many.

And the Amlicites were distinguished from the Nephites, for they had marked themselves with red in their foreheads after the manner of the Lamanites; nevertheless they had not shorn their heads like unto the Lamanites. (Alma 3:3–4)

Verse 3 sets the historical stage — there are dead Lamanites and Amlicites. Apparently, Mormon assumed there could be a problem

---

330. For the Amlicite/Amalekite naming issue, see the section on “Subtle Manipulation of Names” in Part 1.

discerning whom among the dead was Lamanite or Nephite, so he records that the Amlicites had marked themselves on the forehead to be similar to the Lamanites but had not shorn their hair so they were different. Thus Mormon indicates the criteria upon which Nephite, Lamanite, and Amlicite dead might be distinguished. The Amlicites had the hair of the Nephites but the forehead mark of the Lamanites.

That historical tidbit is turned into fulfilled prophecy. Verse 8 is the turning point: “And this was done that their seed might be distinguished from the seed of their brethren, that thereby the Lord God might preserve his people, that they might not mix and believe in incorrect traditions which would prove their destruction” (Alma 3:8). The ability to distinguish is linked to the early curse prohibiting the Lamanites and Nephites from mixing.

The curse would follow any mixing, which Mormon notes in verse 9. Verse 13 repeats the information about the Amlicite mark, whereupon Mormon moralizes:

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

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

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

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

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

Now I would that ye should see that they brought upon themselves the curse; and even so doth every man that is cursed bring upon himself his own condemnation. (Alma 3:14–19)

It is interesting for the modern debate over the question of Lamanite skin color that the fulfillment of mixing with the Lamanites was a painted mark on the forehead, and nothing is said of skin pigmentation. Nevertheless, Mormon considered that a fulfillment of the curse.

The chapter ends on the fifth year of the reign of the judges. As noted in the section on “Chapters and Years,” when there is no other reason to end a chapter, beginning in Alma, Mormon uses five-year blocks as convenient historical units.

### **Alma Chapter II (4)**

This chapter begins after the end of the fifth year, and in the beginning of the sixth year of the reign of the judges. Mormon simply notes that “there were no contentions nor wars in the land of Zarahemla” (Alma 4:1). As with most statements of the absence of contentions and wars, Mormon is marking time, indicating that nothing happened that he thought was important to his thesis.

In this chapter, the division in Zarahemla’s religious community begins to change those who belonged to the church:

Now this was the cause of much affliction to Alma, yea, and to many of the people whom Alma had consecrated to be teachers, and priests, and elders over the church; yea, many of them were sorely grieved for the wickedness which they saw had begun to be among their people.

For they saw and beheld with great sorrow that the people of the church began to be lifted up in the pride of their eyes, and to set their hearts upon riches and upon the vain things of the world, that they began to be scornful, one towards another, and they began to persecute those that did not believe according to their own will and pleasure.

And thus, in this eighth year of the reign of the judges, there began to be great contentions among the people of the church; yea, there were envyings, and strife, and malice, and persecutions, and pride, even to exceed the pride of those who did not belong to the church of God. (Alma 4:7–9)

The impending mass apostasy from the church led Alma<sub>2</sub> to abdicate his position in the government, “that he might preach the word of God unto them, to stir them up in remembrance of their duty, and that he might pull down, by the word of God, all the pride and craftiness and all the contentions



which were among his people, seeing no way that he might reclaim them save it were in the bearing down in pure testimony against them” (Alma 4:19).

The chapter ends with an explicit division between church and state. While law had separated them, there was still a connection when the same person was the head of both church and state. This ends when Alma<sub>2</sub> “delivered up the judgment-seat to Nephiah, and confined himself wholly to the high priesthood of the holy order of God” (Alma 4:20).

### **Alma Chapter III (5) [Has Header]**

The chapter header and verses 1–2 are Mormon’s introduction. While the header implies a separate source, it is made explicit in Alma 5:2. The rest of the chapter is quoted from Alma<sub>2</sub>’s personal record. Using the personal record provides Mormon with the religious content that he does not appear to get from the large plates. Thus, the content that we see from Alma<sub>2</sub>’s personal record is almost exclusively sermons, with a little connecting history added as needed.

Mormon is writing exemplar historiography (see the introduction to “Mormon: Writing” in Part 1). That means his history serves as the example of the lessons he wishes his readers to learn. However, Mormon is also very interested in the principles of the gospel and how one might both understand the Savior and live according to his gospel. It appears that he found, among multiple records in the Nephite archive, some records preserved that were not recorded on the large plates. There may have been many. One was the Record of Zeniff, which Mormon used because it provided needed history. Some, like the included personal records of Alma<sub>2</sub> and Nephi<sub>3</sub>, contained spiritual content. Mormon also appreciated this content and made certain it was included.

What is not clear is whether or not he knew of these records before writing the book headers. The book headers do not include the information from the personal records. There are two possibilities. One is that Mormon found these separate records later and added them because they were important. The other is that Mormon, as a formality, simply wrote the headers to reflect the large plates regardless of what he intended to write. I prefer the second option. While either case might describe the use of Alma’s personal record, the entirety of 3 Nephi suggests that Mormon knew about these separate records and intended to use them from the beginning of creating his outline.

Most of the chapter quotes “the words which he [Alma<sub>2</sub>] spake to the people in the church which was established in the city of Zarahemla, according to his own record, saying. . .” (Alma 5:2). Not only does it

make sense for Alma<sub>2</sub> to begin his missionary journey in Zarahemla, but it provides Mormon the opportunity to set the picture of the nature of Nephite apostasy at this time, an apostasy of heart that was sufficient that it affected those who affiliated with the church, in the capital city. It provides the essential contrast that will highlight his sermon to the people in Gideon, recorded in chapter V (7).

The sermon and the chapter conclude simultaneously. There is no testificatory *Amen*, but the sermon clearly ends and was certainly indicated as having ended on Alma<sub>2</sub>'s record. Ending a chapter at the end of a sermon is common enough for Mormon that this could be his own chapter ending rather than one copied from Alma's record.

### **Alma Chapter IV (6)**

There are only 8 verses in this chapter, which Orson left just as Mormon created it. Thus we have a separate chapter dedicated to very little information. One of the reasons for a new chapter here is that rather than copying from Alma<sub>2</sub>'s record, Mormon is narrating. The source continues to be Alma<sub>2</sub>'s record. Mormon will quote from it again in the next chapter.

The function of this chapter is to provide Mormon's moralizing summary of the reason why he includes Alma<sub>2</sub>'s sermons. Certainly he agrees with the doctrine, but Mormon is still setting the stage for the nature of Nephite apostasy that will be seen in the rest of the book. His intent to moralize is clear in the beginning of verse 5 when he states: "Now I would that ye should understand. . . ."

The chapter is Mormon's description of the conditions and the need for the sermons, but it isn't his testimony — that is, until the very end: "And Alma went and began to declare the word of God unto the church which was established in the valley of Gideon, according to the revelation of the truth of the word which had been spoken by his fathers, and according to the spirit of prophecy which was in him, according to the testimony of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who should come to redeem his people from their sins, and the holy order by which he was called. And thus it is written. Amen" (Alma 6:8).

When Mormon writes of what Alma<sub>2</sub> did, "according to the prophecy which was in him," it triggers the declaration: "according to the testimony of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who should come to redeem his people from their sins, and the holy order by which he was called." That served as enough of a testimony from Alma<sub>2</sub>, that Mormon confirmed it: "And thus it is written. Amen." Mormon's "thus it is written" becomes his own

additional testimony, sealed with *Amen*. The testificatory *Amen* created the chapter ending, short though the chapter was.

### **Alma Chapter V (7) [Has Header]**

The header provides the linking information: “the words of Alma which he delivered to the people in Gideon, according to his own record.” The quoted material begins in verse 1. What we have in this chapter is a recorded sermon. There is no reason to believe that Mormon did anything other than copy it as it was entered on Alma<sub>2</sub>'s record.

Those who settled in Gideon were the people of Limhi, who appear to have been given the name of their military leader who stood up to king Noah. These were people who had already been through a regime which witnessed the problems Mormon sets up as the threats to true Nephite society and religion: unrighteous kingship and an apostate religion with ties to the Jaredites. The people of Limhi, now the people of Gideon, had already lived through the dominance of that government and religion, had turned their backs on it, and had embraced the Nephite gospel. As recent converts away from that system, they had not turned back to it, and therefore the sermon given to them stands as a contrast to the one Alma<sub>2</sub> gave in Zarahemla.

Thus this righteous people can be commended for what they have avoided and be admonished to continue to expect the coming Messiah:

But behold, I trust that ye are not in a state of so much unbelief as were your brethren; I trust that ye are not lifted up in the pride of your hearts; yea, I trust that ye have not set your hearts upon riches and the vain things of the world; yea, I trust that you do not worship idols, but that ye do worship the true and the living God, and that ye look forward for the remission of your sins, with an everlasting faith, which is to come.

For behold, I say unto you there be many things to come; and behold, there is one thing which is of more importance than they all — for behold, the time is not far distant that the Redeemer liveth and cometh among his people. (Alma 7:6–7)

At the end of the sermon is a testificatory *Amen* which triggers the end of the chapter.

## Alma Chapter VI (8)

This chapter is a pastiche of quotation and linking narrative. Mormon is copying the quotations from Alma<sub>2</sub>'s record, but it is Mormon's language that ties the quotations into a storyline.

Mormon notes that "thus ended the ninth year of the reign of the judges" (Alma 8:2). This date may have been on Alma<sub>2</sub>'s record since Alma<sub>2</sub> continued to be the Nephite recordkeeper. Mormon quickly describes a discourse to the people in the land of Melek without quoting anything from the sermon. We do not know what was said in Melek or any of the details. This is not because Alma<sub>2</sub> did not write them; he almost certainly did. However, they did not further Mormon's purposes. Mormon is interested in moving to the story of Ammonihah.

Mormon tosses in an aside short enough that he does not consider it an interruption requiring repetitive resumption:

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

Now it was the custom of the people of Nephi to call their lands, and their cities, and their villages, yea, even all their small villages, after the name of him who first possessed them; and thus it was with the land of Ammonihah. (Alma 8:6–7)

The insertion is verse 7. It is preceded by a reference to Ammonihah and ends with, "thus it was with the land of Ammonihah." Why does Mormon insert this information? It should be clear that Mormon intended his readers understand that Ammonihah carried the name of its founder. However, no person named Ammonihah survives in our text. Perhaps it is a reference to some ancestor mentioned in the lost pages. Personally, I do not think so.

Mormon inserts this information at this point because it has a meaning relevant to the current story. Why mention the source of the name at all? It will become very obvious that Ammonihah is a city in rebellion politically and apostasy religiously. What does its name add to that story?

There are two possibilities. One, Ammonihah was a famous villain. That would show why Ammonihah was a bad place. That explanation would require that Mormon's readers understand something about that person. I prefer the second explanation, which is that the name is intended to invoke Ammon "he being a strong and mighty man, and a descendant of Zarahemla" (Mosiah 6:3). While Mormon uses Jaredite names to indicate his black-hat characters, Zarahemlaite names can be ambiguous.

In this case, Ammon is righteous. Thus, I suggest that the name Mormon assigns to the city reflects a beginning in righteousness, and the name itself was intended to draw attention to an apostasy, the city having once been righteous (using the name as the witness for the original state).

Much of this chapter is couched in dialogue. The linking narrative is heavily third person, and the quoted dialogue is first person. This might suggest that Mormon creates the narrative links and copies the quotations. Mormon will copy linking narrative in some cases later in his work with Alma<sub>2</sub>'s record, but he will also clearly create the linking dialogue as well. The most conservative reading here is that Mormon wrote the narrative and copied the dialogue from Alma<sub>2</sub>'s record.

### **Alma Chapter VII (9) [Has Header]**

The header associated with chapter VII (9) has two functions. It describes content and declares the source: “The words of Alma, and also the words of Amulek, which were declared unto the people who were in the land of Ammonihah. And also they are cast into prison, and delivered by the miraculous power of God which was in them, according to the record of Alma.” Neither of these functions appears to be exclusive to this chapter.

The declaration of the source is particularly interesting because it is the same declared source as we have for Alma chapter III (5) and chapter V (7). These are not all separate sources but rather the same personal record which Alma<sub>2</sub> kept. The reason for the repeated headers from the same text has no clear explanation. As a usable hypothesis, I suggest they represent times when Mormon included material from the private record and then skipped other material. When he returned to the information in the source, he used a header.

This chapter (VII (9)) and the next several: (VIII (9–10), IX (12:1–13:9), and X (13:9–15)) are the focus of the material Mormon took from Alma<sub>2</sub>'s personal record. The story of Alma and Amulek's defense of the gospel contains much religious instruction that Mormon clearly loved but had not found in the large plates.

Interestingly, in addition to the name Ammonihah used to indicate a city in apostasy, we have Amulek, who has a very clearly Zarahemlaite *mlk*-name. He is set up as a converted, previously wayward soul, if not fully apostate. Amulek reveals:

Nevertheless, after all this, I never have known much of the ways of the Lord, and his mysteries and marvelous power. I said I never had known much of these things; but behold, I mistake,

for I have seen much of his mysteries and his marvelous power; yea, even in the preservation of the lives of this people.

