



BOOK OF MORMON CENTRAL

<http://bookofmormoncentral.org/>

Learning to Love the Book of Mormon - The Words of Mormon

Author(s): Michael J. Preece

Source: *Learning to Love the Book of Mormon*

Last Updated: August 2013 to February 2014

Abstract: This work consists of a rather comprehensive commentary on the verses of the Book of Mormon. I believe it may be read and enjoyed by the casual student of the Book of Mormon who might, for example, find use for it as a reference source. The book's intended purpose, however, is to assist the serious student who would like to begin a thorough, intensive, and searching tour through the book.

Learning to Love the Book of Mormon

Updated August 2013 to February 2014

Contents

Introduction

The First Book of Nephi

1 Nephi Chapter 1
1 Nephi Chapter 2
1 Nephi Chapter 3
1 Nephi Chapter 4
1 Nephi Chapter 5
1 Nephi Chapter 6
1 Nephi Chapter 7
1 Nephi Chapter 8
1 Nephi Chapter 9
1 Nephi Chapter 10
1 Nephi Chapter 11
1 Nephi Chapter 12
1 Nephi Chapter 13
1 Nephi Chapter 14
1 Nephi Chapter 15
1 Nephi Chapter 16
1 Nephi Chapter 17
1 Nephi Chapter 18
1 Nephi Chapter 19
1 Nephi Chapter 20
1 Nephi Chapter 21
1 Nephi Chapter 22

The Second Book of Nephi

2 Nephi Chapter 1
2 Nephi Chapter 2
2 Nephi Chapter 3
2 Nephi Chapter 4
2 Nephi Chapter 5
2 Nephi Chapter 6
2 Nephi Chapter 7
2 Nephi Chapter 8
2 Nephi Chapter 9
2 Nephi Chapter 10
2 Nephi Chapter 11
2 Nephi Chapter 12
2 Nephi Chapter 13
2 Nephi Chapter 14
2 Nephi Chapter 15
2 Nephi Chapter 16
2 Nephi Chapter 17
2 Nephi Chapter 18
2 Nephi Chapter 19
2 Nephi Chapter 20
2 Nephi Chapter 21

2 Nephi Chapter 22
2 Nephi Chapter 23
2 Nephi Chapter 24
2 Nephi Chapter 25
2 Nephi Chapter 26
2 Nephi Chapter 27
2 Nephi Chapter 28
2 Nephi Chapter 29
2 Nephi Chapter 30
2 Nephi Chapter 31
2 Nephi Chapter 32
2 Nephi Chapter 33

The Book of Jacob

Jacob Chapter 1
Jacob Chapter 2
Jacob Chapter 3
Jacob Chapter 4
Jacob Chapter 5
Jacob Chapter 6
Jacob Chapter 7

The Book of Enos

Enos Chapter 1

The Book of Jarom

Jarom Chapter 1

The Book of Omni

Omni Chapter 1

Words of Mormon

Words of Mormon Chapter 1

The Book of Mosiah

Mosiah Chapter 1
Mosiah Chapter 2
Mosiah Chapter 3
Mosiah Chapter 4
Mosiah Chapter 5
Mosiah Chapter 6
Mosiah Chapter 7
Mosiah Chapter 8
Mosiah Chapter 9
Mosiah Chapter 10
Mosiah Chapter 11
Mosiah Chapter 12
Mosiah Chapter 13

Mosiah Chapter 14
Mosiah Chapter 15
Mosiah Chapter 16
Mosiah Chapter 17
Mosiah Chapter 18
Mosiah Chapter 19
Mosiah Chapter 20
Mosiah Chapter 21
Mosiah Chapter 22
Mosiah Chapter 23
Mosiah Chapter 24
Mosiah Chapter 25
Mosiah Chapter 26
Mosiah Chapter 27
Mosiah Chapter 28
Mosiah Chapter 29

The Book of Alma

Alma Chapter 1
Alma Chapter 2
Alma Chapter 3
Alma Chapter 4
Alma Chapter 5
Alma Chapter 6
Alma Chapter 7
Alma Chapter 8
Alma Chapter 9
Alma Chapter 10
Alma Chapter 11
Alma Chapter 12
Alma Chapter 13
Alma Chapter 14
Alma Chapter 15
Alma Chapter 16
Alma Chapter 17
Alma Chapter 18
Alma Chapter 19
Alma Chapter 20
Alma Chapter 21
Alma Chapter 22
Alma Chapter 23
Alma Chapter 24
Alma Chapter 25
Alma Chapter 26
Alma Chapter 27
Alma Chapter 28
Alma Chapter 29
Alma Chapter 30

