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## Twenty-Four Jaredite Plates

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# Chapter 25

## Twenty-Four Jaredite Plates

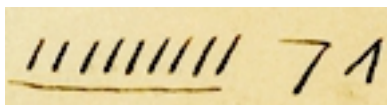
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It is important to discuss the specifics of the source of much of the Jaredite information that is in the Book of Mormon, which comes from the Twenty-Four plates of the Jaredites.

What was the name of this record, and what was the glyph representing it? What do these tell us about the record's nature and meaning? Was it a unitary record, a record of single authorship, or a set of records? What was the size of the record, and how much content did it convey?

It is first important to note that these plates, when directly referred to, are always referred to as the "twenty-four plates" (Mosiah 8:9; Alma 37:21) or the "twenty and four plates" (Ether 1:2). This is actually the formal and official name of the plates. The Characters Document contains the name of the plates, which consists of three glyphs, the number 10, the number 5, and the number 9, with 9 also being a rebus for the term "plates." These glyphs are identified as C-46, C-45, and C-47. The script runs right to left with the sum of the terms equaling 24.

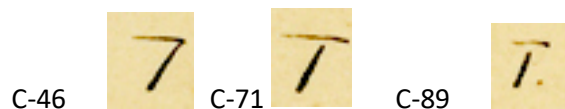
C-45, C-46, C-47



$9 + 5 + 10 = 24$

Each of the individual numbers is found in hieratic Egyptian. The following section is extracted from the book that describes the translation (Grover 2015):

**5** (Palestinian hieratic) Characters 46, 71, and 89 (exclude base dot):



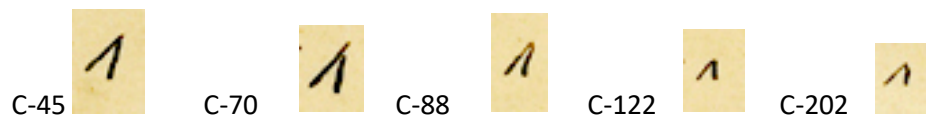
This is a standard form of the hieratic numeral 5, also found in Palestine.

Example:



Ostraca Arad 36, seventh century BC, Negev, Palestine (Wimmer 2008, 46–47).

**10** (Palestinian hieratic) Characters 45, 70, 88, 122, and 202:



This is a well-known standard hieratic form of the number 10, also found in Palestine.

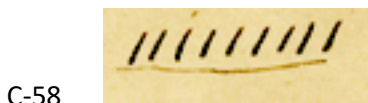
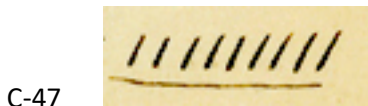
Example:



Ostraca Samaria 61, eighth century BC, Samaria (Wimmer 2008, 125).

### The Number 9 and the Twenty-Four Plates Rebus

Character 47 is preceded by the number 15, but character 58 is not adjacent to any numbers. The character is a numeric form and is similar to the bar-and-dot structure but with dashes instead of dots; however, the bar-and-dot system can only have a maximum of 4 dots. The intuitively apparent number is 9, in that this character has 9 dashes; however, Character 58 is not part of a number sequence while Character 47 is.



In context, it clearly has the numeric value of 9, as the addition of the preceding number 15 gives a total number of 24. Immediately preceding C-58 (C-55 and C-56) are the hieratic/demotic words “good or pure” and “gold.” The term “pure gold” is only used three times in the Book of Mormon: first, for Laban’s sword (1 Nephi 4:9); second, to ornament the seats of king Noah’s high priests (Mosiah 11:11); and third, to the Twenty-Four Jaredite plates recovered by a group sent by Limhi (Mosiah 8:9). It is clear this glyph can have the meaning “9” or “plates,” or both at the same time, a practice not uncommon in other Caractors glyphs.

### Sumerian/Elamite Proto-Cuneiform Elements of the Twenty-Four Plate Glyph

The form of the glyph is similar to Proto-Elamite forms of glyphs found in Mesopotamia that are likely number glyphs.



M001+M379~d M041 M041~c M041~d

Figure 103. Proto-Elamite Period (ca. 3100–2900 BC) from J. Dahl’s Working Elamite Sign List (2006).

### Glyph Similarity with Mesoamerican Systems

The similarities for the glyph are found in the Texcocan and Aztec number systems previously discussed. Specifically, the Texcocan comb form shown in figures 105 and 106 for the numbers from 5 to 19 and the Aztec number forms for 100, 200, 300, and 400.