Nevertheless, I did harden my heart, for I was called many times and I would not hear; therefore I knew concerning these things, yet I would not know; therefore I went on rebelling against God, in the wickedness of my heart, even until the fourth day of this seventh month, which is in the tenth year of the reign of the judges. (Alma 10:5–6)

While the city began righteous (symbolized by the name), Amulek began unrighteous (symbolized by his *mlk*-name). The subtext is the contrast of the repentant Amulek and the unrepentant Ammonihah. The way one begins does not seal one's fate but rather the choices to obey or disobey.

Alma 9:1–34 are all a quotation from Alma's record. Even the narration is copied from Alma<sub>2</sub>'s record. This is clear from the very first verse, which is narration but clearly Alma<sub>2</sub>'s writing: "And again, I, Alma, having been commanded of God that I should take Amulek and go forth and preach again unto this people, or the people who were in the city of Ammonihah, it came to pass as I began to preach unto them, they began to contend with me, saying. . ." (Alma 9:1).

Alma 9:34 is difficult to assign. The Rosenvall's have reformatted the Book of Mormon and assigned the speaker or narrator to the various verses. They assign Alma 9:34 to Mormon.<sup>331</sup> Two things contraindicate that assignation. First is that 9:33 is clearly Alma (which the Rosenvall's also recognized): "But it came to pass that the Lord did not suffer them that they should take me at that time and cast me into prison." The first person *me* indicates that Alma has been speaking. Although Mormon could have inserted his own narrative here, the second contraindication is the parallel between the ending of these words of Amulek and those found in 11:46. Both these verses end chapters:

And it came to pass that Amulek went and stood forth, and began to preach unto them also. And now the words of Amulek are not all written, nevertheless a part of his words are written in this book. (Alma 9:34)

Now, when Amulek had finished these words the people began again to be astonished, and also Zeezrom began to tremble.

---

331. Lynn A. Rosenvall and David L. Rosenvall, *A New Approach to The Book of Mormon, Another Testament of Jesus Christ* (Pleasant Grove, UT: Olive Olive Leaf Foundation, 2017), 311.

And thus ended the words of Amulek, or this is all that I have written. (Alma 11:46)

The parallelism between the closing ideas — that Amulek had said more but that this was all that was written — is striking. In Alma 11:46 we have the important “or this is all that I have written.” Mormon does insert his authorial *I* at times but not in these contexts. With the quantity of copying we have in this chapter, I think we must assign these two closing verses to Alma. I also suggest therefore, the chapter break was copied from Alma’s record as well. This particular chapter break does not fit into any of the typical patterns for the way Mormon created a chapter. If Mormon was copying the entire entry up to the chapter break, and he would again begin copying *after* the chapter break, it would make sense that the chapter break was copied as well.

### **Alma Chapter VIII (10–11)**

I see Mormon continuing to copy both the quotations and the narrative. Therefore, even though the first sentence is linking narrative, I suggest it comes from Alma<sub>2</sub>, not Mormon. Mormon continues to copy through the end of Alma 10:29, which ends a quoted discourse. In the very next verse, I see Mormon beginning to take over as the narrator. It seems reasonable for Mormon to shift modes from copying to narrating after the end of a quoted speech.

The confirmation that we have Mormon at this point comes when we see him inserting a body of material. Were he copying, it is less likely that he would have inserted new material at this point. The introduction that generates the aside is at the end of our chapter 10, and the insertion itself was separated into chapter 11.

Alma 11:1–19 are an insertion that clearly comes from Mormon. Mormon provides a discussion of wages and then information about the system of weights and measures. Mormon would understand that his future readers might not understand the values as they are listed. For Alma<sub>2</sub>, there was no reason to explain a system of weights and measures his readers would have found very familiar. Had this inserted explanation come from Alma<sub>2</sub>, it would be an anomaly in an ancient record. When we find that it comes from Mormon, a man who knows he is writing for a distant readership (for whom it may not be the current system), the insertion is not only understandable, but modern experience has shown how important the addition was.

Alma 10:31 introduces an important new character: “And there was one among them whose name was Zeezrom. Now he was the foremost to

accuse Amulek and Alma, he being one of the most expert among them, having much business to do among the people” (Alma 10:31). Right after introducing Zeezrom, Mormon introduces the theme of Zeezrom’s desire: “Now the object of these lawyers was to get gain; and they got gain according to their employ” (Alma 10:32).

The discussion of wages, weights, and measures is bracketed by repetitive resumption:

**[Departure text]:** 10:32 Now the object of these lawyers was to get gain; and they got gain according to their employ.

**[Return text]:** 11:20 “Now, it was for the sole purpose to get gain, because they received their wages according to their employ, therefore, they did stir up the people to riotings, and all manner of disturbances and wickedness, that they might have more employ, that they might get money according to the suits which were brought before them; therefore they did stir up the people against Alma and Amulek.”

The reason for this insertion is to explain how Mormon is using names (see “Mormon’s Interruptive Insertions”).

Mormon is back to the original text again at 11:21: “And this Zeezrom began to question Amulek, saying:” This narrative fits what Alma<sub>2</sub> would have done to introduce the quoted dialogue. If we put the verses together without Mormon’s interruption, we have:

And it came to pass that the lawyers put it into their hearts that they should remember these things against him. And there was one among them whose name was Zeezrom. . . . And this Zeezrom began to question Amulek, saying: Will ye answer me a few questions which I shall ask you? Now Zeezrom was a man who was expert in the devices of the devil, that he might destroy that which was good; therefore, he said unto Amulek: Will ye answer the questions which I shall put unto you? (Alma 10:30–31, 11:21)

That would be a very plausible quotation from Alma<sub>2</sub>’s record. The repetition of Zeezrom’s name also forms a secondary repetitive resumption. Mormon quotes from Alma<sub>2</sub>’s record through the end of the chapter. The final words of the chapter still quote Alma<sub>2</sub>, and Mormon’s switch from copying to narrating will create the close of this chapter and the opening of the next: “Now, when Amulek had finished these words the people began again to be astonished, and also Zeezrom began to tremble. And thus ended the words of Amulek, or this is all that I have written” (Alma 11:46). It is Alma<sub>2</sub> who wrote “this is all that I have written.”



### Alma Chapter IX (12:1–13:9)

Mormon returns to his more typical process of writing the connecting pieces between the quotations. The only difference between Alma VIII and Alma IX that might help explain the reason for changing his use of quoted material is that the place where he quotes Alma<sub>2</sub>'s narratives came in a longer quotation of what Amulek had said. Now that Mormon returns to quoting Alma<sub>2</sub> from Alma<sub>2</sub>'s record, he returns to creating the linking narratives.

In chapter 12 Mormon uses repetition for emphasis rather than resumption. As he describes the effect of Amulek's preaching on Zeezrom, Mormon says:

Now Alma, seeing that the words of Amulek had silenced Zeezrom, for he beheld that Amulek had caught him in his lying and deceiving to destroy him, and seeing that *he began to tremble under a consciousness of his guilt*, he opened his mouth and began to speak unto him, and to establish the words of Amulek, and to explain things beyond, or to unfold the scriptures beyond that which Amulek had done. (Alma 12:1)

Mormon introduces, then copies, Alma<sub>2</sub>'s words to Zeezrom (verses 3–6). Mormon describes the effect of Alma<sub>2</sub>'s words upon Zeezrom, linking it to Amulek, but intensifying the reaction:

Now when Alma had spoken these words, *Zeezrom began to tremble more exceedingly*, for he *was convinced more and more of the power of God*; and he was also convinced that Alma and Amulek had a knowledge of him, for he was convinced that they knew the thoughts and intents of his heart; for power was given unto them that they might know of these things according to the spirit of prophecy. (Alma 12:7)

This technique allows Mormon to give full credit to Amulek's preaching but also to note that Alma<sub>2</sub> was able to intensify the effect on Zeezrom.

This chapter moves forward the story of Alma<sub>2</sub> and Amulek in Ammonihah but has the added advantage of some precious doctrine being taught. The combination assured that Mormon would include this information in his book.

The chapter ends with the *Amen* from Alma<sub>2</sub>'s sermon. The next chapter continues with Alma<sub>2</sub>'s speech without any narrative interruption. I suggest the lack of intervening narrative suggests that

it was Alma<sub>2</sub> who ended a chapter after the testificatory *Amen* and continued with his discourse. Note that the next chapter begins with “Now, as I said. . .” (Alma 13:10). Mormon was copying Alma<sub>2</sub>’s sermon and copied the chapter break as well as the text.

### **Alma Chapter X (13:10–15:19)**

Although the previous chapter ended due to the testificatory *Amen*, the sermon is not over. Alma<sub>2</sub> continues, clearly without stopping. The sermon as given live would have had no pause. The break for the chapter is an artifice required by writing, not speaking.

There are some interesting notes for this chapter. In Alma 13:31 we find Mormon indicating: “And Alma spake many more words unto the people, which are not written in this book.” We can confirm this is Mormon because we find Alma<sub>2</sub> named in the third person. However, the phrasing “spake many more words unto the people, which are not written in this book” echoes the similar endings to chapters VII (9:34) and VIII (11:46) which also mention there were more words spoken which have not been written.<sup>332</sup> Interestingly, both those previous occasions are from Alma<sub>2</sub> as the narrator, and both close chapters. Mormon intentionally echoes those ending statements to end a section, but not a chapter.

We rarely get dates mentioned in the material from Alma’s personal record, but in this chapter we have two. One comes at the very end of the chapter (15:19) and is part of the transition out of the record of Alma and back into the large-plate book of Alma for chapter XI. It is the other occurrence that is interesting; it occurs in Mormon’s narration at 14:23: “And it came to pass after they had thus suffered for many days, (and it was on the twelfth day, in the tenth month, in the tenth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi) that the chief judge over the land of Ammonihah and many of their teachers and their lawyers went in unto the prison where Alma and Amulek were bound with cords.” I speculate that this very precise dating was included in Alma<sub>2</sub>’s record and is here because on this day a miracle occurred, which Mormon described:

And Alma cried, saying: How long shall we suffer these great afflictions, O Lord? O Lord, give us strength according to our faith which is in Christ, even unto deliverance. And they broke the cords with which they were bound; and when the

---

332. Because we see Alma<sub>2</sub> using the phrase, we cannot be certain if Mormon is indicating that there is no more in Alma’s book from which he is copying, or that he chose not to include more in his editing of the book of Alma.

people saw this, they began to flee, for the fear of destruction had come upon them.

And it came to pass that so great was their fear that they fell to the earth, and did not obtain the outer door of the prison; and the earth shook mightily, and the walls of the prison were rent in twain, so that they fell to the earth; and the chief judge, and the lawyers, and priests, and teachers, who smote upon Alma and Amulek, were slain by the fall thereof.

And Alma and Amulek came forth out of the prison, and they were not hurt; for the Lord had granted unto them power, according to their faith which was in Christ. And they straightway came forth out of the prison; and they were loosed from their bands; and the prison had fallen to the earth, and every soul within the walls thereof, save it were Alma and Amulek, was slain; and they straightway came forth into the city.

Now the people having heard a great noise came running together by multitudes to know the cause of it; and when they saw Alma and Amulek coming forth out of the prison, and the walls thereof had fallen to the earth, they were struck with great fear, and fled from the presence of Alma and Amulek even as a goat fleeth with her young from two lions; and thus they did flee from the presence of Alma and Amulek. (Alma 14:26–29)

Mormon certainly intended to include their miraculous escape, and it is likely Alma had recorded the precise date, which Mormon took from Alma<sub>2</sub>'s record. The tenth year also closes the chapter: “And thus ended the tenth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi” (Alma 15:19). The year causes the ending; there is no *Amen*, nor the end to a speech. As a chapter ending of convenience, it ends on a five-year ending.<sup>333</sup>

### **Alma Chapter XI (16)**

Mormon takes a break from using Alma<sub>2</sub>'s record as his source and returns to the large plates. The first hint is that the chapter opens with a declaration of the date, something typical of Mormon's use of the large plates (beginning with the book of Alma). The emphasis on years

---

333. See the section “Chapters and Years” in Chapter 4.

throughout the chapter further underscores the annalistic nature of this chapter, and that reflects on the organization of the large plates.<sup>334</sup>

The opening also refocuses Mormon's narrative away from what Alma<sub>2</sub> and Amulek preached and onto the aftermath:

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

For behold, the armies of the Lamanites had come in upon the wilderness side, into the borders of the land, even into the city of Ammonihah, and began to slay the people and destroy the city. (Alma 16:1–2)

Mormon returns to the large plates to fill out the details of the Lamanite destruction of Ammonihah. Ammonihah thus becomes the extreme example of the Lord's promise relative to the land. There is safety and prosperity in following God's commands, but a cursing if the Nephites do not. Ammonihah is presented as a quintessential apostate land, and therefore it is destroyed.