Alma Chapter 31
Alma Chapter 32
Alma Chapter 33
Alma Chapter 34
Alma Chapter 35
Alma Chapter 36
Alma Chapter 37
Alma Chapter 38
Alma Chapter 39
Alma Chapter 40
Alma Chapter 41
Alma Chapter 42
Alma Chapter 43
Alma Chapter 44
Alma Chapter 45
Alma Chapter 46
Alma Chapter 47
Alma Chapter 48
Alma Chapter 49
Alma Chapter 50
Alma Chapter 51
Alma Chapter 52
Alma Chapter 53
Alma Chapter 54
Alma Chapter 55
Alma Chapter 56
Alma Chapter 57
Alma Chapter 58
Alma Chapter 59
Alma Chapter 60
Alma Chapter 61
Alma Chapter 62
Alma Chapter 63

The Book of Helaman

Helaman Chapter 1
Helaman Chapter 2
Helaman Chapter 3
Helaman Chapter 4
Helaman Chapter 5
Helaman Chapter 6
Helaman Chapter 7
Helaman Chapter 8
Helaman Chapter 9
Helaman Chapter 10
Helaman Chapter 11
Helaman Chapter 12
Helaman Chapter 13
Helaman Chapter 14
Helaman Chapter 15
Helaman Chapter 16

The Book of Third Nephi

Third Nephi Chapter 1
Third Nephi Chapter 2
Third Nephi Chapter 3

Third Nephi Chapter 4
Third Nephi Chapter 5
Third Nephi Chapter 6
Third Nephi Chapter 7
Third Nephi Chapter 8
Third Nephi Chapter 9
Third Nephi Chapter 10
Third Nephi Chapter 11
Third Nephi Chapter 12
Third Nephi Chapter 13
Third Nephi Chapter 14
Third Nephi Chapter 15
Third Nephi Chapter 16
Third Nephi Chapter 17
Third Nephi Chapter 18
Third Nephi Chapter 19
Third Nephi Chapter 20
Third Nephi Chapter 21
Third Nephi Chapter 22
Third Nephi Chapter 23
Third Nephi Chapter 24
Third Nephi Chapter 25
Third Nephi Chapter 26
Third Nephi Chapter 27
Third Nephi Chapter 28
Third Nephi Chapter 29
Third Nephi Chapter 30

The Book of Fourth Nephi

Fourth Nephi Chapter 1

The Book of Mormon

Mormon Chapter 1
Mormon Chapter 2
Mormon Chapter 3
Mormon Chapter 4
Mormon Chapter 5
Mormon Chapter 6
Mormon Chapter 7
Mormon Chapter 8
Mormon Chapter 9

The Book of Ether

Ether Chapter 1
Ether Chapter 2
Ether Chapter 3
Ether Chapter 4
Ether Chapter 5
Ether Chapter 6
Ether Chapter 7
Ether Chapter 8
Ether Chapter 9
Ether Chapter 10
Ether Chapter 11
Ether Chapter 12
Ether Chapter 13

Ether Chapter 14
Ether Chapter 15

The Book of Moroni

Moroni Chapter 1
Moroni Chapter 2
Moroni Chapter 3
Moroni Chapter 4
Moroni Chapter 5
Moroni Chapter 6
Moroni Chapter 7
Moroni Chapter 8
Moroni Chapter 9
Moroni Chapter 10

Supplemental Articles

- Introduction to the Supplemental Articles
- Biblical Prophecies of the Book of Mormon
- Book of Mormon Chapter Framework
- Book of Mormon Geography
- Book of Mormon Myths
- Brief History of Opposition to the Book of Mormon
- A Brief History of the Translation of the Book of Mormon
- Chronology of the Bible and the Book of Mormon
- Editions of the Book of Mormon
- Evidences of the Book of Mormon
- Great Apostasy
- Hebrew Language and the Book of Mormon
- Historical Setting for the Book of Isaiah
- Introduction to the Book of Isaiah
- Jerusalem at the Time of Lehi
- Jewish Pilgrimage Festivals and their Relationship to King Benjamin's Speech
- Language of the Book of Mormon
- Lehi's Life and Profession in Jerusalem
- Names in the Book of Mormon
- Narrative Historical Summary of the Book of Mormon
- Notes on the Hypothetical Map of Book of Mormon Lands