1	5	20	100
		•	•••••

Figure 104. Texcocan line-and-dot numerals. (Chrisomalis 2010, 304)



Figure 105. Numerical phrase from the Codex Kingsborough, circa AD 1550, enumerating the population of Tepetlaoztoc at 27,765 ( $[3 \times 8000] + [9 \times 400] + [8 \times 20] + 5$ ). (Chrisomalis 2010, 305)

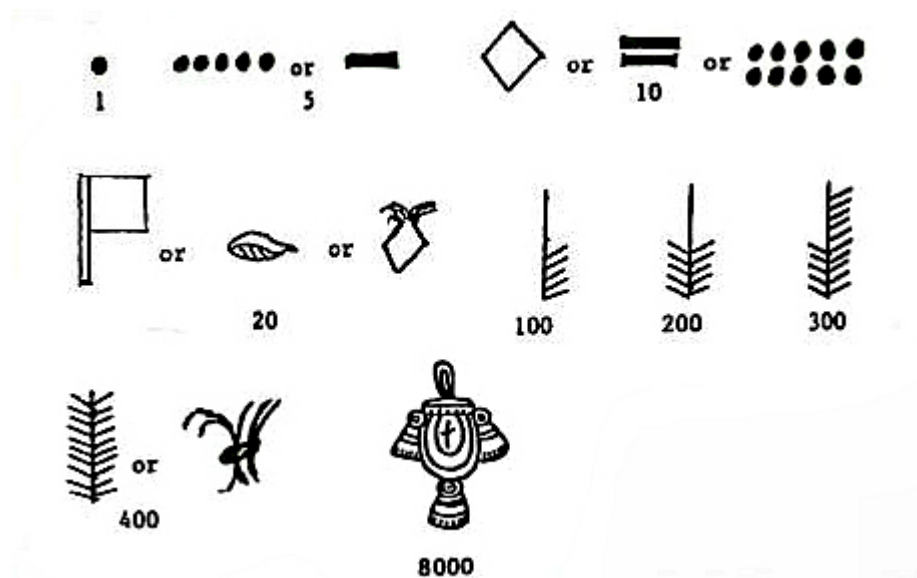


Figure 106. Aztec numbers set one. (Ortiz-Franco 2002, 239)

A correspondence in glyph form exists for this character in the Maya language as well. Below are a few of the Maya glyphs for “scribe,” “he of writing,” and “someone who writes.” Part of these two Maya glyphs has been interpreted as the “someone” or “he of” in relation to the scribe, when that glyph appears separately, at least one instance of it has exactly eight gaps, identical to the Caractors glyph (see below; all images and definitions are taken from the *John Montgomery Dictionary of Maya Hieroglyphs* 2007):

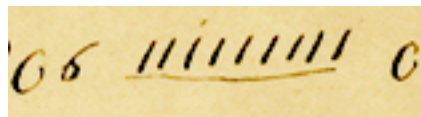


AJ tz'i-b'a (aj tz'ib') (T12.nn:501:314) > prep. phr. "he of the writing," or "scribe"; artist's title; designates the occupation of scribe, painter, or artist in general.

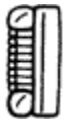


AJ tz'i-b'a (aj tz'ib') (T12.248:501) > prep. phr. "he of the writing" or "scribe"; artist's title.

(CH) > u-tz'i-b'a-la (utz'i[h]b'al) u-tz'ihb'-al ~ 3SE-i. v. -nom. "the painting/writing of" forms part of the "surface treatment" section of dedicatory expressions; alternatively may introduce painted scribal signatures.



Eight gaps



Eight gaps

a/AJ (a/aj) (T12) 1> vowel a 2> masc. agentive pro > n. meaning "he" 3> agentive pref. "he of \_\_\_\_\_"; associates individuals with locations or qualities.

The Maya character can be somewhat random in the number of gaps dependent on the scribe. Therefore, nothing should be attributed to the number of gaps, other than the similarity of the glyph form. In addition, the Maya glyph is used in many types of instances unrelated to scribes, so no meaning should be inferred. However, the fact that the hand of the scribe is actually writing on the glyph is similar to the Caractors glyph for plates is an interesting coincidence.

In Egyptian, this glyph is a clear shorthand version of the Egyptian hieroglyph *Mn* or *Men*, which means "to remain, to abide, to continue, to be permanent, to be stable, fixed, abiding, stablished" (Budge 1920, 1:296). In conjunction with other glyphs, it can mean "everlasting inscriptions."



Figure 107. Hieroglyph for *Mn* on the Temple of Karnak (upper left center in red).

The hieroglyph for *Mn* is derived from its depiction of the Egyptian religious ritualistic game called senet. At least 4,000 years ago, the Egyptian senet game came to be associated with the notions about migration of the soul (*ba*) and the Egyptian funerary cycle of life, death, and spiritual renewal. In the First and Second Dynasties, senet boards were deposited inside tombs with other furnishings for use by the deceased in the next life. Egyptians later represented senet boards artistically on the walls of Old Kingdom tombs, in offering lists and wall paintings, and as part of the mortuary equipment.

During the Sixth Dynasty, in the depiction of certain Hathoric celebrations, the deceased was depicted playing against a living person. The senet board is a physical bridge stretching from the space of the living into the space of the dead, permitting direct physical contact and a conduit of communication between the two; this motif is quite rare in Old Kingdom reliefs. Before the end of the Twelfth Dynasty, notions about the passage of *ba* via the senet game were applied to the Coffin Text Spell 335 (CT 335) and later to the Book of the Dead, chapter 17 (BD 17). In the senet ritual of the Twentieth Dynasty, the game re-created the nocturnal journey of the sun god through the Netherworld, thereby the senet board became the Netherworld and the moving players became the passage of the player/deceased through the realm of the dead.