Alma will discuss the destruction of Ammonihah twice. The second time will be in the story of the Anti-Nephi-Lehies. In that story, the destruction of Ammonihah is placed in a more historical context with more historical motivations. In this chapter, the destruction is clearly cast as God's punishment. Mormon uses this event as an exemplar that makes explicit the results of God's promise for the land. He will show both sides of the promise.<sup>335</sup>

Clearly, Ammonihah represents the dire promise that would accompany apostasy. Mormon underscores that meaning in his description of the destruction:

---

334. The year is indicated in Alma 16:1 (eleventh), 16:9 (eleventh year), 16:12 (eleventh), and 16:21 (fourteenth year).

335. Grant Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon: A Reader's Guide* (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 118, discusses the dual presentation of the destruction of Ammonihah and has a similar analysis: "So in Alma 8–16 and 17–25, we find two separate narrative strands that both culminate in the destruction of Ammonihah, but the explanations given in each version are different. One is spiritual (due to God's justice), and one political (due to Lamanite aggressions in the aftermath of Anti-Nephi-Lehi conversions). Nevertheless, both seem equally valid."

And thus ended the eleventh year of the judges, the Lamanites having been driven out of the land, and the people of Ammonihah were destroyed; yea, every living soul of the Ammonihahites was destroyed, and also their great city, which they said God could not destroy, because of its greatness.

But behold, in one day it was left desolate; and the carcasses were mangled by dogs and wild beasts of the wilderness. (Alma 16:9–10)

Ammonihah was a city of pride, so much that they essentially tempted God in saying it could not be destroyed. The result was that “in one day it was left desolate.”

Mormon then contrasts this with the positive promise of the land. After finishing the aftermath of the destruction of Ammonihah, he turns to the positive results of those who did listen to Alma<sub>2</sub> and Amulek:

And Alma and Amulek went forth preaching repentance to the people in their temples, and in their sanctuaries, and also in their synagogues, which were built after the manner of the Jews.

And as many as would hear their words, unto them they did impart the word of God, without any respect of persons, continually.

And thus did Alma and Amulek go forth, and also many more who had been chosen for the work, to preach the word throughout all the land. And the establishment of the church became general throughout the land, in all the region round about, among all the people of the Nephites.

And there was no inequality among them; the Lord did pour out his Spirit on all the face of the land to prepare the minds of the children of men, or to prepare their hearts to receive the word which should be taught among them at the time of his coming—

That they might not be hardened against the word, that they might not be unbelieving, and go on to destruction, but that they might receive the word with joy, and as a branch be grafted into the true vine, that they might enter into the rest of the Lord their God.

Now those priests who did go forth among the people did preach against all lyings, and deceivings, and envyings, and strifes, and malice, and revilings, and stealing, robbing,

plundering, murdering, committing adultery, and all manner of lasciviousness, crying that these things ought not so to be — Holding forth things which must shortly come; yea, holding forth the coming of the Son of God, his sufferings and death, and also the resurrection of the dead.

And many of the people did inquire concerning the place where the Son of God should come; and they were taught that he would appear unto them after his resurrection; and this the people did hear with great joy and gladness. (Alma 16:13–20)

Mormon noted: “And the Lamanites did not come again to war against the Nephites until the fourteenth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi. And thus for three years did the people of Nephi have continual peace in all the land” (Alma 16:12). That introduction began the discussion of what happened during that time of peace. The closing verse specifically notes the year at the end of the three years of continual peace: “thus ended the fourteenth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi.”

When Mormon closes the fourteenth year, it is obvious the next events will open the fifteenth year. Mormon is using the five-year periods, but he is flexible in how he assigns them so history will correctly fit into the pattern. What is interesting is that the next chapter will not note any years at all. We do not hear about the fifteenth year until Alma 28:1, which marks the end of the fifteenth year. It will be an eventful year.

### **Alma Chapter XII (17–20)**

The header to Alma XII (17) indicates: “An account of the sons of Mosiah, who rejected their rights to the kingdom for the word of God, and went up to the land of Nephi to preach to the Lamanites; their sufferings and deliverance — according to the record of Alma.” Mormon explicitly returns to Alma<sub>2</sub>’s personal record. Although the subject of the chapter is the sons of Mosiah, the information was recorded by Alma<sub>2</sub> and taken from his record.

This explains the first verse: “And now it came to pass that as Alma was journeying from the land of Gideon southward, away to the land of Manti, behold, to his astonishment, he met with the sons of Mosiah journeying towards the land of Zarahemla” (Alma 17:1). It is Alma<sub>2</sub>’s record, and it begins from Alma<sub>2</sub>’s perspective. He is journeying from the land of Gideon when he meets the sons of Mosiah.

The logistics of the situation translated into this text tell us that Mormon has subtly manipulated Alma<sub>2</sub>’s description. It is certain that the

record noted their meeting on the road. The description of their joy in finding each other is also logically part of Alma<sub>2</sub>'s description. However, when the meeting moves directly into the long description of what happened, we are seeing Mormon shifting material to improve his own telling of the tale. It is quite unlikely that the meeting in the road led to the full details of what the sons of Mosiah did, which will occupy chapters, not sentences. Alma<sub>2</sub> must have written it more as it occurred, with Mormon using the meeting as the introduction to the mission stories.

Another indication that it is Mormon who is creating this narrative is the foreshadowing he uses:

And they had been teaching the word of God for the space of fourteen years among the Lamanites, having had much success in bringing many to the knowledge of the truth; yea, by the power of their words many were brought before the altar of God, to call on his name and confess their sins before him.

Now these are the circumstances which attended them in their journeyings, for they had many afflictions; they did suffer much, both in body and in mind, such as hunger, thirst and fatigue, and also much labor in the spirit. (Alma 17:4–5)

Before he even begins, we know that this is a positive story. Although there will be afflictions, there is tremendous reward. The foreshadowing is designed for Mormon's audience. We do not know for whom Alma<sub>2</sub> believed he was writing, but there was no particular reason for Alma<sub>2</sub> to use foreshadowing. A teller of a tale would perhaps prefer to let the tension mount. That was not Mormon's reason for telling this story.

Alma chapter 18 begins a section that tells the story through dialog. It is probable that Mormon is copying here. Since Alma<sub>2</sub> had to set up the conditions of the dialog just as Mormon did, it is possible that much of chapter 17 is copied from Alma<sub>2</sub>'s narration rather than be a new invention Mormon created from what Alma<sub>2</sub> wrote. It would be easier to copy. If that is the case, the dividing line between Mormon's narration and copying Alma<sub>2</sub>'s text would be in Alma 17:6: "Now these were their journeyings: Having taken leave of their father, Mosiah, in the first year of the judges; having refused the kingdom which their father was desirous to confer upon them, and also this was the minds of the people." Mormon would have written "Now these were their journeyings," and the rest would begin the copy from Alma<sub>2</sub>'s record.

Alma<sub>2</sub> (whom I suggest is the writer at this point) finishes the basic story of Ammon and Lamoni in chapter XII (17–20). At the end, he sets up the next story. The final event has Lamoni and Ammon freeing Ammon’s brothers, who have been imprisoned in Middoni. This ends the acts of Ammon and Lamoni and serves to shift the narrative focus onto the brothers who had been imprisoned. Aaron, whose story occupies the next chapter, is not named as one of the prisoners at this time because the focus is still on Ammon. However, we learn in Alma 21:13 that Aaron was one of those prisoners.

This chapter ends at an end in the story, not due to any particular marker, such as a testificatory *Amen* or a year ending. This suggests that the division into chapters is original to Alma<sub>2</sub>’s text and was not one Mormon created but rather one copied from his source.

### **Alma Chapter XIII (21–22) [Has Header]**

Mormon provides a chapter header to signal the shift to the story of a different son of Mosiah: “An account of the preaching of Aaron, and Muloki, and their brethren, to the Lamanites.” Although Mormon doesn’t state it explicitly, this information continues to come from the record of Alma<sub>2</sub>. Most of the previous chapter appears to be copied from Alma<sub>2</sub>’s personal record, including the chapter break. Mormon inserts the header but returns to copying. Although Mormon’s headers most often indicate a change in the source he is using, it indicates a change in the ultimate source of the story in this case. The original information had to come from a different source because this chapter relates information from a similar time but different place than Ammon’s story.

Even though Mormon’s header suggests a change of source, Mormon continues to copy from Alma<sub>2</sub>’s personal record. Although the ultimate source had to be different, we have the information through Alma<sub>2</sub>’s edited version of that story. Thus, when the new story of Ammon begins, Alma<sub>2</sub> places it in the context of what he had written about Ammon. He begins with the separation of the brothers to move the beginning point back in time to when the stories began to separate. Having established the common beginning, Alma<sub>2</sub> moves to Aaron’s story. The story briefly describes his unsuccessful mission to Jerusalem and how the brothers ended up jailed in Middoni.

At that point, Alma<sub>2</sub>’s two stories meet. Ammon and Lamoni free the brothers from prison in Middoni. Even though this is Aaron’s story, Alma<sub>2</sub> gives a few comments to provide an ending to Ammon’s story before moving to the important parts of Aaron’s story (Alma 22:18–23).



Having finished Ammon's story, Alma<sub>2</sub> turns to Aaron's story: "Now, as Ammon was thus teaching the people of Lamoni continually, we will return to the account of Aaron and his brethren; for after he departed from the land of Middoni he was led by the Spirit to the land of Nephi, even to the house of the king which was over all the land save it were the land of Ishmael; and he was the father of Lamoni" (Alma 22:1).

During that story, Mormon inserts an aside into his copied text. Similar to the aside in chapter VIII (10–11), the beginning of this insertion requires some examination. The best clue to where Mormon departed from the text is found in the repetitive resumption with which he returns to the copied text. That resumption is clear in Alma 22:35: "And now I, after having said this, return again to the account of Ammon and Aaron, Omner and Himni, and their brethren." There is a chapter break, and then: "Behold, now it came to pass that the king of the Lamanites sent a proclamation among all his people" (Alma 23:1).

This sentence marks the textual resumption that highlights the departure point: "And it came to pass that the king sent a proclamation throughout all the land, amongst all his people who were in all his land" (Alma 22:27). There is not a clear place where text could be excised to see the before and after.

The inserted text defines the geographic scope of the land through which the proclamation was sent (Alma 22:27–34). As with the insertion about weights and measures in Alma 11, Mormon appears to realize that his readers would not understand the scope of the land throughout which the proclamation was sent. As he describes Lamanite lands, he also provides the overall layout of the lands. These verses provide some of the most important overall geographic details for the Book of Mormon lands. As an author-time insertion, it is also a description from the perspective of Mormon's time rather than a contemporary description from the record.

When Mormon copied the sentence: "And it came to pass that the king sent a proclamation throughout all the land, amongst all his people," it triggered the understanding that his readers would not understand geography, and therefore he writes the aside. In the very next phrase, "who were in all the regions round about," Mormon begins to set up his inserted geography. The ending of the aside comes with the standard technique of repetitive resumption.

Mormon has stepped away from copying. He will return to copying from Alma<sub>2</sub>'s record, and notes that shift with: "And now I, after having said this, return again to the account of Ammon and Aaron, Omner and Himni, and their brethren" (Alma 22:35). I suggest that the shift from his

narration to copying created the reason he ended this chapter. Ending the author-time aside and then returning to copying is the only change that marks this chapter division.

### **Alma Chapter XIV (23–26)**

The phrase that the king of the Lamanites sent out a proclamation is repeated twice:

Behold, now it came to pass that the *king of the Lamanites sent a proclamation among all his people, that they should not lay their hands on Ammon, or Aaron, or Omner, or Himni, nor either of their brethren who should go forth preaching the word of God, in whatsoever place they should be, in any part of their land.*

Yea, *he sent a decree among them, that they should not lay their hands on them to bind them, or to cast them into prison; neither should they spit upon them, nor smite them, nor cast them out of their synagogues, nor scourge them; neither should they cast stones at them, but that they should have free access to their houses, and also their temples, and their sanctuaries.* (Alma 23:1–2)

This is an intentional repetition in which the second repetition expands upon the first. The first is a general statement, and the second provides more details. The effect is to emphasize the absolute prohibition against hindering the brothers in their missionary endeavors. The specific prohibitions of Alma 23:2 likely reprise things which had already happened to them. As they note later in chapter XIV (23–26): “And we have entered into their houses and taught them, and we have taught them in their streets; yea, and we have taught them upon their hills; and we have also entered into their temples and their synagogues and taught them; and *we have been cast out, and mocked, and spit upon, and smote upon our cheeks; and we have been stoned, and taken and bound with strong cords, and cast into prison; and through the power and wisdom of God we have been delivered again*” (Alma 26:29).

Although there is no specific indication, it appears that Mormon returns to copying with the repeated phrase. Alma<sub>2</sub> is clearly speaking at the end of the chapter, and there is little internal to the chapter that would suggest a change of writer.

This chapter will tell the essential story of the Anti-Nephi-Lehies. Mormon includes their story for two reasons. He will argue that just as some of the most dangerous enemies are apostate Nephites, some of

the most faithful are converted Lamanites. Providing these examples helps Mormon demonstrate through example that it is one's personal actions in following or rejecting Yahweh's teachings that matters to the fulfillment of the promise of the land.

We have the second report of the destruction of Ammonihah. Both come from Alma<sub>2</sub>'s record. As noted, the first shows the destruction as Yahweh's wrath for their unrighteousness. In this second version, the cause is Lamanites continuing to thirst for blood after slaughtering many of the Anti-Nephi-Lehies. Assuming Alma<sub>2</sub> as the writer, the first telling occurred before he met the sons of Mosiah on the road and therefore would reflect his interpretation of the event from his perspective after having been personally involved. The second telling was second-hand through the records of the sons of Mosiah he copied into his record at a later point.