- Parable for Critics of the Book of Mormon
- Peoples of the Book of Mormon
- *Strait* and *Straight* in the Book of Mormon
- Those Confusing Book of Mormon Plates
- War and the Book of Mormon
- Pronouncing Guide
- Book of Mormon Scripture Mastery Passages
- Thirty-Five Minute History of the Book of Mormon
- Enallage in the Hebrew Bible and the Book of Mormon

Illustrations

- Book of Mormon Plates
- Frankincense Trail
- Geography of Hill Amnihu
- Hypothetical Map of Book of Mormon Lands
- Liahona
- Spindles of Liahona
- Moroni's Military Strategy against Zerahemnah
- Place of Entrance
- Territories of the Tribes
- "The Box"
- Trench and Palisade
- Book of Mormon History Diagram 1 Nephi 1 through Mosiah 22
- Book of Mormon History Diagram Alma 1 through 22
- Book of Mormon Lands, a Proposed Setting

Introduction

In the Church, our study and understanding of the Book of Mormon has undergone a most interesting evolution since the book's translation in 1829. As late as the early twentieth century our understanding of the book was not far advanced. Almost no serious studies of the book and its contents had been published, and the book was not heavily used in worship service discourse or in gospel instruction. There was even some skepticism about the literal divine origins of the Book within the LDS community, particularly among the more educated. By the mid 1900s, beginning with an acknowledged assumption of the book's divine origins, Sidney B. Sperry, Hugh W. Nibley, John L. Sorenson, and a few others had launched serious scholarly inquiries into the book. In the mid-1970s the rate of publications on Book of Mormon topics began to increase.

The rate of publications on the Book of Mormon particularly soared after President Ezra Taft Benson, soon after his ordination as president and prophet, called the Church to repentance in November of 1985 and at the April General Conference of the Church in 1986. The Church worked the Book of Mormon into the regular cycle of the new correlated curriculum for adults, and church leaders began using the Book of Mormon more frequently and systematically in speeches and instructional situations. Since then, the book's authenticity as an ancient scriptural record has become more firmly and generally established. Those who remain vocal doubters of the book's literal divine origins are no longer identified with the committed LDS community.

In the October General Conference in 1986, President Benson said:

We must make the Book of Mormon a center focus of our study [because] it was written for our day. The Nephites never had the book; neither did the Lamanites of ancient times. It was meant for us. . . . Under the inspiration of God, who sees all things from the beginning, [Mormon] abridged centuries of records, choosing the stories, speeches, and events that would be most helpful to us. . . .

If they [the Book of Mormon writers] saw our day then chose those things which would be of greatest worth to us, is not that how we should study the Book of Mormon? We should constantly ask ourselves, "Why did the Lord inspire Mormon (or Moroni or Alma) to include that in his record? What lesson can I learn from that to help me live in this day and age?" (*Conference Report*, October 1986, 3-7).

President Benson would later write:

It is not just that the Book of Mormon teaches us truth, though it indeed does that. It is not just that the Book of Mormon bears testimony of Christ, though it indeed does that, too. But there is something more. There is a power in the book which will begin to flow into your lives the moment you begin a serious study of the book. You will find greater power to resist temptation. You will find the power to avoid deception. You

will find the power to stay on the strait and narrow path. The scriptures are called the “words of life” (D&C 84:85), and nowhere is that more true than it is of the Book of Mormon. When you begin to hunger and thirst after those words, you will find life in greater and greater abundance (“The Book of Mormon—Keystone of Our Religion,” *Ensign*, November, 1986, 16:7).

Further:

I would like to speak about one of the most significant gifts given to the world in modern times. The gift I am thinking of is more important than any of the inventions that have come out of the industrial and technological revolutions. This is a gift of greater value to mankind than even the many wonderful advances we have seen in modern medicine. It is of greater worth to mankind than the development of flight or space travel. I speak of the gift of the Book of Mormon (*The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft] 1988, 51).

