



Type: Journal Article

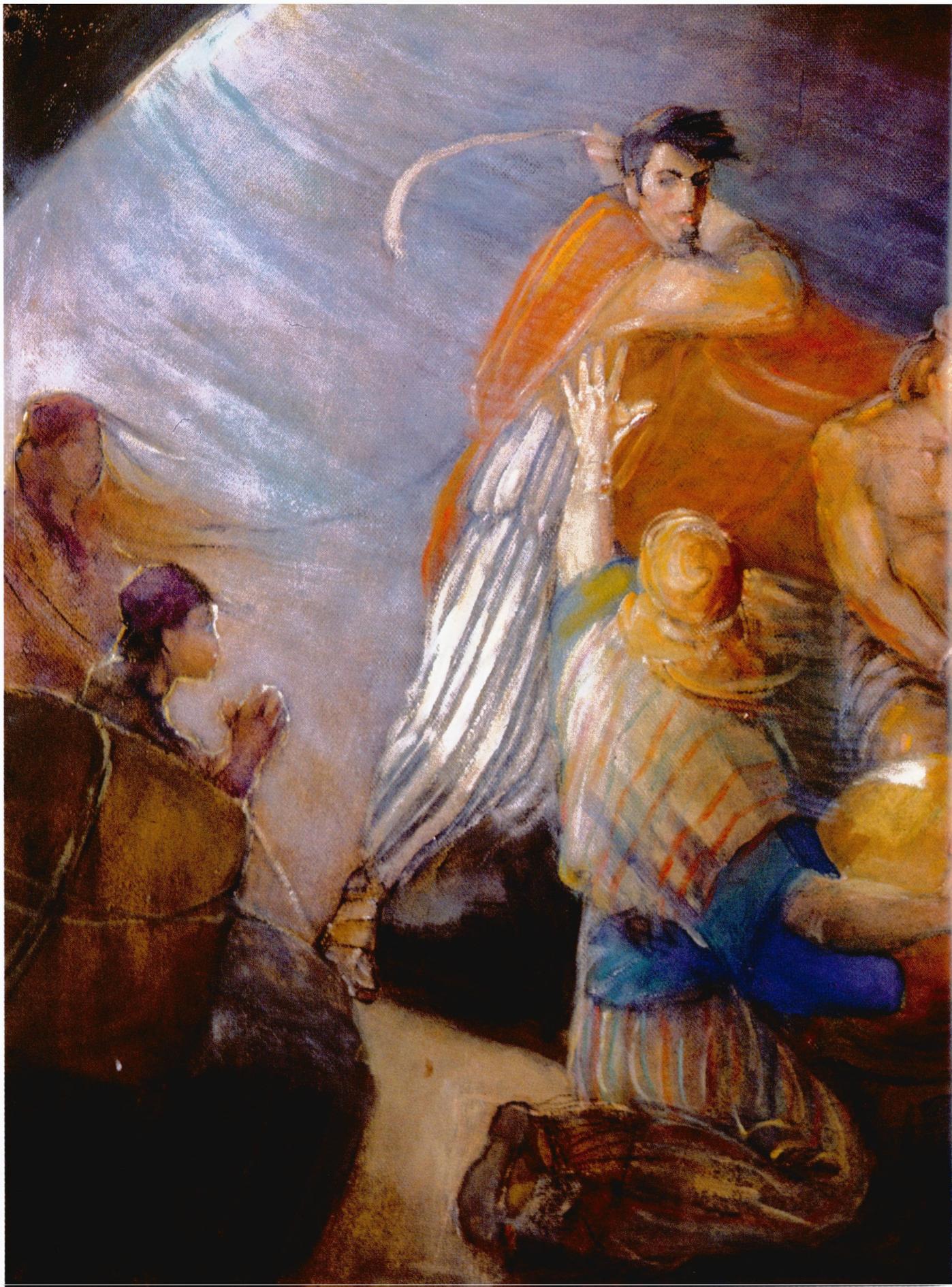
Longevity of Book of Mormon People and the "Age of Man"

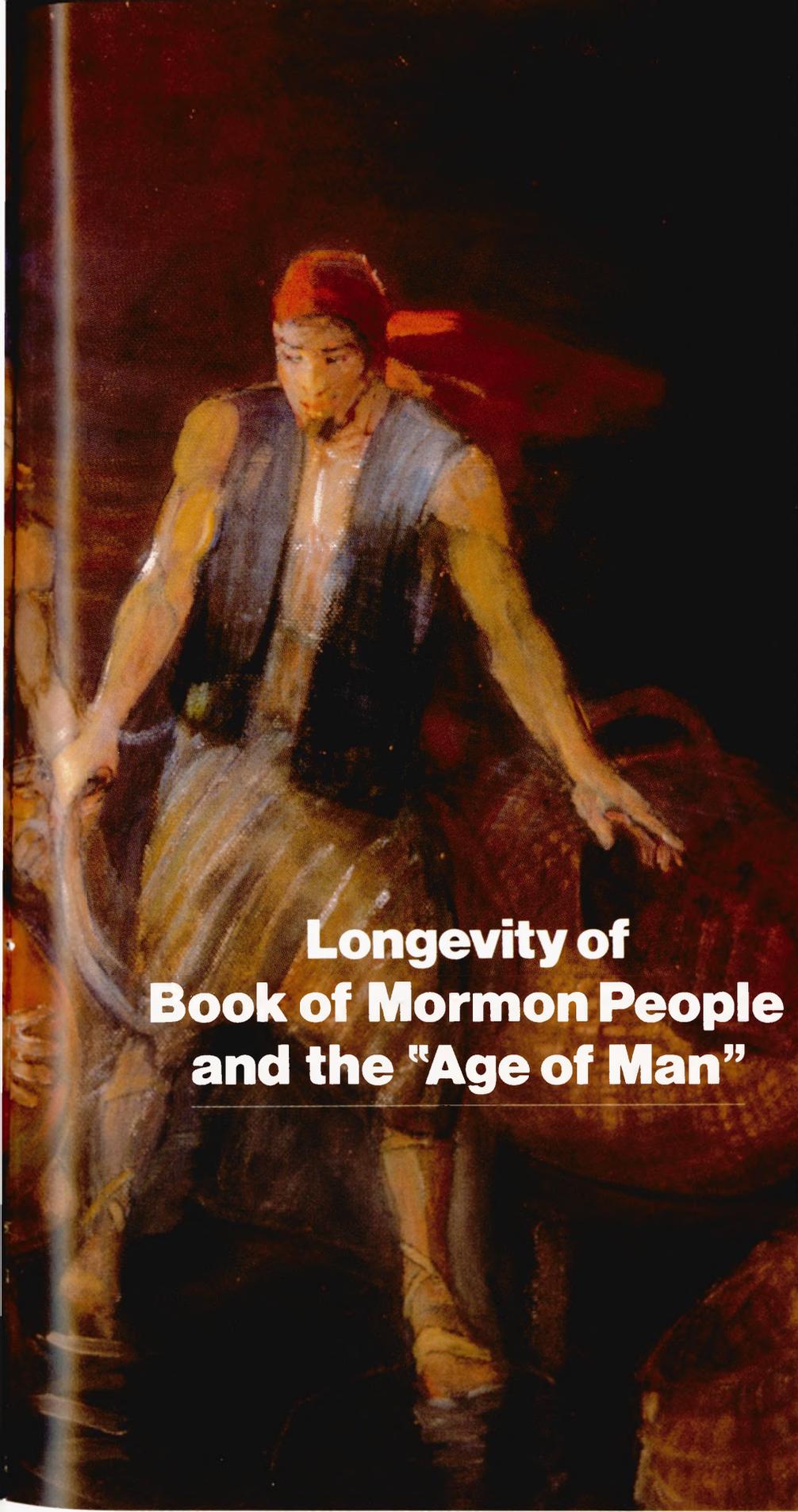
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Source: *The Journal of Collegium Aesculapium*, Vol. 3 (1985), pp. 34-45