Even though Mormon is copying the majority of this text, he does not refrain from making small adjustments that further his exemplar history. Perhaps there are many we cannot discover. One of them is evident in this chapter. In Alma 24:28 we find that "so many of their brethren were Amalekites and Amulonites, the greatest number of whom were after the order of the Nehors." I have argued that the designation of "order of the Nehors" is Mormon's name for this group, not one that would have been used at the time (see *The Case of Nehor* section). It is not a name that would be expected in the text Alma<sub>2</sub> wrote, but it was an important part of the overall argument Mormon was building. Hence, this insertion of the name is due to Mormon and was not on the original record.

At the end of this chapter, Alma<sub>2</sub> inserts a dialogue between Ammon and Aaron. While it is possible this dialog actually took place, it is also possible that it is Alma<sub>2</sub>'s creation or a recreation of what had been told to him. One reason for suspecting that this is a crafted dialog is that it so nicely summarizes the whole of the missionary efforts between the two brothers whose stories were most prominent. The chapter ends with Aaron's testificatory *Amen*.

### **Alma Chapter XV (27–29)**

Chapter XV (27–29) is one of the most complex chapters for the assignment of the text to a particular writer. I would ascribe verses 27:1–4 to Mormon. Although Mormon had been quoting from Alma<sub>2</sub>'s record, and will pick up quoting at 27:5, there is later evidence of Mormon as a main narrator. I believe the best course is to suggest Mormon as the source of most of the narration, and only the quotations come from Alma<sub>2</sub>'s record.

Verses 27:5–12 is the kind of dialogue we have seen before from Alma<sub>2</sub>. The very short linking narratives might be Mormon's, but in the

other examples of this type of dialogue, Mormon appears to have copied Alma<sub>2</sub>'s linking narrative. I suggest that is what we have here.

Verses 27:13–14 (and probably 15a) come from Mormon. This is no longer narrative linking the quotations, but a historical narrative explaining events. Mormon has been doing most of that.

Verse 27:15b is quoted from Alma<sub>2</sub>'s record. Verses 27:16–22a are Mormon's narrative. This is evidenced by the presence of the name of Alma in the third person in verse 16, 19, and 20. Additionally, we have Mormon reacting to the meeting of Alma<sub>2</sub> and the sons of Mosiah. Verses 27:18 and 19 show Mormon's conclusion from this meeting.

Verses 27:22b–24 are quoted from Alma<sub>2</sub>'s record. Verses 27:25–18:4 are Mormon's historical narrative. We see the name Alma<sub>2</sub> in the third person in verse 25, which is the best marker we have in this section that it came from Mormon. This section discusses the decision of the people of Nephi to allow the people of Ammon to relocate in Jershon. After relocating, a war arises with the Lamanites that has terrible consequences. Mormon ends his narration with “a tremendous battle; yea, even such an one as never had been known among all the people in the land from the time Lehi left Jerusalem” (28:2). Mormon notes that it was a time of “great mourning and lamentation” (28:4). These verses are important because their intent will be replicated in 28:9–11. This is not a case of repetitive resumption. The repetition comes because the second instance is a quotation from Alma<sub>2</sub>.

Mormon's original intent was to end the chapter with Alma 28:1–7:

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

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

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

And now this was a time that there was a great mourning and lamentation heard throughout all the land, among all the people of Nephi—

Yea, the cry of widows mourning for their husbands, and also of fathers mourning for their sons, and the daughter for the brother, yea, the brother for the father; and thus the cry of mourning was heard among all of them, mourning for their kindred who had been slain.

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

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

The narration sees the people of Ammon “established in the land of Jershon” (Alma 28:1). Then it describes the terrible war that followed. The original end of the chapter would have closed the eventful fifteenth year. It doesn’t end because Mormon reads on in Alma<sub>2</sub>’s record and decides to add Alma<sub>2</sub>’s reaction to that terrible war.

Verses 28:8–29:17, which end chapter XV (27–29), are copied from Alma<sub>2</sub>’s record. Marking the change at verse 28:8 requires working backwards from a more obvious quotation from Alma<sub>2</sub>’s record. Verses 29:1–17 comprise Alma<sub>2</sub>’s great “O that I were an angel” soliloquy. All of the internal evidence points to Alma<sub>2</sub> as the author of those verses. However, an anomaly raises a question about that understanding.

C. Robb Smith looked at the soliloquy and noted an important apparent contradiction:

While reformatting the Book of Mormon text for his *Readers Edition*, Hardy found more than a hundred editorial insertions and several extended comment sections that caused him to conclude “Mormon was a deliberate and conscientious editor.” I performed my own word analysis using LDS View software and examined every use of a first-person subjective pronoun in the portion abridged by Mormon (Mosiah to 4th Nephi). I found that every occurrence of the pronoun “I” or “We” is either in a clearly labeled quotation or in one of Mormon’s editorial insertions. These pronouns are used 4,325 times in the Book of Mormon. 2,243 of those are found in the abridged

books with 2,095 of those in clearly labeled quotations and the remaining 148 in editorial insertions.<sup>336</sup>

With such a great consistency in noting who the speaker is when quoting, the absence of any indication of the speaker here is anomalous. Smith therefore suggests that this soliloquy must be Mormon's text, not Alma's.<sup>337</sup> Smith spends the rest of his paper exploring how Mormon might be behind the phrases that appear to so clearly depend upon Alma's experiences.

The absence of an introductory statement is indeed anomalous and requires an explanation. The absence is logical if this quotation is embedded within a longer text taken from Alma's record. Alma would have no reason to identify himself in his own record, and if Mormon is simply copying what Alma wrote, that explains the absence of the introduction to the quoted speaker. For Mormon, as he was writing there was no confusion at all because he was fully aware of the sources from which he was quoting.

The lack of clear introduction to the soliloquy tells us that the material immediately prior to the soliloquy must have been part of the quotation. Verses 28:9–12 are the easiest to ascribe to Alma. They not only needlessly replicate the information about the aftermath of the great war that Mormon described in 28:4–6, but important information is written in the present tense where Mormon's descriptions were in the past tense.

**[Mormon's writing]**

And now this was a time that there *was a great mourning* and lamentation heard throughout all the land, among all the people of Nephi—

Yea, the cry of widows mourning for their husbands, and also of fathers mourning for their sons, and the daughter for the brother, yea, the brother for the father; and thus the cry of *mourning was heard* among all of them, mourning for their kindred who had been slain.

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

---

336. C. Robb Smith, "O That I Were an Angel," *Millennial Millennial Star* (blog), accessed 12/15/2017, <https://www.millennialstar.org/wp-content/uploads/.../O-That-I-Were-an-Angel-4.26.16.doc>.

337. Ibid.

And *thus endeth the fifteenth year* of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi. (Alma 28:4–7; italics added to highlight past tense)

**[Alma’s writing]**

And this *is* the account of the wars and contentions among the Nephites, and also the wars between the Nephites and the Lamanites; and the fifteenth year of the reign of the judges *is ended*.

And from the first year to the fifteenth has brought to pass the destruction of many thousand lives; yea, it has brought to pass an awful scene of bloodshed.

And the bodies of many thousands *are laid low* in the earth, while the bodies of many thousands *are moldering* in heaps upon the face of the earth; yea, and many thousands *are mourning* for the loss of their kindred, because they have reason to fear, according to the promises of the Lord, that they *are consigned* to a state of endless wo. (Alma 28:9–11; italics added to highlight present tense)

With a strong assignment of verses 28:9–12 to Alma<sub>2</sub>, we may also safely assign verses 28:13–14 because only with a continuous quotation would the absence of the introduction to Alma<sub>2</sub> make sense.

With these verses firmly assigned to Alma<sub>2</sub> as the writer, we may define the beginning of the copied text. Verse 28:8 says: “And this is the account of Ammon and his brethren, their journeyings in the land of Nephi, their sufferings in the land, their sorrows, and their afflictions, and their incomprehensible joy, and the reception and safety of the brethren in the land of Jershon. And now may the Lord, the Redeemer of all men, bless their souls forever.” The beginning of the verse is in the present tense, “this is the account of Ammon,” and the sentence ends with the “safety of the brethren in the land of Jershon.”

The quoted material in chapter XV (27–29) preceding this section was about the resettlement of the people of Ammon in Jershon. This this verse picks up as a conclusion to the very topic Mormon had been quoting from Alma<sub>2</sub>’s personal record. I believe we can firmly assign all of 28:8–29:17 to Alma<sub>2</sub> as the writer, with the entirety being copied from Alma<sub>2</sub>’s personal record.

## Alma Chapter XVI (30–35)

This chapter opens with a return to the historical conditions described in Alma 28:1–7:

Behold, now it came to pass that after the people of Ammon were established in the land of Jershon, yea, and also after the Lamanites were driven out of the land, and their dead were buried by the people of the land —

Now their dead were not numbered because of the greatness of their numbers; neither were the dead of the Nephites numbered — but it came to pass after they had buried their dead, and also after the days of fasting, and mourning, and prayer, (and it was in the sixteenth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi) there began to be continual peace throughout all the land. (Alma 30:1–2)

This brings Mormon back in line with the historical timeline and he proceeds with his planned text. His next story has an interesting introduction:

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

Now there was no law against a man's belief; for it was strictly contrary to the commands of God that there should be a law which should bring men on to unequal grounds. (Alma 30:6–7)

After this introduction, the story of Korihor begins. Compare this to the beginning of the book of Alma: “Nevertheless, they durst not lie, if it were known, for fear of the law, for liars were punished; therefore they pretended to preach according to their belief; and now the law could have no power on any man for his belief” (Alma 1:17). Both the stories of Korihor and Nehor began with the statement that there was no law against one's belief. That must be a significant aspect of Mormon's discussion of the two men who preached a different religion to the Nephites.

The introduction of both stories with a statement that there was no law against belief answers why such an apostate from the religion was allowed in the political arena. Regardless of the political position, Yahweh's law did (and does) judge the religious beliefs and actions. In the story of Nehor, Alma<sub>2</sub> was both the Chief Judge and the High Priest.



In the case of Korihor, the two functions are filled by two different men. Nevertheless: “And it came to pass that when he was brought before Alma and the chief judge, he did go on in the same manner as he did in the land of Gideon; yea, he went on to blaspheme” (Alma 30:30). The problem is not simply religion but the social upheaval that accompanied Korihor’s preaching. Thus Alma<sub>2</sub> responds: “Thou knowest that we do not glut ourselves upon the labors of this people; for behold I have labored even from the commencement of the reign of the judges until now, with mine own hands for my support, notwithstanding my many travels round about the land to declare the word of God unto my people” (Alma 30:32). The issue is political and social, not simply religious.

The parallels between the two stories are strong enough that they mask an important difference — each comes from a different record. Though we may easily posit Alma<sub>2</sub> as the writer behind both stories, one was written on the large plates and the second on Alma<sub>2</sub>’s personal record. The charter for the large plates was clear, and there was no overarching charter for the personal record. Thus, we should discern a more political reason for the inclusion of the Nehor story. I suggest that the story of Nehor was important for setting a precedent of what fell into the newly divided political and religious realms. When we have Korihor’s story, the context is more clearly religious, though it could not help but be socially disruptive as well.

Mormon continues as the narrator through 30:12. From this point to the end of the story of Korihor in 30:60, Mormon creates the historical narrative and quotations are taken from Alma<sub>2</sub>’s personal record. In this case, even the short connecting narratives between quotations come from Mormon. For example, we find Alma 30:34 “and now Korihor said unto Alma” and 30:44 “But Alma said unto him” both indicating Mormon as the author.

This is important because Mormon crafts Korihor’s story to transition from it to the story of the Zoramites. Mormon makes sure that his readers know that Korihor left the city where Alma condemned him and went to “a people who had separated themselves from the Nephites and called themselves Zoramites” (Alma 30:59). Mormon then notes that while there, “he was run upon and trodden down, even until he was dead” (Alma 30:59). Although it is possible that this really occurred, the primary purpose of noting Korihor’s death was not to finish Korihor’s story, but to provide a narrative link to the Zoramite story: “Now it came to pass that after the end of Korihor, Alma having received tidings that the Zoramites were perverting the ways of the Lord. . . .” (Alma 30:60).

Mormon is the narrator here because he needs to mold his story to his own purposes, which plausibly did not replicate the way the

information was presented in Alma<sub>2</sub>'s source. Indeed, even if neither Alma<sub>2</sub>'s personal journal nor the large plate book of Alma told of Korihor's demise, Mormon needed that connection to relocate his story to the city of the Zoramites.

From Alma 31:1 to the end of Alma 35 (which chapter ended chapter XVI), Mormon is the narrator. This is quite clear from the number of times Mormon refers to Alma<sub>2</sub> in the narration.

Mormon sets up his transition from ending his work with Alma<sub>2</sub>'s personal record and the return to the large plates by noting the years, and that an important year-related story would be told later:

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

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

With one exception, Mormon is ready to move on. That exception is that he will add Alma's blessings to his three sons:

Now Alma, being grieved for the iniquity of his people, yea for the wars, and the bloodsheds, and the contentions which were among them; and having been to declare the word, or sent to declare the word, among all the people in every city; and seeing that the hearts of the people began to wax hard, and that they began to be offended because of the strictness of the word, his heart was exceedingly sorrowful.