President Benson often reiterated the prophet Joseph Smith’s statement when Joseph referred to the Book of Mormon as “the keystone of our religion” (*TPJS*, 194). A keystone, sometimes called the headstone, is the central stone in an arch. It holds all the other stones in place, and if it is removed, the arch crumbles.

Your author has developed the habit, as I read the Book of Mormon, of reading slowly and actually looking for words or phrases or concepts whose meanings are unclear. I search for ideas that are not completely compatible with the framework of knowledge I already possess. I have been surprised to learn that I seldom have to read more than two or three verses before coming upon some puzzlement, large or small. On each occasion, I am left with an unsettled perplexity, a sort of uncomfortable disequilibrium. “Why are there so many verses in this basic scriptural work,” I have wondered, “that cause me to struggle so?” Disquieting as these feelings are, I have come to recognize them as a first step in learning some valuable new insight.

Once I come upon a phrase or verse I don’t understand, I begin my search for the answer by reading and re-reading the “offending” passage, by checking cross references, by reading supplemental explanatory materials, by sometimes asking help of my learned friends, and often praying about the verse. Mercifully, I have found that my efforts are most always fruitful. I am able to re-establish my equilibrium with the verse, and, at the same time, find myself possessing a greater insight on some particular point. With some satisfaction, I then continue on in my reading, only to find the process beginning again a verse or two later. I heartily recommend this same approach to my readers, and I have attempted in this commentary to spare you some of the pain of finding your answers. I hope I have anticipated many of your perplexities as you study the Book of Mormon, yet I suspect that each of us will encounter and be obliged to overcome our own unique set of questions. There is certainly a magic in enduring in this process, for certainly as we do so, we are “treasur[ing] up . . . the words of life” (D&C 84:85).

Your author prefers to think of this work as an “enrichment commentary.” I believe it may be read and enjoyed by the casual student of the Book of Mormon who might, for example, find use for it as a reference source. The book’s intended purpose, however, is to assist the serious student who would like to begin a thorough, intensive, and searching tour through the book. Though it may be useful to the student who wishes to skip from one verse here to another verse there, it is intended to be read sequentially. Some concepts discussed in earlier verses in the book or even earlier verses in a particular chapter may receive more casual attention when encountered later in the text.

This work consists of a rather comprehensive commentary on the verses of the Book of Mormon. Some may have reservations about the basic concept of this book. I am aware of Peter’s warning: “Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of men: but Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Peter 1:20-21). I have endeavored in this project not to add or detract from the scripture, but only clarify. Some will say that such a comprehensive commentary is not possible without placing a “private interpretation” on some verses. I have earnestly attempted to avoid assigning any purely individual or private interpretations to the scriptural verses. Your author is a student of the Book of Mormon and in no wise an expert. To create this volume I have prayerfully studied and utilized the thoughts and explanations of many authors and scholars whose explanations of the Book of Mormon verses might be generally considered to be “authoritative” and “scholarly.” I have collected materials from general authorities and from individuals with undeniable scholarly credentials who openly profess a spiritual witness of the book. When I have borrowed their ideas only, and have rephrased them for my purposes, no reference will be cited. When I have quoted another author’s wording, acknowledgment is provided. Indeed, I have begun and completed this project as a student who is simply trying to make it possible for myself and for others to understand the book’s sometimes difficult verses. I acknowledge the fact, however, that my private biases have not been completely eliminated.

I am also sensitive to the need to avoid proof-texting in a work such as this. That is, I have tried very hard to let the scriptures speak for themselves. An author guilty of proof-texting presupposes the doctrine and then seeks support from the scriptures. I have attempted to consider each verse in its historical and sequential context.

I have tried to include timely and necessary background information to make the book’s words, phrases, and verses really come alive. I have tried to avoid rhetoric and concentrate on the meat. It is not my purpose to preach about the principles contained in the book, rather my goal is to improve understanding. This work presupposes, in its reader, an “average” understanding of the Book of Mormon. I have tried to eliminate those commentary materials which would likely be redundant and unnecessary for my

so-called average reader. It is my intent to explain, clarify, and enrich your study and understanding of the book.