Published by: The Collegium Aesculapium Foundation

Abstract: No abstract available





Longevity of Book of Mormon People and the "Age of Man"

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*Presented at the Second Annual Meeting of
Collegium Aesculapium
Salt Lake City, Utah*

There are several lineages in the Book of Mormon. From at least four of these genealogies we may reconstruct timelines and estimates regarding how long these people lived and how old a typical Book of Mormon father was upon the birth of his successor son. The four are the ruling lines from Lehi to Amaleki, from Mosiah I to the sons of Mosiah II, from Alma the Elder to Amos II and his brother Ammaron, and of the Jaredite kings from Jared to Ether. This article lists these four genealogies and gives, where possible, estimates of each person's approximate date of birth (ADoB), the approximate age of each person's father at the birth of that son (AAoFBoS), the last date on which that person was known to be alive (LKDA), his approximate date of death (ADoD), and his approximate age at death (AAaD).

Most of these dates are necessarily approximate: No precise date of any birth (other than the birth of Jesus) is given in the Book of Mormon, and not all deaths were recorded as having occurred in a given year. Furthermore, it is uncertain exactly how long Book of Mormon years were (although it appears that the Nephite year had 360 days rather than 365.25); this adds yet an-

other element of imprecision to these computations.¹

Nevertheless, several *key* dates are known (these are shown in bold type in the charts below). Also, the *total* number of years these lists span is either known or can be closely estimated. With this much solid information in hand, we can infer a relatively complete general picture,

75 and perhaps even older when he died, although we cannot be at all sure.

Nephi: Jacob 1:1 states that Nephi gave the plates to Jacob 55 years after Lehi left Jerusalem, or in other words in 542 B.C. If Nephi was at least 17 in 597 B.C.,⁵ then he lived to be at least 72 years old. Assuming that he survived a few years

dest sons. Indeed, some may have been youngest sons. Younger Nephite sons may have been more highly favored than elder sons either in light of the tradition of Jacob favoring his younger sons Joseph and Benjamin, or in light of Nephi, Jacob, and Joseph having been younger sons of Lehi. As will be seen in more detail below, the Jaredite record on

I. Lineage of Lehi

Name	ADoB	AAoFBoS	LKDA	ADoD	AAaD
	Approximate Date of Birth	Approximate Age of Father at Birth of Son	Last Known Date Alive	Approximate Date of Death	Approximate Age at Death
Lehi	655 [?] B.C.		585 B.C.	580 B.C.	75
°Nephi	615	40	543	540	75
Jacob	592	63	543	495	97
Enos	515	77	418	417	98
Jarom	440	70	359	355	85
Omni	390	50	315	315	75
°Amaron	350	40	277	277	73
Chemish	330	60		250	80
Abinadom	270	60		180	90
Amaleki	210	60		138	72

° indicates that the person was an elder son of the preceding name and a brother of the successor.

along with even some fairly precise details.

I. Lineage of Lehi

Lehi: If we assume that Nephi was at least 17 by the first year of the reign of Zedekiah in 597 B.C.,² and if we assume that Nephi was Lehi's sixth child,³ it is reasonable to conclude that Lehi must have married around 630 B.C. If we arbitrarily assume that Lehi was about 25 years old when he married, then he was born very approximately around 655 B.C. The mention of Lehi's death (2 Nephi 4:12) as occurring after the family arrived in the New World places this event possibly around 585 B.C.⁴ It is of course possible that Lehi was born somewhat before 655 B.C. In 2 Nephi 4:12 it states that "he waxed old." This might mean that he was about

after he transferred custody of the plates to Jacob places the date of his death around 540 B.C. at age 75.

General: It is 382 years from Jacob's birth in the desert (which can be dated fairly nearly to 592 B.C.)⁶ to the birth of Amaleki around 210 B.C.⁷ During this time the Small Plates of Nephi were handed from father to son through only six father-son generations (Jacob-Enos, Enos-Jarom, Jarom-Omni, Omni-Chemish, Chemish-Abinadom, Abinadom-Amaleki). This means that the average father must have been over 63 years old upon the birth of his successor son. Since the Nephite population was probably expanding by propagation during this time more rapidly than such slow reproduction would allow (see Jarom 8)⁸ we must conclude that these sons were not el-

several occasions seems to reflect a preference for younger sons and in several cases refers to the fact that the successor sons were begotten in their father's old age after the father had begotten many other children.⁹

Jacob and Enos: Since the record indicates that Enos' death occurred soon after 418 B.C., which was 179 years after Lehi left Jerusalem (Enos 25) we must conclude either that Jacob or Enos lived to be well over 115 years of age, or that both lived about 95 years. My assumption that both lived about the same length of time places Jacob's death in 495 B.C. and Enos' in 417 B.C. Enos must have been born more than 10 to 15 years before Jacob's death, for Jacob lived long enough to teach Enos "his language, and also in the nurture and admonition of the

Lord" (Enos 1). If Enos was born in 515 B.C., then Jacob was already 77 years old at his birth. If Jacob was any younger when Enos was born, then Enos lived that much longer.