Therefore, he caused that his sons should be gathered together, that he might give unto them every one his charge, separately, concerning the things pertaining unto righteousness. And we have an account of his commandments, which he gave unto them according to his own record. (Alma 35:15–16)

At the end of the three chapters recording separately the blessing to each son, Mormon will shift to the large plates. Before he does, he will finish the story of Alma<sub>2</sub> and his sons in Alma 43:1–2:

And now it came to pass that the sons of Alma did go forth among the people, to declare the word unto them. And Alma, also, himself, could not rest, and he also went forth.

Now we shall say no more concerning their preaching, except that they preached the word, and the truth, according to the spirit of prophecy and revelation; and they preached after the holy order of God by which they were called. (Alma 43:1–2)

The testificatory *Amen* at the end of Alma XIX (39–42) required the ending of the chapter, so the first two verses finish the story that could not be added to the end of that chapter.

### **Alma Chapters XVII (36–37), XVIII (38), XIX (39–42) [Each with a Header]**

Mormon provides a separate chapter for each of Alma<sub>2</sub>'s sons. The entire chapter is copied from Alma<sub>2</sub>'s record, with Mormon providing a header and, I suggest, the manipulation of the names. Although the headers do not specifically indicate that they come from Alma<sub>2</sub>'s personal record, when Mormon does add a chapter header, it is for information or text that will be coming from a separate record, even if that record is not explicitly mentioned in the chapter.

Chapters XVII (36–37) and XVIII (38) end with “my son, farewell.” Chapter XIX (39–42) ends with “And may God grant unto you even according to my words. Amen” (Alma 42:31). That testificatory *Amen* forced the ending of the chapter before the end of the story could be written. Mormon adds the ending material for the story of the blessings on Alma<sub>2</sub>'s sons at the beginning of Alma XX (43–44).

The names of Alma's sons are interesting. The oldest, Helaman<sub>2</sub>, echoes the name of one of king Benjamin's sons (Mosiah 1:2). Shiblon is a unit of measure (Alma 11:15) as well as a Jaredite king (Ether 1:11–12). Corianton is not otherwise attested directly in the Book of Mormon, but it is clearly related to Coriantum, a Jaredite king (Ether 1:13–14). Similarly, Coriantor was a Jaredite king (Ether 1:6–7). Of course, there is also Coriantumr, who was the last Jaredite king as well as the name of a prominent Nephite dissenter who was related to Zarahemla (1:15), and thus connected to the Jaredites through the Mulekites.

These names are probably used for teaching purposes, and may not have been the names by which the sons were known (see the section on *Subtle Manipulation of Names* in Part 1). Helaman<sub>2</sub> was the good son. He was

first-born and the first inheritor of the plates. Helaman<sub>2</sub> is a good Nephite name, and Mormon uses that name to highlight his goodness/righteousness.

When Alma goes on the missionary journey to the Zoramites, he does not take Helaman<sub>2</sub>. Rather, he takes his other sons, Shiblon and Corianton. This may be a foreshadowing of the way both those sons may have been affected by apostate notions. They do no (recorded) preaching on that journey and may be included for the connection to the Zoramites rather than the specifics of the mission to the Zoramites.

Shiblon is an ambiguous name. It has Jaredite connections but a more recent connection to the system of weights and measures in which it could be used as an indication of something with value (as Mormon did when he used other designations from the list in Alma 11 as the basis for names). Shiblon is basically a good son, but in Alma's final blessing to him, note how Alma suggests that Shiblon might be spiritually ambiguous:

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

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

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

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

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

Right after the admonition to be diligent and temperate, Alma lists the things that might tempt Shiblon from being diligent or temperate. They are descriptions of apostasy. Apparently, Shiblon is good with the notable possibility of being tempted into apostasy. He eventually chooses the good and becomes the recordkeeper after his brother Helaman<sub>2</sub> dies.

Corianton is the child who did apostatize (for a time). Notice that Alma tells Corianton that one of the things he did wrong was: “thou didst go on unto boasting in thy strength and thy wisdom” (Alma 39:2). That doesn't seem so bad, but it is also the very thing Alma warned Shiblon about in his blessing (Alma 38:11). As the child with the most

obviously Jaredite name, it is unsurprising that he was the one to cause the greatest problem and to become an actual apostate rather than only to have the potential to become one as is suggested for Shiblon.

Nevertheless, the sermons to the sons were not about apostasy but of righteousness and repentance. Helaman<sub>2</sub> was righteous. Shiblon was tempted but resisted. Corianton fell away but repented and later preached the word of God alongside Helaman<sub>2</sub> and Shiblon (Alma 49:30). As a moral story, the names foreshadow the nature of their experiences, with the ultimate lesson the ability to repent, even (in the case of Corianton) when there had been a major apostasy from the true way.

### **Alma Chapter XX (43–44)**

As previously noted, verses 1–2 finish the story of Alma<sub>2</sub> and his sons. This chapter returns to the large-plate book of Alma as the source. It also returns to finish the story of the eighteenth year, as foreshadowed in Alma 35:13.

The conceptual beginning of the new material coming from the large plates begins in Alma 43:3: “And now I return to an account of the wars between the Nephites and the Lamanites in the eighteenth year of the reign of the judges.” For Mormon, the “now I return” was as much a physical act as a narrative tool. Mormon had to physically change his relationship to a set of plates, returning to the large plates after having Alma’s record close enough to copy large amounts of text from it.

Marking the year at the beginning of a chapter is one of the traits of Mormon’s editing from the large plates, beginning with the book of Alma. Finally, war is one of the mandated subjects for the large plates. There was little emphasis on war in the material copied from Alma<sub>2</sub>’s personal record. There was Alma<sub>2</sub>’s lament for the aftermath of war, but there were no details. In contrast, from this point on, Mormon’s editing of the book of Alma will be heavy on details of wars and battles.

The end of this chapter is also the end of Alma<sub>2</sub>’s writing on the plates. It is possible in the blessings to his sons that Mormon’s insertion of material from Alma<sub>2</sub>’s personal record overlapped in time with the events of this final chapter from Alma<sub>2</sub>’s large-plate record. These records cover the events of the eighteenth year (Alma 44:24), and Helaman<sub>2</sub> takes up the record after that. It is probable that Alma<sub>2</sub> kept both records and there were two different endings. The blessings to his sons fit a father’s dying (or nearly dying) blessing, and the entrusting of the records to Helaman<sub>2</sub> would be the logical forerunner to Helaman<sub>2</sub> being the recordkeeper, which begins in chapter XXI (45–49). Note also the finality of Alma<sub>2</sub>’s comments to Helaman<sub>2</sub>:

And may the Lord bless your soul, and receive you at the last day into his kingdom, to sit down in peace. Now go, my son, and teach the word unto this people. Be sober. My son, farewell. (Alma 38:15)

And now it came to pass that after Alma had said these things to Helaman, he blessed him, and also his other sons; and he also blessed the earth for the righteous' sake. (Alma 45:15)

I suggest those blessings were Alma<sub>2</sub>'s final recorded act, coming at the end of the eighteenth year, but Mormon included them before the events of that year to keep them with Alma<sub>2</sub>'s personal record. Perhaps Mormon also wanted a cleaner separation between the more religious messages of those blessings and the beginnings of the stories of war.

Mormon closes the chapter with: "And thus ended the eighteenth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi. And thus ended the record of Alma, which was written upon the plates of Nephi" (Alma 44:24). Most important about this statement is that we again have text at the beginning of the next chapter that belongs with this particular event. If Alma<sub>2</sub> is no longer writing, he should give the task to his son. He does, but not until the beginning of the next chapter.

### **Alma Chapter XXI (45–49) [Has Header]**

Mormon's header introducing Helaman<sub>2</sub> as the recordkeeper is unusual. The rest of the times there are changes in the recordkeeper in the middle of a named book the event is noted, but is not accompanied by a chapter header. It says: "The account of the people of Nephi, and their wars and dissensions, in the days of Helaman, according to the record of Helaman, which he kept in his days." As did his father, Helaman<sub>2</sub> keeps the large plates, but they are outside of the strictly political line. Helaman<sub>2</sub> follows his father in the church, but has no official political standing. Yet he keeps the records. The confirmation that we are dealing with the large plates is the header's declaration that he is recording "the account of the people of Nephi, and their wars and dissensions." That language describes the large plates.

The transfer of the task of keeping the plates is not explicit, but it is implicit in Alma<sub>2</sub>'s question to Helaman<sub>2</sub>: "Believest thou the words which I spake unto thee concerning those records which have been kept?" (Alma 45:2). This is made explicit in Alma 50:38: "Nevertheless, he [Nephihah] had refused Alma to take possession of those records and those things which were esteemed by Alma and his fathers to be most sacred; therefore Alma had conferred them upon his son, Helaman" (Alma 50:38).

Alma 45:1–19 focuses on Alma<sub>2</sub>'s final acts. It is possible these events are at the beginning of Helaman<sub>2</sub>'s record because they were not recorded in what Alma<sub>2</sub> wrote. It is also possible that Mormon wants to keep events in full years. Alma<sub>2</sub>'s writings end with the end of the eighteenth year. At the beginning of the nineteenth is when the transfer or the records occurs. However, it is also the beginning of the Amalickiahite rebellion. That is the story that Mormon wants to include, and he keeps the whole year together by taking the ending of Alma<sub>2</sub>'s life story and putting it in the chapter where the rest of the nineteenth year will be discussed.

The real focus of this chapter is the religious contention which lay at the heart of internal strife. Mormon notes that: “And it came to pass that as many as would not hearken to the words of Helaman and his brethren were gathered together against their brethren. And now behold, they were exceedingly wroth, insomuch that they were determined to slay them” (Alma 46:1–2). Right after the rejection of religious preaching, the religiously-connected political issues raise their head:

Now the leader of those who were wroth against their brethren was a large and a strong man; and his name was Amalickiah.<sup>338</sup>

And Amalickiah was desirous to be a king; and those people who were wroth were also desirous that he should be their king; and they were the greater part of them the lower judges of the land, and they were seeking for power.

And they had been led by the flatteries of Amalickiah, that if they would support him and establish him to be their king that he would make them rulers over the people. (Alma 46:3–5)

Chapter XXI (45–49) is the origin story of Amalickiah up through the end of the first Lamanite invasion he initiated. Mormon spends time on this story because it is a potent example of his contention that the most serious wars and contentions are those which may be traced to apostate Nephites. Amalickiah has a *mlk*-name and is therefore desirous of becoming a king. He is part of the *mlk*-ite division in Nephite society, and exacerbates that difference until it becomes first rebellion, and then full apostasy and dissension. Amalickiah becomes Lamanite, very clearly in this case focusing on the definition of a Lamanite as “one opposed to the Nephites.”

From a source standpoint, it also leads to the question of the source for the information in our modern chapter 47, which concerns the way in

---

338. See “Subtle Manipulation of Names” in Part 1 for more information on the use of *mlk*-names, like Amalickiah.

which Amalickiah obtained the kingship over the Lamanites. Mormon does not make the source explicit.

The chapter ends with the defeat of Amalickiah's forces at the city of Noah. Mormon ends the chapter with: "And thus ended the nineteenth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi. Yea, and there was continual peace among them, and exceedingly great prosperity in the church because of their heed and diligence which they gave unto the word of God, which was declared unto them by Helaman, and Shiblon, and Corianton, and Ammon and his brethren, yea, and by all those who had been ordained by the holy order of God, being baptized unto repentance, and sent forth to preach among the people" (Alma 49:29–30).

Mormon emphasizes the year-based format that began in the book of Alma, then uses the "continual peace" to mark the lull between wars. In the lull, Mormon makes certain to note the continuation of the effort to preach the gospel. The chapter opened in the beginning of the nineteenth year and concludes with the end of the nineteenth year.

### **Alma Chapter XXII (50)**

Although there is a topic change that influenced the change of chapters, it was also influenced by the ending of the nineteenth year (Alma 49:29) and the beginning of the more significant twentieth year (Alma 50:1). In a Mesoamerican culture's vigesimal system (base 20), the number 20 has much of the same connotations as the number 10 in our decimal system. Just as we have a term for a ten-year period, *decade*, the Maya had a term for a twenty-year period, *katun*. Additionally, important historical events were celebrated on five-year intervals. We will see Mormon using each of these set-numbers to make an end and beginning to chapters.

The event that ends the chapter is the change in chief judge from Nephihah to his son, Pahoran. The end of the chapter comes with the note that he "did commence his reign in the end of the twenty and fourth year" (Alma 50:40). Note that again we are at a five-year break.

### **Alma Chapter XXIII (51)**

The chapter begins with "the commencement of the twenty and fifth year of the reign of the judges (Alma 51:1). Mormon creates a tie between the previous chapter and the new one by referencing an event from the end of the previous chapter. That chapter had told of the people of Morianton who had attempted to flee into the land northward. They were intercepted and brought back. In this chapter Mormon notes that the Nephites had



established peace with the people of Morianton. However, “they did not long maintain an entire peace in the land” (Alma 51:2).

Once again, Mormon is more interested in conflict than in peace. In this chapter, we are introduced to the opposing factions, the king-men and the freemen. The parallel in the name is intentional. Mormon wants his readers to see these two groups as antithetical parallels. As noted in the section “Subtle Manipulation of Names” in Part 1, it is possible that “king-men” is the translation of *mlk*-men. The implication is that there is a division among the Nephites that divides along the old Mulekite/Nephite lineages.