A good number of senet boards have been found inside tombs, where they were carved as graffiti in the floors. Given the nature and location of the senet ritual, these boards could have been used by visitors to communicate with the dead or to perform some version of the ritual (Piccione 2007).

The games came to be incised into flat slabs of stone, wood, or faience. One of these completely inscribed and surely religious boards was found buried in the courtyard of the Eighteenth Dynasty tomb of Kenamun at Thebes. But the board, now in the British Museum, dates to the Twentieth Dynasty and was thus interred more than 300 years after Kenamun was buried. The ritual importance of this board is implied not because it was a later burial addition, but because it was interred by itself without any associated corpse. The roots of this character in the



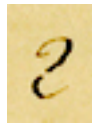
Egyptian hieroglyphs is consistent with its use as a description of engraved metal plates from the Jaredites, which were probably recovered from an underground tomb of some sort.



Figure 108. Senet game interred in a ritual burial. (Piccione 1980)

The Twenty-Four plates are also referred to in their second occurrence in the Caractors Document as “pure gold” plates; in this instance it is not a numeric glyph but simply utilizes the C-58 glyph for “plates.” The words for “pure gold” are fairly straight forward from standard hieratic and Demotic Egyptian:

C-55



gold

This is a somewhat straightforward form of the Egyptian demotic character for the word *nb*, which is translated as “gold” (Chicago Demotic Dictionary 2014, N (04:1), p. 57).



Demotisches Glossar (Erichsen 1954, 213).


C-56



good (pure in context)

This is a straightforward form of the Egyptian hieratic character for the word *nfr*, translated as “good” and which would be translated as “pure” in this Book of Mormon context (Chicago Demotic Dictionary 2014, N (04:1), p. 72).

The phonetic hieroglyph for *nfr* is Gardiner Number F-35 meaning “good” (Gardiner 1957, 465):

F35: 

The hieratic versions of the glyph are as follows:



Möller Number 180, Bd. III-1-31, p. III 176–86 (Möller 1965).

### **Significance of the Use of the Number 9 in the Twenty-Four Plates Glyph**

The use of the number 9 in the Twenty-Four plate glyph may have Mesoamerican significance specific to the Jaredites/Olmecs and their calendar. As previously referenced, in Mesoamerican mythology the Lords of the Night are a set of nine gods who each ruled over every ninth night forming a calendrical cycle. Each lord was associated with a particular fortune, bad or good, that was an omen for the night that they ruled over.

The Lords of the Night are known in both the Aztec and Maya calendar, although the specific names of the Maya Night Lords are unknown. The existence of a nine-night cycle in Mesoamerican calendric cycles was first discovered in 1904 by Eduard Seler. The Aztec names of the deities are known because their names are glossed in the Codex Telleriano-Remensis and Codex Tudela. Seler argued that the nine Lords each corresponded to one of the nine levels of the underworld and ruled the corresponding hour of the night time. This argument has not generally been accepted, since the evidence suggests that the lord of a given night ruled over that entire night. Zelia Nuttall (1904) argued that the Nine Lords of the Night represented the nine moons of the lunar year. The cycle of the Nine Lords of the Night held special relation to the Mesoamerican ritual calendar of 260 days and nights, which includes exactly 29 groups of nine nights each, and also, approximately, nine vague lunations of 29 days each (Hassig 2001, 37–38).

Considering Olmec rulers were considered to have mythical Underworld origins which provided them claim to divine status, the utilization of the number nine would be perfectly appropriate to include in the numeric glyph as the name of the 24 plates, which is a record of Olmec/Jaredite rulers. Coriantumr<sub>2</sub>, the last Jaredite ruler, remained with the people of Zarahemla for nine moons (Omni 1:21), also consistent with the ruler theme. The fact that the number 9 was an important formational element of the Olmec 260-day calendar is certainly consistent with a calendar different from the Nephites, and with the practice of incorporating numerical glyphs into the reformed Egyptian glyphs that are the identifiers of the separate Nephite calendars contained in the Caractors Document (Grover 2015, 67–110).

### **Significance of the Use of the Numbers 10 and 15 in the Twenty-Four Plates Glyph**

The use of the Egyptian hieratic numbers 10 and 5, with the sum of them being 15, is not unique to the Twenty-Four plates glyph but is used in this or similar fashion in other calendar dates in the Caractors Document unrelated to the Twenty-Four plates. This utilization of the numbers 10 and 15 in the manner in which they are used look to be optional within the Nephite reformed Egyptian numeric system (Grover 2015), so it is likely to have some alternative significance.

The likely use of the numbers 10 and 5 would be consistent with other thematic elements of Moses and Exodus found in the Book of Mormon relating to the 10 plagues in Egypt, the 10 Commandments, and the Pentateuch (five books of Moses that contain the Torah or law of Israel). Both numbers constitute the compass and square symbols, which have temple implications.