Jarom: Jarom's birth must have occurred before 397 B.C., which is 200 years from the time Lehi left Jerusalem (Jarom 5). Because Jarom was apparently grown by this year (he recorded judgmental commentary about public events and included himself among those who had revelations at this time [Jarom 3-5]), it seems reasonable to place his birth around the year 440 B.C. Jarom lived to see the 238th year, or 359 B.C. (Jarom 13). His death may be placed around 355 B.C. at the age of 85.

Omni: The text says that "in fine" Omni made an end of his record keeping in the 282nd year, or 315 B.C. (Omni 3). The word "fine" here appears to refer to some exact computation summing up the years and perhaps recording the final year of Omni's life. If this is so, then Omni lived to be about 75, supposing he was born when his father was 50. He lived longer if he was born when his father was correspondingly younger.

Amaron: Amaron lived at least to the year 277 B.C. (Omni 5). If he died in that year and was born when his father Omni was 40, then he lived to an age of 73.

Chemish, Abinadom and Amaleki: There are no definite dates in the lives of any of these individuals. Assuming, however, that Chemish was a younger son of Omni, born when Omni was 60 years of age, Chemish was born in 330 B.C. Since his grandson Amaleki was born "in the days of Mosiah I," Omni 23, which cannot be placed much earlier than 210 B.C., then Omni must have begotten Abinadom at about age 60; and likewise, Abinadom may be assumed to have begotten Amaleki at about the same age.

Concluding Observations:

1. Since some fixed dates are

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known in the lives of Lehi, Nephi, Jacob, Enos, Jarom, Omni and Amaron, there is little room for wide revision of the estimated ages and dates listed, unless one is to assume that these people lived significantly longer than the already remarkably consistent and considerably old ages shown.

2. On the average fathers must have been quite old when their successor sons were begotten.

3. In all likelihood the mothers of several of these sons were the second or later wives of these men, since it is unlikely (in light of the expanding population) that these men had delayed their marriages until they were 40 or 45 in order to marry women who were young enough to still be of childbearing age when those sons were born.

4. This fact could in turn reflect a higher mortality rate for Nephite women since the record is clear that at least Lehi and Jacob prohibited plural marriages and concubines among the Nephites (Jacob 2:27, 34).¹⁰

5. The men seemed to live consistently to very old ages, perhaps an indication that they occupied a privileged social status over the common people. The fact that they lived so long is even more remarkable in light of the frequent references in the Small Plates to wars and contentions between the Nephites and the Lamanites, unless these particular people were not generally involved in the military (see, e.g., Enos

14, 20; Jarom 7; Omni 3, 10; Words of Mormon 13). These ages, however, are at least consistent with what little we know about the demography of preindustrial peoples, where those who manage to live past middle age are often the fittest and tend to live long lives.

6. Also, it should be noted that these successor sons would have known their fathers only as old men, and would not have known their grandfathers at all. This may account partially for the importance of the the written record as a means of preserving the traditions of the fathers from generation to generation and may also explain why generations after Nephi and Jacob seemed to lack the fire and vision of their ancestors.

II. Lineage of Mosiah

Mosiah I: No solid dates in the life of Mosiah I are known. However, his son Benjamin died in 119 B.C., when he was fairly old (Mosiah 2:28-30; 6:5).

Amaleki was born "in the days of" Mosiah I and lived to see the death of Mosiah I (Omni 23) but did not live to see the return of the Limhi party around 120 B.C.; thus he was roughly contemporary with, but slightly older than, Benjamin. If, as it appears, Mosiah I was ruling when Amaleki was born around 210 B.C., then we should assume that Mosiah I was born no later than about 230 B.C. Since we must allow for the fact that Benjamin himself was a prominent ruler who seems to have ruled a fairly long time (Mosiah

2:12), we should place the death of Mosiah I in the middle of the Second Century B.C. to allow for a reign by Benjamin of at least 30 years. This means that Mosiah I either reigned for about 60 years or consecrated his son Benjamin king while Benjamin was at quite a young age,¹¹ then survived several years thereafter. Since Mosiah I probably would not have consecrated Benjamin king when his

or 40 when we was consecrated king by his father (Mosiah 2:11). Also, the death of Mosiah I would have occurred around the time of the birth of Mosiah II, unless Mosiah I lived to be extraordinarily old. Since the birth year of Mosiah II is definitely known as 154 B.C., this means that Benjamin became king about the same time that his three sons were born, and that Benjamin was king

grown up not believing the traditions of their fathers (Mosiah 26:1-4), he turns over to Alma I for the first time the authority to judge church members in excommunication cases (Mosiah 26:12).

Sons of Mosiah: Mosiah's sons, who were still young men between 100 and 91 B.C. when they were behaving rebelliously with Alma II before he became Chief Judge in 91

II. Lineage of Mosiah I

Name	ADoB	AAoFBoS	LKDA	ADoD	AAaD
Mosiah I	230 B.C.			150 B.C.	80
Benjamin	189	41	119 B.C.	119	70
Mosiah II	154	35	91	91	63
# Helorum	152	37			
# Helaman	149	40			
Ammon	124	30	76		
# Aaron	121	33	76		
# Omner	118	36	76		
# Himni	115	39	76		

indicates that the person was a brother of the preceding individual. There may, of course, have been other brothers who did not get mentioned in the record.

son was under 30 years of age, we can assume that Mosiah lived until at least 159 B.C. and reigned at least 51 years.

Possibly Mosiah I was born earlier or later. If he was born earlier than 230 B.C., then Amaleki may have lived that much longer, depending on when "in the days of Mosiah" he was born. A later birth for Mosiah I is also possible, if the phrase "in the days of" does not mean "during the reign of." It would seem odd, however, for Amaleki to mark the year of his birth to a year in which Mosiah I was still a young boy. A later birth date for Mosiah I also becomes more feasible if one assumes that Chemish and Amaron were commensurately older when their sons were born.