In addition to the conflict with the internal king-men, the Lamanites led by Amalickiah invade again. Teancum kills Amalickiah, which ends the war. That closing event is followed by the closing year. “And thus endeth the twenty and fifth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi” (Alma 51:37).

### **Alma Chapter XXIV (52–53)**

Mormon worked within cultural standards that suggested he create his chapters in five-year increments. However, he was also constrained by the salient historical events, which may not have occurred in precise five-year blocks. The last time Mormon used the five-year block to create a chapter break, the fifth year began the new chapter. In this case, it ends the previous chapter. The concept is the same, but Mormon adapted his text to attempt to meet both requirements. In this case, the death of Amalickiah that was discovered “on the first morning of the first month” of the twenty-sixth year (Alma 52:1) was an important beginning.

The chapter begins with Moroni’s actions, but ends with the description of the people of Ammon providing their two thousand young men as a fighting unit to assist in the war. That story comes without an easy transition within the chapter:

And now it came to pass that the armies of the Lamanites, on the west sea, south, while in the absence of Moroni on account of some intrigue amongst the Nephites, which caused dissensions amongst them, had gained some ground over the Nephites, yea, insomuch that they had obtained possession of a number of their cities in that part of the land.

And thus because of iniquity amongst themselves, yea, because of dissensions and intrigue among themselves they were placed in the most dangerous circumstances.

And now behold, I have somewhat to say concerning the people of Ammon, who, in the beginning, were Lamanites;

but by Ammon and his brethren, or rather by the power and word of God, they had been converted unto the Lord; and they had been brought down into the land of Zarahemla, and had ever since been protected by the Nephites. (Alma 53:8–10)

There is no easy reason for the shift in topic, yet it is a completely different narrative thread. It did not create a chapter break at its inception, but the conclusion of the chapter comes when Mormon concludes this part of the story: “And now it came to pass that Helaman did march at the head of his two thousand stripling soldiers, to the support of the people in the borders of the land on the south by the west sea. And thus ended the twenty and eighth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi” (Alma 53:22–23). The year that closes the chapter is noted, and it is not a five-year block. Mormon followed history first, and the symbolic collection of years as a lower priority for creating a chapter break.

### **Alma Chapter XXV (54–55)**

The chapter opens with the declaration of the year; the twenty-ninth. Mormon is linking his chapters as clearly consecutive in time. After a short introduction of a letter from the Lamanite leader Ammoron to Moroni requesting an exchange of prisoners, Mormon inserts a letter from Moroni to Ammoron. There is no header indicating a source change. As noted in the section on sources, it is difficult to know whether or not these letters were included on the large plates, or whether the originals were kept in the archive. In order for the letters from any Nephite to have been included, a copy had to have been made for archival purposes before a letter was sent to the Lamanites. It is difficult to conceive of any scenario that would have returned those letters to the Nephites from the Lamanites.<sup>339</sup> Perhaps the lack of a header may be used as a reason for suggesting the letters were copied onto the large plates.

The chapter ends after an exchange of letters that Moroni found unsatisfactory. Mormon describes the subterfuge that Moroni used to free his captives and capture the Lamanite guards. The chapter ends with the preparations for the next phase of the war, and specifically ends with “thus ended the twenty and ninth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi” (Alma 55:35).

---

339. Alternately, this may also suggest that Mormon, or Helaman<sub>2</sub>, as the large plate historian, created the letters from what they *should* have said. That would not be unusual for an ancient author, similar to the recreation of dialogue that would have been impossible to record. There is no way to know whether we are dealing with a copy of the letter which was sent or the artistic license that created the letter.

### Alma Chapter XXVI (56–58)

The chapter begins in the thirtieth year. Since Mormon is telling a continuous story, there is no particular reason to have a new chapter here, save that it allows him to create a five-year block. At this point, Mormon inserts a letter from Helaman<sub>2</sub> to Moroni. It will tell of events beginning four years earlier, in the twenty-sixth year (Alma 56:7). Mormon had covered the events of the twenty-sixth year in chapter XXIV (52–53). One of the events covered in that chapter is the same story with which Helaman<sub>2</sub> begins his letter — the story of the people of Ammon and their sons.

This repetition tells us a few things about the way Mormon is constructing his text. He is using the large plates and their strict chronological framework. As he comes to events, he notes them in the correct year. When the story becomes complicated by multiple threads of events happening at similar times in different fronts of the war, Mormon uses the timing of the main story to create the chapter breaks.

This is evident in the story of the stripling warriors. Mormon told that story in a chapter that began with the twenty-sixth year (chapter XXIV (52–53)). While the story of the formation of the stripling warriors is in that chapter, it isn't assigned a particular date. At the end of the chapter, Mormon provides information that might be confusing. He notes: "And now it came to pass that Helaman did march at the head of his two thousand stripling soldiers, to the support of the people in the borders of the land on the south by the west sea. And thus ended the twenty and eighth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi" (Alma 53:22–23).

Helaman<sub>2</sub> marching with the two thousand stripling soldiers comes immediately before the closing of the twenty-eighth year. That makes it appear that this story took place in the twenty-eighth year. Not until Alma 56:7 do we learn from Helaman<sub>2</sub>'s letter to Moroni that they began in the twenty-sixth year. Helaman<sub>2</sub> specifically says: "But behold, here is one thing in which we may have great joy. For behold, in the twenty and sixth year, I, Helaman, did march at the head of these two thousand young men to the city of Judea, to assist Antipus, whom ye had appointed a leader over the people of that part of the land" (Alma 56:9). By the end of the twenty-eighth year, the young men had already been part of the important battle in which they suffered injury but no losses (see Alma 57:4–5 for the entry of the twenty-eighth year after those events).

Mormon is working with different threads of stories. He writes the beginning of the Helaman<sub>2</sub> thread as it occurs in the strict chronological framework, but the ending of that story in chapter XXIV (52–53) gives

a year two years later than the events described. The end of the year comes so that Mormon can continue the Moroni thread in its correct time sequence. The entry of the letter from Helaman<sub>2</sub> to Moroni is provided in the correct timeframe of the main story (Moroni's thread), but it provides the flashback with details and the correct dates.

This dual presence of the beginning of the story of the sons of the people of Ammon raises questions about the sources that Mormon worked with. He might have had some indication of the story in the appropriate timeframe, and that was the reason he added it in the earlier chapter. However, it is also possible the story wasn't available on the large plates, and Mormon gave a synopsis in the appropriate timeframe, and the details when the letter was received (and entered in the year received). There is currently no good way to resolve the question.

The chapter ends with the end of the letter: "And now, behold, I close mine epistle. I am Helaman, the son of Alma" (Alma 58:41).

### **Alma Chapter XXVII (59–60)**

The previous year began with the statement that it was "in the commencement of the thirtieth year of the reign of the judges" (Alma 56:1). The beginning of this chapter (XXVII) notes that the events continue to be in the thirtieth year (Alma 59:1). This confirms that the closing of the previous chapter was generated by the end of the letter and not the annalistic framework.

This chapter will begin with narration, but also include an epistle from Moroni to Pahoran, the Nephite Chief judge. The ending of that letter creates the end of the chapter.

### **Alma Chapter XXVIII (61)**

This chapter consists of two letters, with minimum narration to provide context. Pahoran writes to Moroni and Moroni writes again to Pahoran. The chapter ends with the end of the letter. The fact that there are two letters in the same chapter indicates that the end of a letter was not a firm reason to end a chapter, but when the end of a letter ended a particular narrative thread, then the end of the letter became the catalyst to end the chapter.

### **Alma Chapter XXIX (62)**

This chapter picks up the narrative of the action that was the result of the exchange of letters. A modern writer might have had all writers and the action that resulted from them in the same chapter. Mormon's reasons for ending chapters were clearly different from modern expectations.

This chapter will see the end of the long thread of this war. It ends in the thirty-first year (Alma 62:39). After the detailed events of the thirty to thirty-first years, Mormon rapidly narrates the end of the conflict. It ends with Helaman<sub>2</sub>'s death in the thirty-fifth year. It appears that Mormon had told the story he wanted to tell and filled in the events of the next four years to end on a fifth-year marker. That Helaman<sub>2</sub> died in that year likely influenced the choice to end on the thirty-fifth rather than the thirty-fourth.

### **Alma Chapter XXX (63)**

The final chapter of the book of Alma begins with the transfer of the records from Helaman<sub>2</sub> to his brother Shiblon (Alma 63:1). Mormon keeps the events rolling through the years until he reached the thirty-ninth year, when Shiblon died and passed the records to his nephew, Helaman<sub>3</sub>. The ending of the chapter, and book, is: "And thus ended the thirty and ninth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi. And thus ended the account of Alma, and Helaman his son, and also Shiblon, who was his son" (Alma 63:16–17).<sup>340</sup>

The book of Helaman is the dynastic record of Helaman<sub>3</sub>, son of Helaman<sub>2</sub>. Helaman<sub>3</sub> will not become chief judge until Helaman 2:2. I believe that the events that are listed in the book of Helaman from the beginning of the book until the appointment of Helaman<sub>3</sub> as the chief judge are in the book of Helaman because it was important to Mormon to start the book of Helaman at the fortieth year. Thus, the final chapter of Alma ends in the thirty-ninth year to accommodate the beginning of the new book in the fortieth year, even though Helaman<sub>3</sub> was not chief judge when the beginning events are narrated. This is Mormon's ending and not a representation of how the large plate text ended the book of Alma.

---

340. The way John Gilbert used commas in this verse might make it appear that Shiblon was Helaman's son. He was Helaman's brother, and Alma's son.

## Chapter 15: Book of Helaman

### Helaman Chapter I (1–2) [Book Header]

As a new book, there is a synoptic header:

An account of the Nephites. Their wars and contentions, and their dissensions. And also the prophecies of many holy prophets, before the coming of Christ, according to the records of Helaman, who was the son of Helaman, and also according to the records of his sons, even down to the coming of Christ. And also many of the Lamanites are converted. An account of their conversion. An account of the righteousness of the Lamanites, and the wickedness and abominations of the Nephites, according to the record of Helaman and his sons, even down to the coming of Christ, which is called the book of Helaman, and so forth.

Mormon must have been the author of this header, since it discusses the coming of Christ, which would not have been known to the contemporary recordkeeper. As with other books, it provides a preview of the contents. In this case, I suggest that we can see that Mormon wrote this header before he wrote the text and that he wrote it from his outline. He notes that the chapter will speak of the mission to the Lamanites and their conversion. This occurs in Helaman 5 (part of chapter II). “The righteousness of the Lamanites, and the wickedness and abominations of the Nephites” is covered in chapter 6 (also part of chapter II). Chapter III (7–10) will begin with a header suggesting it is a new source. This follows the form seen at the beginning of the book of Alma, where the synoptic header dealt only with the material from the large plates.

The fortieth year represents two katuns. That number was significant enough that Mormon elected to start the new book with that date, even though the event that created the new dynastic name came two years later. Mormon works with history but also works his history into the annalistic framework, paying attention to significant sets of years (multiples of five, with multiples of twenty being the most important). In this case, it appears the desire to mark the culturally significant forty years altered the information transferred from the large plate text to Mormon’s plates.

The name of the books on the large plates corresponds to changes in dynasty. At the end of the book of Mosiah, we have the information about who the next ruler would be prior to the beginning of that ruler’s dynastic book (Alma). At the end of the book of Alma, however, we don’t

get anything about the next ruler. The actual information associated with the next dynastic ruler, Helaman<sub>3</sub>, does not appear until he is seated in the forty-second year. Thus, the first two years of the book of Helaman don't really apply to the book of Helaman. It is probable that information was on the book of Alma on the large plates but that Mormon shifted the location of the information so he could highlight a beginning with the fortieth year.<sup>341</sup>

The book of Helaman also begins with the introduction of Kishkumen and his band, later known as Gadiantons. Kishkumen is clearly intended to be seen as a Jaredite name, and the connection between a Jaredite-descendant and a secret combination is intentional. It is a theme Mormon will develop from this point to the end of his work and which his son Moroni will also emphasize in the translation of the plates of Ether.

The end of the chapter comes with the events of the forty-second year, which included the seating of Helaman<sub>3</sub>, the death of Kishkumen, and the survival of the Gadiantons. Throughout Mormon's text, alternative political parties are known for their first founder. For example, Alma 2:11 notes: "Now the people of Amlici were distinguished by the name of Amlici, being called Amlicites." Similarly, we find in Alma 46:28 that those who followed Amalickiah were called Amalickiahites. The basic naming precedent suggests that we might have expected Kishkumenites — but we get Gadiantons.