The work includes a variety of “supplemental articles” to which reference is made appropriately in the text. Among these supplemental articles is a purely historical telling of the Book of Mormon story entitled, *A Narrative Summary of the Book of Mormon*. From this “historical” summary, doctrinal materials have been omitted, but all characters, events, and places are included. It is hope that this historical account may be useful to the student who wishes to quickly “brush up” on the historical narrative.

A few “housekeeping” notes about this work are pertinent. The text of the Book of Mormon is included in bold with a blue color to clearly distinguish it from the commentary. All commentary is colored black. The paragraphs of commentary material are often preceded by a quoted phrase, also of blue color, without any punctuation except for quotation marks. These are phrases taken directly from the verse of text immediately above the commentary paragraph. The commentary then follows these quoted phrases. Sometimes the verse commentary for a group of verses will precede, rather than follow, the actual text rendering of the verses. This is done if it felt that a word of explanation before reading a passage would be helpful. Most block quotes appear in red print and are not double-indented. Finally, in this current updated version of this commentary (2014) page numbers have been eliminated, as they are considered unnecessary.

In reading the Book of Mormon, often we tend to regard some of the materials contained therein as non-essential. We wonder, “Why was the report of this battle or that incident included in the book?” As we study the book, we will assume that there is no “filler” material in the Book of Mormon. Every item in the book was placed there for a reason and purpose. In making his abridgment of the sacred records of the Book of Mormon people, Mormon wrote, “I cannot write the hundredth part of the things of my people” (Words of Mormon 1:5). Hence, we must assume that all items in the book have been included following thoughtful and inspired consideration.

There is a miracle in the scriptures. If a person reads the scriptures regularly, he or she will invariably have his or her life touched by them eventually. “Whosoever believeth on my words,” the Lord said in reference to the Book of Mormon, “them will I visit with the manifestation of my Spirit” (D&C 5:16). Isaiah prophesied that the Book of Mormon would bring a spiritually blind generation to an understanding of the doctrine of Christ (2 Nephi 27:35; Isaiah 29:24). It has been suggested by those experienced in gospel study that no individual who studies the scriptures daily will be remiss in keeping the commandments.

Our scriptures advise us of several other books of scripture yet to come forth. One day, “all things shall be revealed unto the children of men which ever have been . . . and which ever will be” (2 Nephi 27:11). Perhaps, though, we will never be privileged to receive additional scriptures until we learn to appreciate fully those we already have.

Consider the following testimony of The Book of Mormon by President Ezra Taft Benson:

We invite all men everywhere to read the Book of Mormon, another testament of Jesus Christ.

The Bible sits on the pulpit of hundreds of different religious sects. The Book of Mormon, the record of Joseph, verifies and clarifies the Bible. It removes stumbling blocks, it restores many plain and precious things. We testify that when used together, the Bible and the Book of Mormon confound false doctrines, lay down contentions, and establish peace (see 2 Nephi 3:12).

We do not have to prove that the Book of Mormon is true. The Book is its own proof. All we need to do is read it and declare it! The Book of Mormon is not on trial—the people of the world, including the members of the Church, are on trial as to what they will do with this second witness for Christ” (*Conference Report*, October 1984, 7; *Ensign* November 1984, 8).

I am deeply committed to the book as an authentic ancient scripture. The Spirit has born witness to my soul on numerous occasions as I have studied and pondered its verses. I know with all my heart that the book was written by ancient prophets who intended for their writings to come forth to the world and be translated in our day by Joseph Smith, Jr., through the “gift and power of God.”

Michael J. Preece

The Words of Mormon

The Words of Mormon is an editorial comment written by the prophet Mormon onto the end of the small plates of Nephi about AD 385. This entire “book” serves as a colophon (see the commentary for 1 Nephi 1:1-3) or explanatory passage. It is a bridge between the record on the small plates of Nephi and that on the plates of Mormon. Incidentally, in that year the prophet Mormon was 74 years old (Mormon 2:2). He was in the process of abridging the vast library of plates that had been handed down to him, the so called large plates of Nephi. He was entering his abridgment onto yet another set of plates, the plates of Mormon. He had started his abridgment with the records from time of Lehi and had completed his record down to the time of King Benjamin, the son of Mosiah I. In searching for additional records of this period, he came upon the small plates of Nephi which, he found, covered the entire period which he had just abridged. He was inspired to include these small plates with his own record. Mormon was not really told why the small plates should be included with his own plates. The small plates were eventually passed on to his son Moroni along with his own abridged record, the plates of Mormon.