Benjamin: If Benjamin was born in 189 B.C., then he was around 35

when he taught his sons or had them taught (Mosiah 1:2-8). Since it is reasonable to assume that Benjamin had no sons before the three sons mentioned in Mosiah 1:2, it is interesting to note that Benjamin was in his late 30s when his children were born.

Mosiah II: The record is definite that Mosiah died in 91 B.C. at the age of 63, having reigned 33 years (Mosiah 29:46). He was therefore born in 154 B.C. He took the throne in 124 B.C. when he was 30 years old. It appears that he delegated to Alma I the responsibility for organizing churches in Zarahemla shortly after Alma's return following 119 B.C. When he is close to 50 years old, i.e., after the "rising generation" of people who had been little children when Benjamin delivered his speech in 124 B.C. had

B.C., must have been born about the time Mosiah II became king. Perhaps Ammon and Aaron were among the children described in Mosiah 26:1 as having been too young to understand King Benjamin's speech in 124 B.C. and who therefore became rebellious. There is no record of death for any of the sons of Mosiah II, nor indeed of any of their activities after they returned from their approximately 15 years of missionary work in the Land of Nephi. Since their converts who returned with them were living in the land of Jershon by the 15th year of the Reign of Judges (Alma 28:9), their mission would not have been longer than 15 years. The sons could have been approximately 24 to 34 years old when they left on this mission; this would make Aaron old enough to be acceptable to the people as Mosiah's

successor on the throne in Mosiah 29:2. They would have been 39 to 49 when they returned.

III. Lineage of Alma

Alma I: Alma was born in 174 B.C., for he was 82 at his death in 92 B.C. (Mosiah 29:45). Since he was a young man at the time of the trial of Abinadi (Mosiah 17:2), this trial would have occurred sometime around 150 to 145 B.C. Alma I ap-

consecrated). In addition, he must have been born early enough to have three sons old enough to accompany him in 74 B.C. on an important religious and political mission to the lands of Antionum and Jershon (Alma 31-35). These facts argue in favor of placing Alma's birth at a time before the return of the party of Alma I to Zarahemla. But it would not seem that Alma II could

we must revise our usual conception that Alma II was a rebellious young man when he and the sons of Mosiah II went around seeking to destroy the Church. I find no evidence of the age of Alma II at this time. If the conversion of Alma II occurred in 94 B.C., he was 32 years old at that time if we place his birth at 126 B.C., which seems reasonable enough and makes him a close con-

III. Lineage of Alma the Elder

Name	ADoB	AAoFBoS	LKDA	ADoD	AAaD
Alma I	174 B.C.		92 B.C.	92 B.C.	82
Alma II	126	48	73	?	Over 53
Helaman I	97	29	LC 73	57	40
# Shiblón	95	31		53	42
# Coriantón	93	33		?	Over 40
Helaman II	76	21	CJ 50	39	37
Nephi I	54	22	CJ 39	13 AD	Over 67
Nephi II	30	24	LC 1	60	90
Nephi III	30 AD	60	110		80
Amos	90	60		194	104
° Amos II	174	84		305	129
Ammaron	190	100	320	320	130

° and # have the same meanings as defined above. LC indicates when the individual became leader of the Church, and CJ indicates the year in which the individual became chief judge.

pears to have had several sons (Mosiah 27:8).

Alma II: Alma the Younger is the most difficult and most important person to date for determining the relative ages and life spans of his descendants. His birth date may be placed around 126 B.C., but this is not at all certain. Alma's father seems to have returned to Zarahemla after 119 B.C., since he is greeted only by King Mosiah (see Mosiah 24:25). If Benjamin had still been alive at this time, one would expect him to be mentioned here too. Since Alma the Younger became chief judge in 91 B.C., one would expect him to be at least 30 at that time (since Mosiah II was 30 when he was

be born long before this return, since the angel of the Lord (Mosiah 27:16) does not remind Alma II of his own captivity in the land of Helam, but only of the captivity of his fathers. Furthermore, Alma II does not refer to this deliverance at all (Alma 36:28-29) when he lists prior occasions in salvific history on which God had delivered people from bondage and captivity. This might indicate that Alma was not old enough to remember personally the deliverance of his father's group from the land of Helam. On the other hand, Alma II could have been born any time after Alma I had fled from the court and kingdom of Noah. If he was born earlier, then

temporary of the sons of Mosiah. It is notable that by the time of his rebellious activity, Alma II could already have been married with three sons. If he was born in 134 B.C., alternatively, then he was 40 years old when his conversion occurred and would have been a significant number of years older than the sons of Mosiah, which seems less likely. Dating Alma II's birth to this earlier date, however, would allow greater latitude in reconstructing the dates of the next few succeeding generations in which Alma's successors do not live long and have only a short time in which to beget a male heir. Alma II's death date is unknown, since he leaves and is never heard of

again (Alma 45:19). He would have been slightly over 50 years old when he retired from office, the age at which Numbers 8:25–26 says a priest shall retire from service in the tabernacle “and shall serve no more.” Would this in part explain Alma’s departure? Similarly Nephi, one of Alma’s descendants, leaves his religious position at this same age, slightly over age 50, and is not heard of again (3 Nephi 1:2).

Helaman I: This son of Alma II was the leader of the stripling Ammonite warriors who fought around 64 to 62 B.C. He himself would have been only about 33 to 35 as he led this small army. He took over for his father as leader of the Church in 73 B.C. (Alma 45:1–22), when Helaman would have been about 24 years old, although it is easily possible that he was a few years older than this. He must have married young, for Helaman II must have been born about 76 B.C., when Helaman would have been about 21 years old, so Helaman would have had a wife and a young son at the time he spent three years on his military campaign. He dies in 57 B.C. (Alma 62:52), at an age of about 40.

Shiblon: Also a son of Alma II, Shiblon takes charge of the records in 56 B.C. at about age 39 (Alma 63:1), possibly because Helaman II would have been only about 20 years old at the time. However, Shiblon dies shortly thereafter in 53 B.C. at age 42, but the text makes a specific point that he managed to confer the records upon Helaman II before he died (Alma 63:13).

Corianton: If born in 93 B.C., he would have been about 19 years old when tempted into transgression by the harlot Isabel in 74 B.C. Nothing is said of his death, for he sails into the land northward (Alma 63:10).