Kishkumen might have been a personal name, but the fact that it is a Jaredite name makes it at least suspicious. Understanding that Mormon inserts names for narrative functions, we can recognize anyone with a Jaredite name as a person of questionable character at the very least. Further, the Book of Mormon Onomasticon provides a tempting etymology that might help us understand why Kishkumen's band becomes Gadiantons. John W. Welch suggested that the *Gad*- root of Gadianton might derive from the Hebrew for band/bandits, *gedud*, or a *gdd* root. The early spelling in the original manuscript is Gaddianton, with a doubled 'd'.<sup>342</sup>

The ending of the word parallels similar Jaredite names with an *-ianton* ending. A tempting textual meaning would be something like "Jaredite Robbers." Why then would Mormon name them Gadiantons instead of Kishkumenites? Mormon wanted a generic title that could be used to cover the many times he mentions northern destroyers. The differences in the timing of their appearances tells us they could not have been a single historical group. Nevertheless, Mormon intends that his readers see them

---

341. It is possible that I learned this from Mark Wright.

342. Book of Mormon Onomasticon, s.v. "Gadianton," last modified on November 14, 2015, <https://onoma.lib.byu.edu/index.php/GADIANTON>.

as a continuing influence with inherited ties to the Jaredites — both groups representing secret combinations that destroyed nations.

Mormon makes clear his intent for the Gadianton subtheme in the final verses of this first chapter:

And more of this Gadianton shall be spoken hereafter. And thus ended the forty and second year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi.

And behold, in the end of this book ye shall see that this Gadianton did prove the overthrow, yea, almost the entire destruction of the people of Nephi.

Behold I do not mean the end of the book of Helaman, but I mean the end of the book of Nephi, from which I have taken all the account which I have written. (Helaman 2:12–14)

At this early point, Mormon is telling his readers that it will be the Gadiantons who will “prove the overthrow, yea, almost the entire destruction of the people of Nephi.” This becomes one of his important subthemes, beginning with the book of Helaman.<sup>343</sup>

### **Helaman Chapter II (3–6)**

This chapter begins in the forty-third year. That is not a year that fits into the pattern of multiples of five, so something else created the ending of the previous chapter. The major event of the forty-second year was the installation of Helaman<sub>3</sub> and the chief judge, and that beginning of the new dynasty appears to have been the reason for the close of the previous chapter. Mormon’s focus on contentions and wars is underscored in the first three verses of chapter II (3–6):

And now it came to pass in the forty and third year of the reign of the judges, there was no contention among the people of Nephi save it were a little pride which was in the church, which did cause some little dissensions among the people, which affairs were settled in the ending of the forty and third year.

And there was no contention among the people in the forty and fourth year; neither was there much contention in the forty and fifth year. (Helaman 3:1–2)

---

343. For a more in-depth analysis of the way that Mormon uses the theme of the Gadianton robbers, see Brant A. Gardner, *Traditions of the Fathers: The Book of Mormon as History* (Lake Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2015), 325–42.



When there are no contentions, Mormon simply marks the passing years. When he finally gets to a major contention, he begins the intended story of that contention. Importantly, however, Mormon inserts a significant aside before returning to the story of wars and contentions in Helaman 3:17. This insertion appears to be completely unrelated to Mormon's topic, as rather than wars and contentions he has been setting up, it speaks of Nephites who left the land of Zarahemla and traveled north. The aside begins in Helaman 3:3: "And it came to pass in the forty and sixth, yea, there was much contention and many dissensions; in the which there were an exceedingly great many who departed out of the land of Zarahemla, and went forth unto the land northward to inherit the land."

It might be argued that Mormon was simply following the archived years and enters this information because it was on the plates. Mormon himself tells us this isn't the case. Mormon *knows* he has departed from his story. He specifically says, in verse 17, "And now I return again to mine account; therefore, what I have spoken had passed after there had been great contentions, and disturbances, and wars, and dissensions, among the people of Nephi" (Helaman 3:17).

In the structure of repetitive resumption, Mormon left his narrative with "much contentions and many dissensions" and returns to "great contentions, and disturbances, and wars, and dissensions." To make certain we know the intervening text was an aside, Mormon is explicit in telling his readers that he must return "to mine account." Having discerned that we have an aside, we need to understand what triggered it, and why that trigger produced this particular aside. The trigger is very clearly the increase in contentions and dissensions. That marked the departure and the return. The story was therefore intended to speak of contentions and dissensions. The actual aside speaks of Nephites who travel "unto the land northward to inherit the land" (Helaman 3:3). What is most remarkable about this description is that Mormon is more detailed in his description of the land northward than in any other passage in his abridgement. The details are amazingly precise:

And they did travel to an exceedingly great distance, insomuch that they came to *large bodies of water and many rivers*.

Yea, and even they did spread forth into all parts of the land, *into whatever parts it had not been rendered desolate and without timber*, because of the many inhabitants who had before inherited the land.

And now no part of the land was desolate, save it were for timber; but because of the greatness of the destruction of the people who had before inhabited the land it was called desolate.

And there being but little timber upon the face of the land, nevertheless the people who went forth became exceedingly *expert in the working of cement; therefore they did build houses of cement*, in the which they did dwell.

And it came to pass that *they did multiply and spread, and did go forth from the land southward to the land northward*, and did spread insomuch that they began to cover the face of the whole earth, from the sea south to the sea north, from the sea west to the sea east.

And the people who were in the land northward did dwell in tents, and in houses of cement, and they did suffer whatsoever tree should spring up upon the face of the land that it should grow up, that in time they might have timber to build their houses, yea, their cities, and their temples, and their synagogues, and their sanctuaries, and all manner of their buildings.

And it came to pass as *timber was exceedingly scarce* in the land northward, they did send forth much by the way of shipping.

And thus they did enable the people in the land northward that they might build many cities, both of wood and of cement.

And it came to pass that there were many of the people of Ammon, who were Lamanites by birth, did also go forth into this land.

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

But behold, a hundredth part of the proceedings of this people, yea, the account of the Lamanites and of the Nephites, and their wars, and contentions, and dissensions, and their preaching, and their prophecies, and their shipping and their building of ships, and their building of temples, and of synagogues and their sanctuaries, and their righteousness, and their wickedness, and their murders, and their robbings,

and their plundering, and all manner of abominations and whoredoms, cannot be contained in this work.

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

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

And now I return again to mine account; therefore, what I have spoken had passed after there had been great contentions, and disturbances, and wars, and dissensions, among the people of Nephi. (Helaman 3:4–17)

I have italicized some of the more interesting details. One of the most important phrases is “because of the greatness of the destruction of the people who had before inhabited the land it was called desolate” (Helaman 3:6). The land called Desolation was “the land which had been peopled and been destroyed, of whose bones we have spoken, which was discovered by the people of Zarahemla, it being the place of their first landing” (Alma 22:30). Mormon has these peoples in what he deems Jaredite lands, and he describes the land in sufficient detail that he expected that his readers might understand that land northward as the location of the Gadiantons of Mormon’s time.<sup>344</sup>

Mormon’s aside was triggered by increasing warfare. That suggested the need to more tightly associate the increasing warfare from Helaman<sub>3</sub>’s time with what Mormon saw as the increased warfare and destruction from his own time. Therefore, Mormon creates a link whereby dissenting Nephites (who were always dangerous enemies) and even Gadiantons might go north. In the north, those traditions (recorded in books) could be “handed down from one generation to another by the Nephites, even until they have fallen into transgression” (Helaman 3:16).

The reign of Helaman<sub>3</sub> was short. After only eleven years as chief judge, Helaman<sub>3</sub> dies in the fifty-third year (Helaman 3:37). His son Nephi<sub>2</sub> is seated as the chief judge. The majority of the book of Helaman has little to do with Helaman<sub>3</sub> at all. This is another case that highlights

---

344. Gardner, *Traditions of the Fathers: The Book of Mormon as History*, 325–42.

the change of book names as dynastic changes rather than any connection between the text and the major recordkeeper in the text.

Interestingly, the book of Helaman repeats the abdication of a chief judge (Nephi<sub>2</sub>, in Helaman 5:1) who appears to retain the records and continue to write on them. In this case, the removal of the book of Helaman from the Nephite ruling line may have been Nephi<sub>2</sub>'s choice (as opposed to the chief judge's refusal of the records with Alma<sub>2</sub>). In 3 Nephi 1:2–3 we learn that Nephi<sub>3</sub> received “the plates of brass, and all the records which had been kept.” The cause was the increasing iniquity of the Nephite government:

For as their laws and their governments were established by the voice of the people, and they who chose evil were more numerous than they who chose good, therefore they were ripening for destruction, for the laws had become corrupted.

Yea, and this was not all; they were a stiffnecked people, insomuch that they could not be governed by the law nor justice, save it were to their destruction.

And it came to pass that Nephi had become weary because of their iniquity; and he yielded up the judgment-seat, and took it upon him to preach the word of God all the remainder of his days, and his brother Lehi also, all the remainder of his days. (Helaman 5:2–4)

Mormon emphasizes that the Nephites were “ripening for destruction” when “they who chose evil were more numerous than they who chose good.” As with Mormon's description of Noah's city, it is probable that those who lived in Zarahemla and its territories were happy enough with the change. After all, the majority had made the choice. Given the types of tensions that prevailed in the land of Zarahemla, it is also probable that we are seeing the ascendance of the more apostate side of the Nephite unrest.<sup>345</sup>

The shift from official Nephite political record to a record outside of the political realm also appears to shift the content of the plate record. Unlike the book of Alma where a header indicated a separate record upon which Alma<sub>2</sub> recorded his preaching, we have the same shift in content but no header in Helaman to indicate a change of source. Without any indication that Mormon changed to a different source, we must suppose he continued to use the large plates as a source for Helaman chapter II (3–6). In fact, the

---

345. For a discussion of the nature of Nephite apostasy, see Mark A. Wright and Brant A. Gardner, “The Cultural Context of Nephite Apostasy,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 1 (2012): 25–55.

header for the book of Helaman strongly suggests that the material for chapter II (3–6) was contained on the large plates, since the headers appear to provide synopses for only the large plate material.

What changes in Helaman 5:5–52 is that we get a record of Nephi<sub>2</sub> and Lehi<sub>2</sub>'s preaching. This type of material does not typically appear on the large plates.<sup>346</sup> Mormon has entered such information from secondary sources before, but since the Nephite government was in apostasy, Nephi<sub>2</sub> appears to have begun to use the official plates as though they were a personal record.

The chapter ends with a recurrence of the theme of the Gadiantons which had closed chapter I. It also reprises the phrase from Helaman 5:2 that the Nephites were “ripening for destruction.” Here it becomes “ripening for an everlasting destruction” (Helaman 6:30). As is typical of text taken from the large plates, the chapter ends noting the year; “the sixty and eighth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi” (Helaman 6:41)

### **Helaman Chapter III (7–10) [Has Header]**

The question of source in Helaman II (3–6) is made more difficult by the header at the beginning of chapter III (7–10):

The Prophecy of Nephi, the Son of Helaman — God threatens the people of Nephi that he will visit them in his anger, to their utter destruction except they repent of their wickedness. God smiteth the people of Nephi with pestilence; they repent and turn unto him. Samuel, a Lamanite, prophesies unto the Nephites.

The presence of a chapter heading means that Mormon has changed sources. There is every reason to believe it has occurred again. The printer's manuscript separates “The prophecy of Nephi, the Son of Helaman” as a title, with the rest of the text coming as the synoptic header below it.<sup>347</sup> I suggest this may have been the title of the text Mormon used. Since it wasn't part of the plates, it wasn't a “book of Nephi” but rather a separate manuscript. The Prophecy of Nephi was the title of the manuscript, much as “Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs,” or “Ladder of Jacob” were names of manuscripts considered to be Old Testament pseudepigrapha. Shifting

---

346. I would argue that the blessings to Helaman<sub>3</sub>'s sons in Helaman 5:5–52 is also anomalous for the type of material typically on the large plates.

347. Capitalization as in the printer's manuscript. Joseph Smith, *Revelations and Translations, Volume 3: Printer's Manuscript of the Book of Mormon*, eds., Royal Skousen and Robin Scott Jensen (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2015), 2:168–69.

to a new source allows Mormon to insert more material about preaching the gospel rather than simply concentrating on wars and contentions.

Another indication that this is a separate source is the presence of a long sermon. The large plates do not appear to have included such information unless they represented an act of the ruler — and Nephi<sub>2</sub> is not a ruler at this time. Nevertheless, this will be a somewhat problematic source because it will mix stylistic elements from the large plates with the characteristic more personal information contained on the separate records. I will revisit that question in the analysis of the next chapter.

Mormon begins with the date. Where the previous chapter “ended the sixty and eighth year,” (Helaman 6:41), chapter III (7–10) begins “in the sixty and ninth year” (Helaman 7:1), not at the beginning of it. The chapter will end with the seventy-second year (Helaman 10:19). The seventieth year is not mentioned. In this chapter, Mormon reinforces his theme of destruction by Gadiantons, both in the Nephite people of Nephi<sub>2</sub>’s time as well as the eventual destruction in Mormon’s time. He accomplishes this by telling the story of Nephi<sub>2</sub>’s unsuccessful preaching in the land northward:

For he had been forth among the people who were in the land northward, and did preach the word of God unto them, and did prophesy many things unto them;

And they did reject all his words, insomuch that he could not stay among them, but returned again unto the land of his nativity.

And seeing the people in a state of such awful wickedness, and those Gadianton robbers filling the judgment-seats — having usurped the power and authority of the land; laying aside the commandments of God, and not in the least aright before him; doing no justice unto the children of men;

Condemning the righteous because of their righteousness; letting the guilty and the wicked go unpunished because of their money; and moreover to be held in office at the head of government, to rule and do according to their wills, that they might get gain and glory of the world, and, moreover, that they might the more easily commit adultery, and steal, and kill, and do according to their own wills. (Helaman 7:2–5)

Mormon’s aside in Helaman 3:3–17 took Nephite apostasy into the symbolically Jaredite lands northward. Nephi<sub>2</sub> preaches to those in the land northward, textually suggested to have been apostate Nephites. They refuse

him, and he returns to find the Gadiantons have taken over the Nephite nation. Mormon presents the Gadianton “success” in destroying the Nephite government prior to the Savior’s arrival in Bountiful, which will become the parallel to the destruction of Mormon’s Nephites at Cumorah.