It is interesting that Mormon was able to fit the Words of Mormon onto the small plates of Nephi since Amaleki had said that the plates were full (Omni 1:30). Apparently Amaleki left enough space for Mormon to record a few words. Perhaps he had been inspired to do so.

Let us summarize the sequential construction of the Book of Mormon as we have it today:

- The title page written by Moroni onto the last leaf of the plates of Mormon
- The small plates of Nephi, an unabridged record of Nephi, Jacob, and others—1 Nephi through Omni
 - The Words of Mormon, Mormon’s editorial comment which smooths the transition between the unabridged small plates of Nephi and Mormon’s abridgment of the large plates of Nephi. It was written on the last leaf of the small plates of Nephi.
 - Mormon’s abridgment of the large plates of Nephi including an abridgment of his own history which he had written onto the large plates of Nephi—Mosiah through Mormon 5
 - Mormon’s additional history written directly onto the plates of Mormon—Mormon 6-7
 - Moroni’s writings—Mormon 8-9
 - Moroni’s translation and abridgment of the twenty-four plates containing the record of the Jaredites—Ether
 - Moroni’s writings—the book of Moroni (In Moroni 7, Moroni reports a sermon delivered by Mormon, and in Moroni 8 and 9 Moroni records letters written him by his father Mormon.)

Words of Mormon Chapter 1

1 And now I, Mormon, being about to deliver up the record which I have been making into the hands of my son Moroni, behold I have witnessed almost all the destruction of my people, the Nephites.

verse 1 “And now I, Mormon” Joseph Smith once suggested that the name “Mormon” means “more good” (*Times and Seasons* 4:194; *TPJS*, 299-300).

The “record which I have been making” is, of course, Mormon’s abridgment of the large plates of Nephi which Mormon engraved onto a separate set of plates, the so called plates of Mormon. It was this latter set of plates, along with the small plates of Nephi, that were eventually delivered to the prophet Joseph Smith, Jr., on September 22, 1827.

2 And it is many hundred years after the coming of Christ that I deliver these records into the hands of my son; and it supposeth me that he will witness the entire destruction of my people. But may God grant that he may survive them, that he may write somewhat concerning them, and somewhat concerning Christ, that perhaps some day it may profit them.

verse 2 It is estimated that Mormon’s “many hundred years after the coming of Christ” is about AD 385.

“he will witness the entire destruction of my people” Moroni did indeed witness this destruction. He will report in Mormon 8:7 a frightening inquisition and slaughter of his people by the Lamanites: “And behold, the Lamanites have hunted my people, the Nephites, down from city to city and from place to place, even until they are no more.”

“may God grant that he may survive them, that he may write somewhat concerning them” From the time Moroni received the plates from his father Mormon in about AD 385, we know that he had possession of the plates for at least thirty-five years until AD 421. This gave Moroni an opportunity to enter onto the plates of Mormon his own writings (Mormon 8-9 and book of Moroni) and his translation of the record of the Jaredites (book of Ether).

“perhaps some day it may profit them” The pronoun “them” clearly refers to “my people” found earlier in the verse. These are Mormon’s people, the Nephites. Presumably Mormon is recording his hope that the descendants of his people will one day be blessed by the Book of Mormon. The large part of the people who were then called Nephites were destroyed though doubtless some few survived. Perhaps Mormon had in mind also that the descendants of those labeled in his lifetime as Lamanites might also benefit from this book. Let us remind ourselves that the labels “Nephites”

and "Lamanites," following Christ's ministry among the Nephites, did not necessarily reflect blood lines. Rather, those labels referred only to an individual's inclination to accept the teachings of the prophets. And even that distinction had been blurred for some years prior to Mormon's final writings.

3 And now, I speak somewhat concerning that which I have written; for after I had made an abridgment from the plates of Nephi, down to the reign of this king Benjamin, of whom Amaleki spake, I searched among the records which had been delivered into my hands, and I found these plates, which contained this small account of the prophets, from Jacob down to the reign of this king Benjamin, and also many of the words of Nephi.

verse 3 "And now, I speak somewhat concerning that which I have written"

Mormon now tells of his experience of finding the small plates of Nephi.