Note on the Year 53 B.C.: Deaths of the great leaders of the Nephite people in the middle of the first century B.C. occurred in close succession. Helaman I died in 57

Younger Nephite sons may have been more highly favored than elder sons either in light of the tradition of Jacob favoring his younger sons Joseph and Benjamin, or in light of Nephi, Jacob, and Joseph having been younger sons of Lehi.

B.C. (Alma 62:52). Captain Moroni died in 56 B.C. (Alma 63:3). Shiblon died in 53 B.C. (Alma 63:10).

Corianton left about this time (Alma 63:10). Pahoran died before 52 B.C. (Helaman 1:2). This undoubtedly left a political power vacuum among the Nephites that accounts for the sudden political turmoil which besets Zarahemla in Helaman I over selecting a successor to Pahoran, and the turmoil continued throughout most of the book of Helaman.

Helaman II: Like his father, he would have been about 24 at the time he was given charge of the records by Shiblon, whose death must have been untimely. If the Nephites at this time thought 24 was an appropriate age of accountability with respect to record keeping, as Ammaron later does when he tells Mormon to take possession of the plates when he is “of that age” (Mormon 1:3), this would account for Shiblon’s retention of the records until Helaman had reached that age. Due to his young age, however, he probably would not have been a prime candidate to be appointed chief judge, but he takes that office in 50 B.C. at age 26 after all three sons of Pahoran have been killed. Helaman II apparently died in 39 B.C. at the young age of 37 (Helaman 3:37).

Nephi: Nephi could not have been born much before 54 B.C., unless his father married extraordinarily early. He therefore would

have been only about 15 years old when his father died and he began to reign in his father’s stead (Helaman 3:37). His young age might account partially for his inability to deal with the dissensions and rebellion that arose in the first couple years of his reign (Helaman 4:1) and why he eventually delivered the judgment seat to Cezoram in 30 B.C. (Helaman 5:1), at age 24. At that age, which seems to be significant for religious purposes,¹² he devotes himself to the ministry. When he returns with his brother Lehi from their stunning mission among the Lamanites in 23 B.C., he is older (near the politically significant age of 30); he more effectively opposes the corrupt regime in Zarahemla, as recorded in Helaman, chapters 7 to 10. Like his great grandfather Alma II, Nephi too leaves at slightly more than age 50 and is not heard of again (3 Nephi 1:2). In the year 10 A.D. (3 Nephi 2:9), the people appear to give up hope of his returning.

Nephi II: Nephi II takes charge of the records in 1 B.C. If he was born about 30 B.C. when his father was 24 and when his father relinquished the judgment seat to Cezoram, then he was 30 when his father deemed him of age to care for the records. One of his very first revelations as a young leader was to receive the assurance from Christ that he would come into the world “on the morrow” (3 Nephi 1:13). He would have been in his 60s when the

Savior appeared and called him forth (3 Nephi 11:18) as the lead disciple. There is no record of his death, but if he lived to be 90, he died about 60 A.D.

Nephi III: Nephi, the Disciple of Jesus, had a son named Nephi, according to the heading on 4 Nephi. Nephi III died in 110 A.D. (4 Nephi 18–19). Placing his birth around 30 A.D. has him live to age 80, being born when his father, Nephi II, was 60 and succeeding his father as record keeper at age 30. Did Nephi II have other children? Did they die in the destructions which accompanied Christ's crucifixion? Was Nephi II reluctant to have children while the political crises of the early part of the first century A.D. continued? Or was Nephi III born earlier and did he live that much longer?

Amos: Amos kept the records 84 years (4 Nephi 20). If he was 20 years old when he took the plates, he was born in 90 A.D. when his father was at least 60, and he lived to be 104, dying in 194 A.D.

Amos II: Two sons of Amos, Amos II and Ammaron, appear to live even longer than their father Amos, if we are to accept the record here as complete and unambiguous. The life of Amos II must span the death of his father, from whom he took custody of the plates, and the birth of his brother Ammaron, who takes the plates from him (4 Nephi 47). Since Ammaron lives into the early Fourth Century, when he meets Mormon, Amos II might have been born around 174 A.D., when Amos I was 84; and Amos II might have lived to 305 A.D., becoming 129 years of age.

Ammaron: Mormon 2:2 indicates that Mormon was 16 years old in 326 A.D., and Ammaron met Mormon when he was "about ten years of age" (Mormon 1:2), so Ammaron must have lived until about 320 A.D. As seen above, Ammaron's father, Amos I, could not have lived too much beyond 194 A.D.; this leads to the conclusion that Amma-

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ron, like his brother, possibly lived a very long time, perhaps as long as 130 years. Ammaron told Mormon to go to the Hill Shim when he was 24 years of age (Mormon 2:3), but we have no record of Mormon's going to the Hill Shim until about the year 379 (Mormon 5:5), by which time he would already have been about 69 years old. He appears to have commenced his abridgment of the Nephite records only after this time (Mormon 5:9).

General Conclusions:

1. It is possible that Amos II and Ammaron each lived as long as 130 years. This was a time of peace, unlike the brutal times of war and slaughter when Alma II, Helaman I and II, and Nephi were alive. Those times of turmoil must have brought along with them disease and unhealthy living conditions caused by poor sanitary conditions and poorer nutrition. Thus one would expect to see shorter life spans during the war years, and longer ones during the days of peace.

2. On the other hand, is it possible that the record is not complete here. The text is very sketchy, with no reference, for example, outside the heading of the book to the fact that the Nephi mentioned in 4 Nephi 19 was a son of the disciple Nephi. Also, can we be sure that Ammaron was literally a "brother" of Amos, or might he have been a nephew or great-nephew? The words "son" and "brother" are ca-