The new record allows Mormon to enter the story of Nephi<sub>2</sub>’s direct conflict with the ruling Gadiantons. So we will not miss it, Mormon makes certain to include Nephi<sub>2</sub>’s exclamation: “Yea, wo be unto you because of that great abomination which has come among you; and ye have united yourselves unto it, yea, to that secret band which was established by Gadianton!” (Helaman 7:25).

The chapter ends with the Lord’s blessing/discourse to Nephi<sub>2</sub>. There is no *Amen* following that information, but Mormon clearly ends on the Lord’s words. Without the *Amen*, however, the specific ending simply provides the date: “And thus ended the seventy and first year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi” (Helaman 10:19).

#### **Helaman Chapter IV (11–12)**

The contents of chapter III (7–10) are what might be expected of a separate record, based on the example we have for other inserted records that were not part of the large plate tradition, such as the record of Zeniff and Alma<sub>2</sub>’s personal record. It was a very personal record and had year markers only at the beginning and end of the chapter. Chapter IV (11–12) feels quite different. Although there is some content that must have come from Nephi<sub>2</sub>’s personal record, most of the chapter could have come from the large plates. One of the indicators of Mormon’s use of the large plates is the prevalence of year markers. Where chapter III (7–10) had only two, chapter IV (11–12) has fifteen (from the seventy-second through the eighty-fifth).<sup>348</sup> The presence of so many years suggests that we are seeing the annalistic approach most typical of the large plates.

The problem in discerning the difference is that Nephi<sub>2</sub> is keeping the large plates as well as (apparently) a separate record. We will see this duality of records again in 3 Nephi. It is possible that Mormon gives us our answer to what is happening both here and later in 3 Nephi: “But behold there are records which do contain all the proceedings of this people; and a shorter but true account was given by Nephi. Therefore I have made my record of

---

348. Helaman 11:1, seventy-second; 11:2, seventy-third; 11:5, seventy-fourth; 11:6, seventy-fifth; 11:17 and 21, seventy sixth; 11:21, seventy-seventh; 11:22 seventy-eighth, 11:23 seventy-ninth, 11:24, eightieth; 11:30 and 35, eighty-first, 11:36, eighty-second, eighty-third, and eighty-fourth; 11:37 and 38, eighty-fifth.

these things according to the record of Nephi, which was engraven on the plates which were called the plates of Nephi” (3 Nephi 5:9–10).

Having the plates of Nephi as a tradition, and then a book of Nephi on them can create some confusion, especially since Mormon appears to indicate that the record of Nephi<sub>2</sub> is somehow “shorter but true,” and yet “was engraven on the plates which were called the plates of Nephi.” Both Nephi<sub>2</sub> and Nephi<sub>3</sub> kept the large plates, and it is possible that while they created a separation in the type of content they were recording (marked with a header in the book of Helaman), they may have actually engraved the separate record onto the large plates. Since they had them available, it is a possibility that can explain the presence of the annalistic framework alongside the more personal content not typically seen when the government-related archivist kept the plates of Nephi.

Unfortunately, there is no clear way to know from what source Mormon took the events in chapter IV (11–12). It is equally possible that the material came from the large plates. The fact that the same person was recording on both and that the person was separated from the ruling line, makes the normal distinctions ambiguous.

An interesting statement raises the issue of the nature of Mormon’s copying and of recorded sermons or conversations. After the drought had effected the desired repentance, Nephi<sub>2</sub> prays to lift the drought. He says: “O Lord, behold this people repenteth; and they have swept away the band of Gadianton from amongst them insomuch that they have become extinct, and they have concealed their secret plans in the earth” (Helaman 11:10). The presence of the phrase “band of Gadianton” should confirm that this is not a text from an official source. If we had the record of a Gadianton-dominated government, we would not expect to see this phrase.

Additionally, this phrase highlights Mormon’s program of emphasizing the destructiveness of the Gadiantons. If Mormon did not assign that name, it was one he used for his own purposes. This raises the important question of whether or not the phrase “band of Gadianton” was written on the plates or was Mormon’s insertion. The answer is complicated if one assumes the absolute accuracy of everything in the Book of Mormon text. I suggest the evidence is that Mormon used history to support his thesis, and this is another example of where Mormon’s narrative program influences the way he reported history.

One problem of recorded dialogue in ancient records is that there was no way a live speech could have been recorded. Thus, all dialogue in the Book of Mormon is necessarily created after-the-fact. The only question is who created the dialogue. In some cases, such as Alma<sub>2</sub>’s



personal record, it appears that Mormon copied much of the dialogue from what Alma<sub>2</sub> wrote. However, there are other occasions where it is equally possible that Mormon created the dialogue. The most conservative solution would be to suppose that Mormon copied dialogue when it was in his source and met his editorial needs. However, there is no reason to believe Mormon did not also create dialogue (or, as in this case, modify dialogue) to meet his editorial needs.<sup>349</sup>

Mormon creatively ties his villains together in a fascinating series of explanations:

And it came to pass that in the eightieth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi, there were a certain number of the dissenters from the people of Nephi, who had some years before gone over unto the Lamanites, and taken upon themselves the name of Lamanites, and also a certain number who were real descendants of the Lamanites, being stirred up to anger by them, or by those dissenters, therefore they commenced a war with their brethren.

And they did commit murder and plunder; and then they would retreat back into the mountains, and into the wilderness and secret places, hiding themselves that they could not be discovered, receiving daily an addition to their numbers, inasmuch as there were dissenters that went forth unto them.

And thus in time, yea, even in the space of not many years, they became an exceedingly great band of robbers; and they did search out all the secret plans of Gadianton; and thus they became robbers of Gadianton.

Now behold, these robbers did make great havoc, yea, even great destruction among the people of Nephi, and also among the people of the Lamanites. (Helaman 11:24–27)

In verse 24, Mormon describes a number of Nephite dissenters who go to the Lamanites. They call themselves Lamanites, but they are really anti-Nephites. They stir up trouble such that even the “real descendants of the Lamanites” were stirred to anger and to wage war with the Nephites. These apostate Nephites and the Lamanites they stirred to anger “in time, yea, even in the space of not many years, they became

---

349. Morgan Deane, “Thucydides and the Book of Mormon,” *Wheat & Tares: The Philosophies of Men Mingled with the Philosophies of Women* (blog), June 2, 2018, <https://wheatandtares.org/2018/06/02/thucydides-and-the-book-of-mormon/>.

an exceedingly great band of robbers; and they did search out all the secret plans of Gadianton; and thus they became robbers of Gadianton.” Mormon thereby creates Gadiantons from apostate Nephites.

Mormon notes: “And it came to pass in the eighty and fifth year they did wax stronger and stronger in their pride, and in their wickedness; and thus they were ripening again for destruction. And thus ended the eighty and fifth year” (Helaman 11:37–38). If we had not been sufficiently warned that the Nephites were heading for destruction when the Gadiantons show up, Mormon makes it explicit. Then, from here to the end of the original chapter (all of our chapter 12), we have Mormon’s moralizing on the events he has been describing. Mormon lays out his vision of one of the major causes of the Nephite downfall:

And thus we can behold how false, and also the unsteadiness of the hearts of the children of men; yea, we can see the Lord in his great infinite goodness doth bless and prosper those who put their trust in him.

Yea, and we may see at the very time when he doth prosper his people, yea, in the increase of their fields, their flocks and their herds, and in gold, and in silver, and in all manner of precious things of every kind and art; sparing their lives, and delivering them out of the hands of their enemies; softening the hearts of their enemies that they should not declare wars against them; yea, and in fine, doing all things for the welfare and happiness of his people; yea, then is the time that they do harden their hearts, and do forget the Lord their God, and do trample under their feet the Holy One — yea, and this because of their ease, and their exceedingly great prosperity.

And thus we see that except the Lord doth chasten his people with many afflictions, yea, except he doth visit them with death, and with terror, and with famine, and with all manner of pestilence, they will not remember him. (Helaman 12:1–3)

He ends this inserted personal sermon by pleading:

Therefore, blessed are they who will repent and hearken unto the voice of the Lord their God; for these are they that shall be saved.

And may God grant, in his great fulness, that men might be brought unto repentance and good works, that they might be restored unto grace for grace, according to their works.

And I would that all men might be saved. But we read that in the great and last day there are some who shall be cast out, yea, who shall be cast off from the presence of the Lord;

Yea, who shall be consigned to a state of endless misery, fulfilling the words which say: They that have done good shall have everlasting life; and they that have done evil shall have everlasting damnation. And thus it is. Amen. (Helaman 12:23–26)

The testificatory *Amen* creates the end of the chapter.

### **Helaman Chapter V (13–16) [Has Header]**

Chapter V (13–16) begins with a header: “The prophecy of Samuel, the Lamanite, to the Nephites.” As with other internal chapter headers, this should indicate a different source. Mormon gives us no indication of who wrote the information. Apparent from the text is that it was not Samuel. There is no indication that he wrote it or how it would have ended up in Nephite hands had he done so. Something of the prophecy of Samuel was written on some type of Nephite record, which may be discerned from the conversation between Christ and the disciples:

And it came to pass that he said unto Nephi: Bring forth the record which ye have kept.

And when Nephi had brought forth the records, and laid them before him, he cast his eyes upon them and said:

Verily I say unto you, I commanded my servant Samuel, the Lamanite, that he should testify unto this people, that at the day that the Father should glorify his name in me that there were many saints who should arise from the dead, and should appear unto many, and should minister unto them. And he said unto them: Was it not so?

And his disciples answered him and said: Yea, Lord, Samuel did prophesy according to thy words, and they were all fulfilled.

And Jesus said unto them: How be it that ye have not written this thing, that many saints did arise and appear unto many and did minister unto them?

And it came to pass that Nephi remembered that this thing had not been written.

And it came to pass that Jesus commanded that it should be written; therefore it was written according as he commanded.  
(3 Nephi 23:7–13)

We learn that something of the record of Samuel was kept on records Nephi<sub>3</sub> had been keeping. Since the chapter containing the prophecy of Samuel appears in the book of Helaman, it must have been recorded on some record Nephi<sub>2</sub> kept and passed to his son Nephi<sub>3</sub>. That record appears to have contained many essentials but missed the fulfillment of the prophecy of the dead rising from the graves. Christ commanded that it be written, and it was edited into the record after the fact. The record that Samuel *said* it is found in Helaman 14:25. Christ did not require that the prophecy be added but rather the fulfillment of the prophecy. Therefore, what Mormon enters into his story may have been the very story that was on the plates. As with the prophecy of Nephi, it is possible it was entered onto the large plates but under a header to separate it from the normal records kept on the large plates.

The marking of the year (eighty-sixth year, Helaman 13:1) suggests, as it did for the prophecy of Nephi, that it may have been added into the large plates. At the very least, Mormon made sure to continue the dating because he is arriving very close to the time of Christ's birth. The marking of the years is important to show how the timing of Christ's birth fulfilled both Lehi's 600-year prophecy and Samuel's five-year prophecy.

After recording Samuel's prophecy and providing the information that he escaped the Nephites who tried to capture him, Mormon closes the story with "and thus were the affairs of the people; and thus ended the eighty and sixth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi" (Helaman 16:8–9). There is no chapter break with the end of Samuel's sayings. Mormon completes the basic history running quickly through the eighty-seventh, eighty-eighth, and the eighty-ninth year. For the ninetieth year Mormon sets up the early chapters of 3 Nephi by describing the increasing denial of prophecy:

That it is not reasonable that such a being as a Christ shall come; if so, and he be the Son of God, the Father of heaven and of earth, as it has been spoken, why will he not show himself unto us as well as unto them who shall be at Jerusalem?

Yea, why will he not show himself in this land as well as in the land of Jerusalem?

But behold, we know that this is a wicked tradition, which has been handed down unto us by our fathers, to cause us that

we should believe in some great and marvelous thing which should come to pass, but not among us, but in a land which is far distant, a land which we know not; therefore they can keep us in ignorance, for we cannot witness with our own eyes that they are true. (Helaman 16:18–20)

Mormon ends the book: “And thus ended the ninetieth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi. And thus ended the book of Helaman, according to the record of Helaman and his sons” (Helaman 16:24–25). Only Helaman<sub>3</sub> and Nephi<sub>2</sub> kept the records, but Lehi<sub>2</sub> is included as an important player in some of the stories. Perhaps the reference is to his presence in the stories rather than imply more than the two recordkeepers.

**Brant A. Gardner** (MA, State University of New York Albany) is the author of *Second Witness: Analytical and Contextual Commentary on the Book of Mormon* and *The Gift and Power: Translating the Book of Mormon*, both published through Greg Kofford Books. He has contributed articles to *Estudios de Cultura Nahuatl* and *Symbol and Meaning Beyond the Closed Community*. He has presented papers at the *FairMormon* conference as well as at *Sunstone*.