The "plates of Nephi," of course, are the large plates of Nephi.

"this king Benjamin, of whom Amaleki spake" Mormon had apparently just finished reading the final sentences of the small plates of Nephi (Omni 1:23-25) when he recorded his editorial comment, the Words of Mormon, onto those same small plates.

"These plates," of course are the small plates of Nephi.

"I searched among the records which had been delivered into my hands, and I found these plates" It is notable that Mormon had to "search "among the voluminous collection of records he had in his possession in order to find the small plates of Nephi. This raises the question of how well known and how well read were the small plates of Nephi among the Nephite prophets such as Alma.

4 And the things which are upon these plates pleasing me, because of the prophecies of the coming of Christ; and my fathers knowing that many of them have been fulfilled; yea, and I also know that as many things as have been prophesied concerning us down to this day have been fulfilled, and as many as go beyond this day must surely come to pass—

verse 4 Here Mormon outlines those subjects or themes contained upon the small plates of Nephi that were pleasing to him and caused him to decide to include the small plates with his own abridged record. These included the prophecies of the coming of Christ particularly in light of the subsequent fulfillment of many of the plates' prophecies and revelations. He referred particularly, of course, to those prophecies concerning the birth and ministry of Jesus Christ. He also was given to know the authenticity of the plates' prophecies yet to be fulfilled in his future.

5 Wherefore, I chose these things, to finish my record upon them, which remainder of my record I shall take from the plates of Nephi; and I cannot write the hundredth part of the things of my people.

verse 5 “these things” As mentioned in the footnotes, this phrase refers to those themes found in the small plates, mentioned in verse 4, which were pleasing to Mormon.

“I chose these things, to finish my record upon them” Mormon here reveals that the themes mentioned in verse 4, will also form the basis or themes of the remainder of his record—his abridgment of the remainder of the large plates of Nephi.

“I cannot write the hundredth part of the things of my people” The limited space available on the plates (see also Jarom 1:2, 14; Omni 1:30; Mormon 8:5); the time required to do the tedious work of engraving the plates (see also 2 Nephi 25:23; Jacob 4:1; Ether 12:24); and the complexities of writing the Egyptian glyphic form of Hebrew language in which the plates were engraved (3 Nephi 5:18; Mormon 9:34) would not permit a more complete record.

6 But behold, I shall take these plates, which contain these prophesyings and revelations, and put them with the remainder of my record, for they are choice unto me; and I know they will be choice unto my brethren.

verse 6 “I know they will be choice unto my brethren” Who are his “brethren”? Mormon has reference to all the descendants of the people of the Book of Mormon, perhaps especially to the descendants of the Lamanites of his day (see verse 8). You will recall that Mormon and the Nephites of AD 385 were virtually exterminated (see the commentary for verse 2), and thus would have had few descendants.

7 And I do this for a wise purpose; for thus it whispereth me, according to the workings of the Spirit of the Lord which is in me. And now, I do not know all things; but the Lord knoweth all things which are to come; wherefore, he worketh in me to do according to his will.

verse 7 It is interesting that Mormon was not given to know specifically why the Lord wanted him to include the small plates of Nephi with his own plates of Mormon. We now know that the small plates of Nephi became especially vital when Martin Harris, in 1828, lost the 116 pages of manuscript which contained Joseph Smith’s translation of the book of Lehi taken from the plates of Mormon. These lost materials covered the same time period as is covered by the small plates of Nephi (see D&C 3, 10).

8 And my prayer to God is concerning my brethren, that they may once again come to the knowledge of God, yea, the redemption of Christ; that they may once again be a delightsome people.

verse 8 “my brethren” See the commentary for verse 6.

“Delightsome” may be defined as pleasing unto God. It certainly has nothing to do with skin color. We know that the Jews are also to become “a delightful people” (2 Nephi 30:7), and they obviously are not black.

9 And now I, Mormon, proceed to finish out my record, which I take from the plates of Nephi; and I make it according to the knowledge and the understanding which God has given me.

verse 9 “my record” This is Mormon’s abridgment of the “plates of Nephi” which are, of course, the set of plates which we call the large plates of Nephi.