### Were There Really Just 24 Plates?

The Book of Ether, which is found in the Book of Mormon, is an abridgement of the Twenty-Four plates. Like standard Book of Mormon abridgement fashion, the name of the abridged book still maintains the name of the original book. Thus, it is likely that the name “Book of Ether” is also the name of the interpreted version of the 24 plates into reformed Egyptian based on Mosiah<sub>2</sub>'s original interpretation of the 24 plates. Based on its length and the indication that not even a “hundredth part” of the Twenty-Four plates is found in the Book of Ether (Ether 15:33), it would seem difficult that 24 plates (even utilizing both sides) would provide enough space for the full record to be recounted (Arts 2002). It should be noted that the term “hundredth part” is a standard literary term used elsewhere in the Book of Mormon (Jacob 3:13, Words of Mormon 1:5; Helaman 3:14, 3 Nephi 5:8, 26:6) indicating “a small amount” and is not a literal percentage. Nevertheless, based on the current length of the Book of Ether as an abridgement and considering the material that was not even abridged, which included “the first part of this record, which speaks concerning the creation of the world, and also of Adam, and an account from that time even to the great tower, and whatsoever things transpired among the children of men until that time” (Ether 1:3), there is a considerable amount of material in the unabridged Book of Ether.

The full Book of Mormon plate stack (assuming uniformity of plate thickness) has been calculated based on alloy composition and dimensions to have between 300 to 600 plates (Grover 2015, 95). There is some defugalty in this calculation, as it assumed a uniform alloy of all the plates in the plate stack. This should not be assumed because the original Twenty-Four plates (or, possibly, the original plates of the brother of Jared) are in the sealed portion, and these plates were not made by the Nephites and likely had a higher concentration of gold.

Utilizing the Caractors Document language density and its translation, one can independently back calculate the number of plates utilized by the complete Book of Mormon plus the 116 missing pages. The Caractors Document is 8 inches by 3.25 inches, there are 222 characters, so the character density is  $222/(8 \times 3.25) = 8.54$  characters per square inch. The translation of the Caractors Document rendered 2.1 words per character. The English equivalent would then be  $2.1 \times 8.54 = 17.9$  words per square inch. Assuming that the Caractors Document lines were identical in length to those on the plates, with the plates being 6 inches wide and the Caractors Document being 8 inches, a proportional adjustment needs to be made, and the expected density on the plates would thus be 23.87 words per square inch. The total number of words in the current Book of Mormon is 270,004 on 492 manuscript pages based on the Yale Edition (Skousen 2009). Jolley (2017) has calculated the likely number of words in the 116 pages to be approximately 63,660 words, for a total of 333,664 words. Utilizing this number and applying the word density of 23.87 words per square inch, and assuming each plate on both sides has a surface area of 96 in<sup>2</sup>, the total number of plates needed for this section of the plate stack is 146 plates. It was indicated by those who saw the plates that the sealed portion was anywhere from one half to two thirds of the total plate stack, which would indicate, based on the Caractors Document language density, that the full stack consisted of between 292 plates and 438 plates, relatively consistent with the range determined using the metallurgical calculations. The maximum number of plates available for the sealed portion would be 292 plates using the language density calculation, or 400 plates using the metallurgical calculation.

At least four records were potentially in the sealed portion of the Book of Mormon plate stack. The first was Twenty-Four plates (Ether 1:4), either in original form or as the unabridged Book of Ether interpreted by Mosiah<sub>2</sub> (with the interpreted metal plates version possibly created by Moroni<sub>2</sub> or Mormon). The second could be the original record of the brother of Jared and the interpretation of that record, presumably in reformed Egyptian (Ether 4:4–6). It is not explicitly stated that the original record of the brother of Jared is in the form of metal plates, but that assumption is made based on their longevity and the fact that they were apparently passed on in a form that maintained the ability to keep them from being read (i.e., sealed). Others have fairly well established that the plates of the brother of Jared were not included in the Twenty-Four plates (Arts 2002) but are a separate record.

It is stated in Ether 1:4 that whomever finds “the plates” that contain information from the first portion of the Twenty-Four plates will have “the power to get the full account,” clearly indicating that the plates referred to there (either the original Twenty-Four plates or the unabridged Book of Ether) were included with the interpreters. The individual width and length of the sealed portion of the Book of Mormon plate stack is described as having a soldered wood-looking type of outside surface (Grover 2015, 69), yet it was observable that there were individual plates there that were sealed. None of the individuals who described the plates indicated that there was a different dimension for the sealed portion (Grover 2015, 67–70).

It would not be expected that the original Twenty-Four plates or the original plates of the brother of Jared would have the same dimensions as each other. It is possible that Mormon, before starting his abridgement, sized his abridgement plates to match one or the other of these two records. As discussed in a prior work (Grover 2017), the small plates of Nephi included in the plate stack were likely an interpreted version, and they were contemplated to be included after Mormon had commenced engraving his abridgement (296–98). It would seem reasonable that the plates created by the Nephites had standard dimensions.

The original record of the brother of Jared and the interpretation of that record, presumably in reformed Egyptian, may also have been in the sealed portion of the Book of Mormon plate stack as they were “sealed up” by Moroni<sup>2</sup> (Ether 4:4–6):

Ether 4:1–6

1 And the Lord commanded the brother of Jared to go down out of the mount from the presence of the Lord, and write the things which he had seen; and they were forbidden to come unto the children of men until after that he should be lifted up upon the cross; and for this cause did king Mosiah keep them, that they should not come unto the world until after Christ should show himself unto his people.