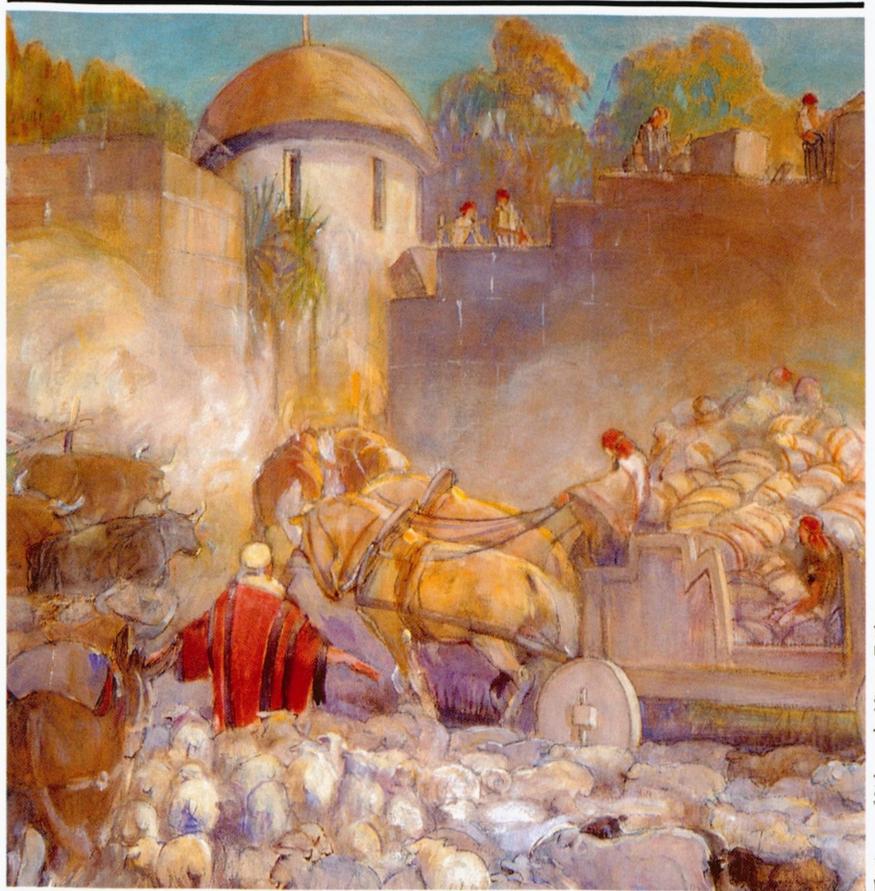
pable of several translations in ancient texts. The fact that Ammaron was willing to give the plates to Mormon, outside the family,¹³ is at least consistent with the idea that Amos II did not give them to his son.

3. Why would Mormon, the writer of 4 Nephi, be content to leave this matter somewhat unclear? Possibly because he seems more interested in showing four generations passed away in peace than in keeping a detailed genealogy. When Nephi died, the text comments, "An hundred and ten years had passed away; and the first generation from Christ had passed away, and there was no contention in the land" (4 Nephi 18). When Amos I dies, it reads, "Two hundred years had passed away; and the second generation had all passed away save it were a few" (4 Nephi 22).

When 210 years had passed away from the sign of the birth of Christ (4 Nephi 27), the people already began to be wicked. If Amos II and Ammaron are in the third generation from Christ, then Mormon is the fourth. Why would the text count generations this way? Why would Nephi the disciple of Jesus not be listed as the first generation? Why does it seem that an entire generation must die out, or nearly die out, before the next generation begins to be counted? An answer may lie in the wording of the prophecies about the time of peace which would follow the appearance

of Christ among the people of Nephi. In 1 Nephi 12:11–12, Nephi sees in vision “three generations . . . [and] many of the fourth generation who pass away in righteousness.”¹⁴ It may be that Mormon counted the generations in such a way as to include himself in the “fourth generation,” many of whom were to be righteous. On the other hand, the prophecy in Alma 45:10 is that “in four hundred years from the time that Jesus Christ shall manifest himself unto them, [the Nephites] shall dwindle in unbelief.” Which was it to be? Four hundred years? or four generations? In Helaman 13:5, 9, Samuel the Lamanite combines these predictions, pronouncing that “four hundred years shall not pass away before . . . they shall be smitten . . . with sword and with famine and with pestilence . . . and there shall be those of the fourth generation who shall live, of your enemies, to behold your utter destruction.” Mormon was undoubtedly aware of these prophecies, for his son confirms in concluding his father’s record upon the destruction of the Nephites, “Behold, four hundred years have passed away since the coming of our Lord and Savior” (Mormon 8:6).

These prophecies raise several questions: (a) Was it expected that four generations or four hundred years would pass? or (b) Was the time to run from the appearance of Christ among the Nephites (as is unspecified in 1 Nephi but as is stated in 2 Nephi 26:9–10 and Alma 45:10) or was it to run four hundred years from the prophecy of Samuel the Lamanite, as appears to be the meaning of Helaman 13:5? or (c) Was it to be connected with the coming of Christ, as in Mormon 8:6, which must refer to his birth? or (d) Was it anticipated that four generations would be righteous, as indicated in 2 Nephi and Alma, or was the fourth generation to consist of enemies who would survive, as in Samuel? With a tradition this uncertain and with terms this imprecise,¹⁵



The Answer of Lachonius by Minerva Teichert

it may be no wonder that Mormon left the point unclear: He presents the history in a manner that would not conflict with any of the prophecies. In point of fact, the people began to be wicked before the end of the second century.

4. The posterity of Alma I in the first century B.C. did not live as long as other generations of Nephites. As mentioned this may have been due to the intense warfare with its inevitably accompanying diseases that plagued the Nephites during the century in which these people lived.

5. The age of 30 seems to be significant for a Nephite to take political responsibility. This was the age when Mosiah II was consecrated by his father; it was about the time Alma II would have been elected chief judge; and Nephi became politically active about age 30. Captain Moroni, however, was only 25 when he was appointed chief captain over the armies of the Nephites (Alma

43:17), and Mormon was 16 (Mormon 2:2).

6. The age of 50 may be significant as an age for retirement from service as leader of the Church. Alma II and Nephi both leave office very close to this age (compare Numbers 8:25–26). Other Church leaders in Alma I’s lineage either do not live past 50 or live after the coming of Christ, so it cannot be tested whether the rule of Numbers 8:25–26 was followed generally among the righteous Nephites or whether it was understood to require a person to retire completely, i.e., by leaving the community, at that age. Mosiah II also relinquished control over excommunication cases to Alma I at about this age (Mosiah 26:12), but he had already turned over general responsibility for the affairs of the Church to Alma I about ten years earlier; moreover, this would have been at a time when Alma I himself was probably over 50.