10 Wherefore, it came to pass that after Amaleki had delivered up these plates into the hands of king Benjamin, he took them and put them with the other plates, which contained records which had been handed down by the kings, from generation to generation until the days of king Benjamin.

verse 10 It is likely unnecessary at this point to remind the reader that “these plates” are the small plates of Nephi, and “the other plates” are the large plates of Nephi.

11 And they were handed down from king Benjamin, from generation to generation until they have fallen into my hands. And I, Mormon, pray to God that they may be preserved from this time henceforth. And I know that they will be preserved; for there are great things written upon them, out of which my people and their brethren shall be judged at the great and last day, according to the word of God which is written.

verse 11 “they were handed down” The small plates of Nephi were passed along by the keepers of the plates.

The phrase “my people and their brethren” refers to all the Book of Mormon people and their descendants.

12 And now, concerning this king Benjamin—he had somewhat of contentions among his own people.

verse 12 The only description of the “contentions” among the people of Benjamin is found in verses 15 through 18 which follow.

13 And it came to pass also that the armies of the Lamanites came down out of the land of Nephi, to battle against his people. But behold, king Benjamin gathered together his armies, and he did stand against them; and he did fight with the strength of his own arm, with the sword of Laban.

verse 13 “king Benjamin . . . did fight with . . . the sword of Laban” The sword that Nephi took from Laban served as a symbol of the legitimate authority of the

Nephite rulers, beginning with Nephi himself. This fits a long tradition, often portrayed in royal and religious art. In the kingly pattern, the sword helped to establish the possessor as the ruler, the one on whom divine kingship was conferred. It symbolized his responsibility to protect the society and to mete out justice. The sword was passed on to the heir as a transfer of authority, and the giving of the sword to the new king was a widespread feature of coronation ceremonies. One example is Goliath's sword which David used to cut off the head of the Philistine. That sword was preserved and revered. David later obtained the sword again, heroically led the Israelites against the Philistines, and later became king.

There is no direct evidence as to whether Joseph Smith ever possessed the sword of Laban, but it was part of the sacred relics, along with the plates, revealed by Moroni.

14 And in the strength of the Lord they did contend against their enemies, until they had slain many thousands of the Lamanites. And it came to pass that they did contend against the Lamanites until they had driven them out of all the lands of their inheritance.

verses 13-14 For additional information on this battle with the Lamanites, see the commentary for Omni 1:24.

verses 15-18 Mormon describes the contentions that occurred among the Nephites of King Benjamin's day.

15 And it came to pass that after there had been false Christs, and their mouths had been shut, and they punished according to their crimes;

verse 15 "False Christs" may be individuals who are insidiously persuasive and charismatic, and who are capable of leading people away from the gospel of Christ. Or, "false Christs" may be false churches, specious philosophies, or erroneous doctrines that turn people from the truth.

16 And after there had been false prophets, and false preachers and teachers among the people, and all these having been punished according to their crimes; and after there having been much contention and many dissensions away unto the Lamanites, behold, it came to pass that king Benjamin, with the assistance of the holy prophets who were among his people—

verses 15-16 There are some verses in the Book of Mormon suggesting that the Nephite legal code did not specify that a man be punished for simply having erroneous beliefs (see Alma 1:17; 30:7). On the other hand, there were apparently some types of heresy, of which these "false Christs," "false prophets," and "false preachers and teachers" were guilty, that broke the law.

“many dissensions away unto the Lamanites” Apparently in King Benjamin’s time, many Nephite dissenters broke with their fellow Nephites and joined with the Lamanites.

17 For behold, king Benjamin was a holy man, and he did reign over his people in righteousness; and there were many holy men in the land, and they did speak the word of God with power and with authority; and they did use much sharpness because of the stiffneckedness of the people—

verses 16-17 We have commented previously (see the commentary for Enos 1:22) that it is the Lord’s pattern to send simultaneously many prophets among the people, especially at times when the people are threatened with destruction for their disobedience.

18 Wherefore, with the help of these, king Benjamin, by laboring with all the might of his body and the faculty of his whole soul, and also the prophets, did once more establish peace in the land.

verse 18 “peace in the land” Undoubtedly this peace was born of spiritual unity as well as secular unity.