2 And after Christ truly had showed himself unto his people he commanded that they should be made manifest.

3 And now, after that, they have all dwindled in unbelief; and there is none save it be the Lamanites, and they have rejected the gospel of Christ; therefore I am commanded that I should hide them up again in the earth.

4 Behold, I have written upon these plates the very things which the brother of Jared saw; and there never were greater things made manifest than those which were made manifest unto the brother of Jared.

5 Wherefore the Lord hath commanded me to write them; and I have written them. And he commanded me that I should seal them up; and he also hath commanded that I should seal up the interpretation thereof; wherefore I have sealed up the interpreters, according to the commandment of the Lord.

6 For the Lord said unto me: They shall not go forth unto the Gentiles until the day that they shall repent of their iniquity, and become clean before the Lord.

We know that there was an interpretation made of the original brother of Jared plates that was made available to the Nephites after Christ came in the flesh (Arts 2002).

Versification and punctuation did not exist in the original Book of Mormon, so there are a few alternative interpretations of what is in the sealed portion of the plate stack in addition to the Twenty-Four plates (or its interpretation) looking at the above-mentioned verses:

1. The original plates of the brother of Jared, the plates containing an interpretation of the brother of Jared, and the interpreters are sealed up as part of the Book of Mormon plate stack. If this was the case, it would seem a bit redundant to include the interpreted version, since either would still require the interpreters to be read.

2. The original plates of the brother of Jared are sealed up and hidden in the earth separately (v. 3), and not included in the sealed portion of the Book of Mormon plate stack. Only the interpreted version (presumably in reformed Egyptian) of the brother of Jared's plates was included. This would separate the interpreters from the original record of the brother of Jared, providing no method to interpret them when they eventually come to light, so this hypothesis may not be as likely.

3. Some have suggested that this set of verses may just be referring to the Book of Mormon itself and not the sealed portion. However, it is indicated that there was also to be sealed "an interpretation thereof," which was not found in the Book of Mormon plate stack. In addition, verse 6 indicates that the record will not go forth until the day that the Gentiles "shall repent of their iniquity" and "become clean before the Lord," which does not appear to have occurred prior to the Book of Mormon coming forth.

4. Where Moroni<sub>2</sub> says he "should seal up the interpretation thereof" he was meaning the method of interpretation, hence he then stated "wherefore I have sealed up the interpreters." In this case only the original brother of Jared plates were included, not the interpreted version, along with the interpreters.

At this point there are a few criteria that would be considered established with regard to the plate stack: 1) a version of the Twenty-Four plates was included; 2) a version of the plates of the brother of Jared was included; 3) the interpreters were included; and 4) the plate stack dimensions, including the sealed portion, were uniform. Assuming that Mormon could have made his abridgement plates match the size of either the Twenty-Four plates or the plates of the brother of Jared, the remaining plate stack possibilities are as follows:

A) 1. Original Twenty-Four plates; 2: interpreted brother of Jared plates; 3: the interpreters

B) 1. Interpreted Twenty-Four plates; 2: original brother of Jared plates; 3: the interpreters

In either case, both the Twenty-Four plates in some form and the brother of Jared plates in some form constitute the sealed portion of the Book of Mormon plate stack. Elliott Jolley (2017) has calculated the total number of words in the original, unabridged Book of Ether by extracting the words of Moroni<sub>2</sub> (leaving 13,240 words), and taking the "hundredth part" as literal, making the total number of English words in excess of 1,324,000 words. If the reformed Egyptian version was included, utilizing the Caractors Document language density, one arrives at 55,467 in<sup>2</sup> or 557 plates just for the interpreted version of the Twenty-Four plates. It is clear that the "hundredth part" is a literary term, since the number of calculated plates exceeds the available number of plates, and that is without accommodation of the plates of the brother of Jared and its interpreted plates.

Assuming that the "hundredth part" really meant something like the "fiftieth part," then the number of plates needed would be 279 plates to accommodate the Twenty-Four Jaredite plates (or their interpretation, the unabridged Book of Ether), leaving up to 159 plates (under the metallurgical approach of a maximum of 438 plates) to accommodate the plates of the brother of Jared (or its interpretation), which, although we don't know the original language, looks to be a reasonable number of plates. The original Jaredite language is likely proto-cuneiform Sumerian or Elamite (Grover 2017), so it would be expected to be heavily logographic, taking up less space than an alphabetic language. These calculations clearly have some range of extrapolation and error. However, even using the widest range possible, it is quite evident that there were more than 24 six x eight-inch plates in the stack dedicated to that Jaredite record, exclusive of the records of the brother of Jared.

The question remains as to whether there are just 24 plates. The logical answer is that each of the Twenty-Four "plates" consists of multiple metal sheets attached together to form a single plate record. The reference to each as a "plate" may be because they were attached in a manner that they formed a single continuous record or plate. Being in Mesoamerica, the most logical form would be the standard "fold out" type of codex arrangement, with each individual plate attached to two others on each side. The Book of Mormon indicates that scriptures or spiritual

information related to the scriptures were “unfolded” (Alma 12:1, 40:3; Mosiah 2:9, 29:33, 35; Jacob 4:18; 1 Nephi 10:19; Ether 4:7, 4:16).