IV. The Jaredite King List

Name	Generation Number	AAoFBoS
Jared	1	
Orihah	2	Appears to have been one of last sons. Ether 6:27.
Kib	3	Begotten in old age; last of 23 sons. Ether 7:2.
Shule	4	Begotten while father exceedingly old. Ether 7:7
Omer	5	Begotten while father in his old age. Ether 7:26.
Emer	6	Begotten in Omer's old age. Ether 9:14.
Coriantum	7	Father begets many, but lives only 4 years after appointing him king. Ether 9:21-22. Coriantum's wife died at age 102; he remarries and begets other sons and daughters, and dies at age 142. Ether 9:24.
Com	8	Reigned 49 years. Ether 9:25.
Heth	9	
Shez	10	Lived to an "exceeding old age." Ether 10:4.
Riplakish	11	Reigned 42 years. Ether 10:8.
Morianton	12(?)	It is possible that Morianton is not a son, but a later "descendant" of Riplakish (Ether 10:9), but in all other instances where a person is called a "descendant" in this king list in Ether 1, it appears from later texts that it means "son of." See Ether 1:6 with 11:23, and 1:16 with 10:31.
Kim	13	Begotten after father had lived to an "exceeding old age." Ether 10:13.
Levi	14	Begotten in Kim's "old age." Ether 10:14.
Corom	15	Lived to a "good old age." Ether 10:16.
Kish	16	
Lib	17	Lives many years. Ether 10:29. Golden Age of Jaredite Civilization.
Hearthom	18	Lived in captivity half his days. 10:30.
Heth	19	Lived in captivity all his days. 10:31.
Aaron	20	Lived in captivity all his days. 10:31.
Amnigaddah	21	Lived in captivity all his days. 10:31.
Coriantum	22	Lived in captivity all his days. 10:31.
Com	23	Lived to a "good old age." Ether 11:4.
Shiblon(m)	24	
Seth	25	Lived in captivity all his days. 11:9.
Ahah	26	
Ethem	27	
Moron	28	Ruled "many years." Ether 11:16.
Coriantor	29	Lived in captivity all his days. 11:19.
Ether	30	

7. The age of 24 seems to be significant for a Nephite to take charge of religious records. Helaman I was between 24 and 30 when his father gave him charge; Helaman II was about 24 when Shiblon gave him the records; Nephi would have been about 24, and Nephi II between 24 and 30. Ammaron specifically mentioned the age 24 for Mormon (Mormon 1:3). These ages may be particularly significant, because the fathers consciously transmit the records to their successors in these cases—it is not the case that the fathers have simply died at this time. Is it coincidence that 24 is 72 divided by three, 72 being the “age of man” in the Nephite mind (3 Nephi 28:2)? (Parenthetically, Joseph Smith was not quite 22 when he was finally entrusted with the plates, and was 24 when the Book of Mormon was published.)

IV. *The Jaredites*

1. If these 30 generations span 2500 years, the average age of a father upon the birth of his successor was 83.3 years. The minimum span would seem to be from 2200 B.C. to 550 B.C., or 1650 years, or 55 years per generation. The maximum would be 3100 B.C. to 200 B.C., or 2900 years, or 96.6 years per generation. The text supports the conclusions that successor sons were born generally in their father’s old age, and that younger sons regularly succeeded their fathers as rulers (see, e.g., Ether 6:24–27).

2. It is quite likely that the Jaredites, if they followed standard ancient Near Eastern custom, practiced polygamy, which would explain the births of children late in the lives of these men (see Ether 10:5; 14:2).

3. Ancient king lists and genealogies exist from Mesopotamia and several other civilized regions. The reliability of the dates in these archaic lists is always open to question, and the case is no different with respect to the Jaredite king list. On the other hand, it is known that many

Under the Law of Moses and at the time of King David, the age of thirty was the age at which men commenced “the service of the ministry” and “work in the tabernacle of the congregation,” while the prescribed age for retirement from serving in sacred occupations was 50.

ancient kings reigned for extraordinarily long times.¹⁶

V. *The “Age of Man”*

3 Nephi 28:2 says that nine of the Disciples asked Jesus that after they had “lived unto the age of man,” that their ministry, might have an end, that they might “speedily come unto thee in thy kingdom.” Jesus grants that this will occur when they have reached age 72 (3 Nephi 28:3). Apparently this would be considered an “ideal age” of a complete life. As a practical matter, however, it does not seem that Nephi, for example, died at age 72.

Other peoples have known similar definitions of an “ideal age” at which to die, as well as recommended ages at which to marry and to assume other social responsibilities. The Jews viewed 70 years as a respectable age to die, but 80 was an age of strength. Psalm 90:10 reads: “The days of our years are threescore and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore, yet is their strength labor and sorrow.”¹⁷ Longevity was viewed as a blessing, whereas early death was a curse (see Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 22:7; 25:15; and I Samuel 2:31–32). Indeed, much as was the viewpoint of the Nephite disciples, the attitude of the Jews was: “If a person had finished his work, his was regarded as the death of the righteous, who is gathered to his fathers.”¹⁸

As seen above, the ages of 30 and 50 were of some significance. Under the Law of Moses and at the time of King David, the age of thirty was the age at which men commenced “the service of the ministry” and “work in the tabernacle of the congregation” (Numbers 4:3, 23, 30, 35, 39, 43, 47; I Chronicles 23:3), while the prescribed age for retirement from serving in sacred occupations was 50 (Numbers 8:25–26). There may be some significance in the scriptural point that Jesus commenced his ministry at age 30 (Luke 3:23).

Although not coming until many centuries after Lehi left Jerusalem, rabbinic rules also dealt with the ages of life. The ideal age for male marriage was set by the rabbis around 18. Anyone remaining single after 20 was said to be cursed by God.¹⁹

Minimum ages for marriage were also set, and the kings of pre-exilic Israel certainly married as early as 14 to 16.²⁰ School age began at 6 or 7.²¹ The Mishnah (Avoth. v.21) contains the following regime: “At five years of age, reading of the Bible; at ten years, learning the Mishnah; at thirteen years, bound to the commandments; at fifteen years, the study of the Talmud; at eighteen years, marriage; at twenty, the pursuit of trade or business [active life]; at thirty years, full vigour; at forty, maturity of reason; at fifty, for counsel; at sixty, commencement of aged-

ness; at seventy, grey age; at eighty, advanced old age; at ninety, bowed down; at a hundred, as if he were dead and gone, and taken from the world."²²