Figure 109. Madrid Codex. ([www.latinamericanstudies.org](http://www.latinamericanstudies.org), 2016)

Unlike the Nephites, who likely used the pattern of the Old World brass plate stack when creating the plates of Nephi and the Book of Mormon plates (plates held together by three D-shaped rings), the Twenty-Four plates would not likely have had such a genesis. We don’t know if there was a continuous metal record being kept through Jaredite times, but it is not a requirement of the text because the Twenty-Four plates were written entirely by Ether around 400 BC (Ether 1:6). The additional record, written by the brother of Jared (apparently while in the Canary Islands as previously discussed) and created by him, presumably consisted of gold plates in order to withstand a long period of time without corrosion and also be capable of transport (as opposed to something like stone).

The fact that the Twenty-Four plates were described as “pure gold” (Mosiah 8:9) would indicate that they were softer than other plates that the Nephites were familiar with; metallurgical analysis of the Book of Mormon plate stack indicates a high copper alloy or a gold-plated copper material (Grover 2015, 95). Since nearly all native gold contains some silver, it is likely that they were actually not of pure gold, but rather a native alloy of gold or silver. The ability to separate gold from silver was not known in the timeframe that the plates could have been created (Grover 2015, 72). A native gold-silver alloy containing 25 percent silver would be four times harder than pure gold (Sachs et al. 1930). If they were created by Ether, depletion gilding of the surface to create a pure gold surface would have been possible based on the metallurgical knowledge known in the New World. A fold-out pattern with two sides attached is structurally superior to a plate penetrated by three holes with a ring binder, so it would be more likely for someone with some experience with plate construction to have created it.

### **Evaluation of the Use of the Word *Record***

Are there actually any textual hints that the 24 plates actually consist of multiple individual records? An evaluation of the use of the word *record* and *records* in relation to specific Book of Mormon records would be useful at this point. One can ignore the use of the word *record* that is not descriptive of an actual physical document or item (e.g., bearing record, etc.) or of generic reference to records (e.g., “many records of every kind,” etc.). Skousen (2014) has noted that the scribes for Joseph Smith had some problems on occasion choosing between *record* and *records* (127).

Skousen also notes that there were passages where a singular pronoun would refer to the plural *records* and conversely plural pronouns would refer to the singular *records*. Skousen opined that part of the shift in use may be explained by the singular *record* being used in a collective sense and the plural *records* being used in reference to the physical plates (Skousen 2017, 128).

### *The Brass Plates*

The brass plates consist of the “record of the Jews” and also “a genealogy” of Nephi’s forefathers (1 Nephi: Preface, 3:3–4, 3:12–13, 5:6, 5:12; Omni 1:14). The record of the Jews is probably also referred to in 1 Nephi 7:11, as it refers to a “record” which was obtained from Laban. In all instances but one (1 Nephi 5:21) where the brass plates are described it uses the word “records,” not “record,” as it actually consists of multiple records (1 Nephi 3:3–4, 3:12–13, 3:19, 3:24; 1 Nephi 4:17, 5:10, 5:16; 2 Nephi 5:12; Mosiah 1:3, 1:6, 1:16, 2:34, 10:16, 28:11; Alma 3:11, 37:3, 37:9). 1 Nephi 5:21, based on the Original and Printers Manuscript indicates the singular “record;” however, it does use the plural pronouns of “them” and “they” (Skousen 2014a, 126–29). The “record” that is being referred to in 1 Nephi 5:21 looks to be the “record of the Jews” and not the genealogy as it indicates that it contains “the commandments of the Lord.” It should be noted that the Mosiah 1:6 reference was changed in the Printer’s Manuscript by Oliver Cowdery from *record* to *records* (Skousen 2014a, 1181–83).

### *Individual Books in the Book of Mormon*

When individual books by individual authors (even when abridged) in the Book of Mormon are referenced they are referred to as a “record” (Nephi—1 Nephi: Preface, 1:1–3; Lehi—1 Nephi 19:1–2, 1:17, 6:1, 19:4 [Nephi’s record on the large plates]; Alma—Alma: Preface, 5:2, 35:16, 44:24; Helaman—Alma 37:2; Helaman: Preface, 16:25; Nephi<sub>3</sub>—3 Nephi 5:10, 8:1, 23:7; Mormon—3 Nephi 5:17; Mormon 1:1, 2:17, 6:1, 8:1; Nephi<sub>4</sub>—4 Nephi: Preface, 1:19, 1:21, 1:47; Ammaron—4 Nephi 1:49; and the brother of Jared—Ether 4:17). The only exception would be the “records” of Helaman, and the “records” of his sons (Helaman: Preface); however, the preface then uses the singular *record* to refer to the “records” of Helaman and his sons. The Original Manuscript and the Printers Edition indicated a singular “record of Helaman,” not records. This in fact is consistent with all of the other individual books (Skousen 2014a, 2875–76). This seems to indicate that for the Book of Helaman abridgement Mormon utilized some records outside of the Large Plates (perhaps those of his sons), so it would thus not be an exception to the reference to individual abridged books being referred to as a “record,” as each son may have had his own record. This would not be surprising, since at this period of Book of Mormon history, Mormon noted that the Nephites had “many books and records of every kind” (Helaman 3:15).

While not an official individual book, there is reference to the “record of Ammaron,” which was abridged by Mormon and incorporated into the book of 4 Nephi (4 Nephi 1:49).

### *Large Plates of Nephi*

The large plates of Nephi seem to be what is referred to as a “record” on the Book of Mormon Title Page. However, other than that one reference, the large plates are referred to as “records” (Words of Mormon 1:10; Mosiah 1:6, 28:20; 3 Nephi 23:8). 3 Nephi 23:8 does not specifically call out the large plates, but follows the verse where Nephi<sub>3</sub> was asked by Christ to bring out his own individual book (3 Nephi 23:7), and then brought out the full set of large plates. He was then instructed by Christ to make a correction in what would have been the timeframe of the record of Helaman, his sons, indicating that the “records” referred to here are the large plates, again consistent with the reference to the large plates in the plural as “records.” The exception on the Title Page refers to a “record of the people of Nephi.” This exception is curious, but it is consistent with the usage of the term “record of the people,” which phrase appears to be an acceptable substitute with regard to the large plates of Nephi and their standard reference as “records”:

## 3 Nephi 1:3

Then he departed out of the land, and whither he went, no man knoweth; and his son Nephi did keep the records in his stead, yea, the record of this people.

The Printer's Manuscript shows that this verse should be read as the singular "record in his stead," so the "record of the people" and its description maintains a singular reference (Skousen 2014a, 3178–3180). Jarom 1:14 refers to the "records of our wars" that are on the large plates but does not refer to the large plates themselves.

*The Small Plates*

The Small Plates are referred to at Omni 1:9 initially in the Printer's Manuscript as "records" but then with an erasure by Oliver Cowdery was corrected to "record" (Skousen 2014a, 127; Skousen 2014b, 1108).

*Plates of Limhi*

The plates of Limhi are referred to as a "record" (Mosiah 8:5–6). They may be the "records" being referred to in Mosiah 22:14 and Mosiah 25:5, but these verses may have been referring to other records.

*Mormon's Abridgement*

Mormon's abridgement was always referred to as a "record" (Words of Mormon 1:1; 1:5; 1:6; 1:9; Alma 47:1; 3 Nephi 5:11, 5:14, 5:15, 5:16, 5:18; Mormon 6:6, 7:8, 8:5). Even after Moroni<sub>2</sub>'s material was added, it was still a "record" (Mormon 8:12, 8:14, 9:32–33; Ether 12:20). It is noted that Mormon 7:8 was changed by scribe 2 from "record" to "records" in the Printer's Manuscript.

*Moroni<sub>2</sub>'s Abridgement of Jaredite Records*

Moroni<sub>2</sub>'s abridgement of Jaredite records was called a "record" or "my record" (Book of Mormon Title Page; Ether 2:13, 6:1, 9:1, 13:1).

*Moroni<sub>2</sub>'s Description of the Book of Ether*

Moroni<sub>2</sub> refers to the Book of Ether as a "record" (Book of Mormon Title Page).

*Moroni<sub>2</sub>'s Description of the Complete Book of Mormon*

Moroni<sub>2</sub> refers to the entire Book of Mormon as a "record" (Book of Mormon Title Page).

*Twenty-Four Plates (aka the 24 Plates)*

Limhi referred to the 24 plates as "records" (Mosiah 8:12–13). When the plates were transported and delivered to Zarahemla, they were referred to as "records" (Mosiah 22:14). At the time the plates were translated by Mosiah<sub>2</sub> they were referred to as "records" (Mosiah 28:11, 17). When Ammon met Limhi, in Mormon's narrative of the event, the 24 plates are referred to as a "record of the people whose bones they found" (Mosiah 21:27), but in the Printer's Manuscript and other early versions of the Book of Mormon, the verse states "and they brought a record with them, even a record of the people whose bones they had found; and **they were it** ~~was~~ engraven on plates of ore" (Skousen 2005b, 1417, 1431).

It is not until Moroni<sub>2</sub> that the 24 plates are conflated with the name the "Book of Ether and referred to as a "record," (Ether 1:3, 1:6, 13:14 ["the remainder of this record"], 15:33 ["he finished his record; (and the hundredth part I have not written)"]). The "Book of Ether then became the name of the record, and consistent with other



records written by a single individual (or an abridgement thereof) known in the Book of Mormon, it was also referred to as a single “record.” Moroni<sub>2</sub> indicates he takes his account from the 24 plates found by Limhi, “which is called the Book of Ether” (Ether 1:2), and indicates that “he that wrote this record was Ether” (Ether 1:6).

So the reference to the 24 plates prior and at the time of their translation as “records” is consistent with a compilation of separate, individual records, just as the plates of brass were referred to as “records.” After translation, as the translation indicated that the plates themselves were “written by Ether” (Ether 1:6), consistent with the standard practice, they were now referred to as a “record” just as the other individual books were in the Book of Mormon. It is likely that Ether prepared the 24 plates making an abridgement utilizing other records or oral histories. In that case, it was also appropriate to refer to the compilation as a “record” just like Mormon’s and Moroni<sub>2</sub>’s abridgements were referred to.

### **Discussion of the Title “Twenty-Four Plates”**

An attempt has never really been made to answer the question of why the specific number 24 is used to describe the Twenty Four plate set. The answer is one of those situations where something is hidden in plain sight. The Jaredite record is obviously a lineage history consisting of the reigning line starting with Jared<sub>1</sub> (technically Jared<sub>1</sub> was not officially a “king” like his son, but he was the apparent leader of the immigrant group). The number of Jaredite kings who would have created a record were exactly 24 (Jared, Orihah, Kib, Shule, Omer, Emer, Coriantum, Com<sub>1</sub>, Heth, Shez, Riplakish, Morionton, Kim, Levi, Corom, Kish, Lib<sub>1</sub>, Hearthom, Com<sub>2</sub>, Shiblom, Ahah, Ethem, Moron, and Ether). Ether appears to be the last son of Coriantor the king in captivity, so he would have had the right to the throne. It is not clear, however, whether he made any attempt to exercise this right or not. He was released from captivity, unlike his father, Coriantor. It is not specifically indicated from where Coriantum<sub>2</sub> derived his right to rule, since the kingdom had been taken from Ether’s line by a rival lineage, “a mighty man” who was a “descendant of the brother of Jared” (Ether 11:17). It is possible that Coriantum<sub>2</sub> is from the rival brother of Jared lineage; however, the more likely scenario is that Coriantum<sub>2</sub> is a relative of Ether, perhaps a half-brother. This is evidenced when Ether indicates a direct association (likely geographical locations) between Coriantum<sub>2</sub>, Cohor, and Corihor (Ether 13:17). Corihor was an early Jaredite prince who rebelled against his father, king Kib, usurping his throne. Cohor was the son of Corihor and rebelled against his uncle, king Shule, and also his father, Corihor (who at that point in time had some “power in the kingdom”) and became king over part of the land (Ether 7). It seems that Coriantum<sub>2</sub> was also of the lineage of Jared, and his “mighty men” challengers (Ether 13:15) were likely from the rival lineage of the brother of Jared. In any event, the record of Ether is effectively the record of the events of Coriantum<sub>2</sub> as well, so Ether’s life would still be the twenty-fourth record.

There are six more individuals mentioned in the lineage from Jared<sub>1</sub> to Ether in addition the 24 that constituted the Jaredite record, but they were born in captivity and dwelt all their days in captivity (Heth<sub>2</sub>, Aaron, Amnigaddah, Coriantum, Seth, and Coriantor), so they would not have generated any record. There are other unidentified persons that were descendants of Riplakish and ancestors of Morionton, but they were “driven out of the land” (Ether 10:8), again losing the ability to leave a record.

Taking from the Jaredite “type,” the number 24 was included by Mormon as a civilization founding and destruction theme in the Book of Mormon. The initial number of the founding group of the Jaredites was 24 (Jared, the brother of Jared, and 22 friends) (Ether 6:16). The first king, Orihah, had 24 sons (Ether 7:2–3). The destruction of the Jaredites is represented in the 24 plates, which were hidden by Ether.

For the destruction of the Nephites, at the final battle of the Nephites on the last day before the remainder of the Nephite army was hunted down and wiped out (Mormon 8:7) Mormon calls out that there were only 24 survivors (Mormon 6:11, 15). It is also interesting that there were 23 Nephite final battle groups, and a twenty-fourth may be interpreted as the group that had escaped to the south (Mormon 6:15, 8:2). For the founding of the Nephites, the

initial number of the followers of Nephi<sub>1</sub> that broke off from Laman and Lemuel have been calculated to be 24 (Sorenson 1992a). Even though we don't have the 116 lost pages, I would presume that Mormon included at some point a summary of that number.

The founding number of Amulonites, which consisted of the priests of Noah<sub>2</sub>, was 24 (assuming they each married one of the Lamanite daughters that they carried away [Mosiah 20:5]). The Amulonites were eventually hunted, driven, and slain (Alma 25:4). Other interesting uses of 24 along the beginning and ending theme were Hearthom's reign of 24 years, after which he lost his kingdom (Ether 10:30). It is also interesting that Mormon was first approached by Ammaron to be responsible for the sacred records at "about ten years of age" (Mormon 1:2); at 15 years of age he was "visited of the Lord" (Mormon 1:15), and he received the sacred records at 24 years of age (Mormon 1:3, 4), reflecting the numbers 10, 15, and 24—all part of the 24-plate glyph.

Perhaps less directly related was Pahoran being appointed chief judge and governor in the twenty-fourth year of the reign of the judges (Alma 50:40) and Morionton being slain and his army defeated in the place of the Jaredite destruction, the land of Desolation, also in the twenty-fourth year of the reign of the judges (Alma 50:25, 35).