The ancient Greeks similarly discussed the ages of man. Hesiod considered 30 to be the ideal age for marriage.²³ Plato picked 30 for men and 20 for women as the ideal ages for child rearing,²⁴ while Aristotle said 37 for men and 18 for women.²⁵ Solon, roughly a contemporary of Lehi, composed a famous poem setting forth the ages of man, which may be paraphrased as follows: At seven, the child loses its teeth; at 14, the signs of adolescence appear; at 21 the limbs grow and the down of a beard shows; at 28, the prime of strength; at 35, one thinks of marriage, seeking a breed of sons to succeed him; at 42, the mind is trained so there is no impulse to wild behavior; at 49 and 56 one has the prime of mind and tongue; at 63, the tongue and wisdom become too feeble for mighty worth; and at 70, "If he complete the tenth seven-year period and reach its full measure, not untimely is it if he meet the fate of death."²⁶

Notes

1. For a discussion of the chronology of Book of Mormon, see, generally, Jay H. Huber, "Lehi's 600 Year Prophecy and the Birth of Christ," F.A.R.M.S. Preliminary Report, 1982. The dates used in the present paper are derived internally within the Book of Mormon and have not been converted to absolute historical dates.
2. The first year of the reign of Zedekiah cannot be earlier than 10 Nisan, 597 B.C. See R. Parker and W. Dubberstein, *Babylonian Chronology 626 B.C.-A.D. 45* (Chicago, 1945); Thiele, *A Chronology of the Hebrew Kings* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977), pp. 68-69.
3. Lehi probably also had daughters who married the sons of Ishmael. 2 Ne. 5:6; see also Sidney B. Sperry, "Did Father Lehi Have Daughters Who Married the Sons of Ishmael?" *Improvement Era* (Sept. 1952), pp. 642, 694; Erastus Snow, in *Journal of Discourses*, 23:18 (May 6, 1882); cf. Hugh Nibley, *Improvement Era* 53 (Feb. 1950), p. 156.

4. See also my "They Came From Jerusalem," *Ensign* (September 1976), p. 30 n. 2.
5. Gordon Thomasson has suggested to me that it is reasonable to assume that Nephi was at least this age, since he was able to wear Laban's armor, disguise his voice as a grown man's, and was soon to marry one of Ishmael's daughters.
6. Lehi's family wandered eight years in the wilderness before reaching the land they called Bountiful, where Nephi builds his ship. 1 Ne. 17:4. The following factors support the idea that Jacob was born a couple years before 588 B.C.: first, Jacob was born "in the wilderness," 2 Ne. 2:1; second, he must have been born in about the fifth or sixth years of those eight years in the wilderness, for Joseph too was born in the wilderness and after Jacob, 1 Ne. 18:7; third, both Jacob and Joseph must have been old enough at the time of the sea voyage to the New World to grieve when Sariah was afflicted, 1 Ne.18:19.
7. Amaleki was born in the days of Mosiah I, and so must have been born sometime around 210 B.C., Omni 23. He also lived long enough to see Mosiah I's death, which I place around 150 B.C.
8. To account for the rapid growth, likely some of the indigenous peoples were converted by the Nephites or Lamanites and assimilated into their populations to also account for their rapid growth.
9. John Sorenson has pointed out to me that preferring younger sons would also be the safest course for a king worried about more powerful older sons challenging his throne prematurely.
10. On the other hand, King Noah had wives and concubines, Mosiah 11:14, and we cannot know for sure when this practice was reintroduced among the Nephites or whether Jacob's exhortation was ever consistently followed. For example, Amulek refers to "mine house . . . and my women" in Alma 10:11.
11. Benjamin consecrates his own son Mosiah II at the age of 30, see Mosiah 29:46.
12. See discussion of Helaman II above and Mormon 1:3.
13. At least the record never states that Mormon was in any way related to Ammaron or his ancestors.
14. 2 Nephi 26:9-10 is consistent with this.
15. As discussed by K. A. Kitchen, *Ancient Orient and Old Testament*, p. 54 and n. 99, the term "generation" can represent a time period from 50-100 years, Gen. 15:16. Cf. in Ugaritic and Akkadian such a cycle or span can be 80 years or more; 70 years or more in Assyrian. Ex. 6:16-20 deals with a period in excess of 100 years.

- See, generally, D. N. Freedman, *BANE*, p. 206, cited in R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, p. 168; M. D. Johnson, *The Purpose of the Biblical Genealogies with Special Reference to the Setting of the Genealogies of Jesus* (Cambridge, 1969); E. J. Forsdyke, *Greece Before Homer: Ancient Chronology and Mythology* (London, 1956).
16. For example, Rameses II ruled for 66 years; Amenemhet reigned for 65 years; Pepi II from 2275 B.C. to 2185 B.C., or 90 years. In addition, John Sorenson has reported Mayan records from which Schele has reconstructed probable periods of reign for Mayan kings at Palenque. Pacal the Great may have ruled from 600 to 670 A.D.; Chan-Bahlum from 670 to 700; another ruler, Kuk, apparently ruled for 40 years. Although examination of the bones in the tombs of these rulers has led others to doubt that these kings lived that long, as seems to have been the case among the Nephites and Jaredites, Linda Schele concludes, "Long-lived rulers seem to be the rule rather than the exception in Maya dynastic records." Linda Schele, "Sacred Site and World-View at Palenque," in E. P. Benson, ed., *Mesoamerican Sites and World-View* (Washington: Dumbarton Oaks, 1981), pp. 112, 116-17, as quoted and discussed in the John Sorenson articles in the *Ensign* (Sept. and Oct. 1984).
 17. See *Encyclopedia Judaica*, s.v. "Age and the Aged," 1:343-346, citing TB, Avot v.21; TB, M.K. 28a; TB, B.B. 75a.
 18. Edersheim, *Sketches of Jewish Social Life in the Days of Christ* (New York: J. Pott & Co.), p. 166.
 19. See *Jewish Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Marriage Laws," p. 347, citing Ab. v.24, Kid. 29b, Sanh. 76b.
 20. See R. DeVaux, *Ancient Israel*, 1:29.
 21. A. Cohen, *Everyman's Talmud* (New York: Dutton & Co.), p.175.
 22. Quoted from Edersheim, *Sketches of Jewish Social Life in the Days of Christ* (New York: J. Pott & Co.) p. 105; see also D. Meilsheim, *The World of Ancient Israel* (New York: Tudor Pub. Co., 1973), p. 63.
 23. *Works & Days*, 695.
 24. Rep. 452, 460E, Laws 785, 833D.
 25. Pol. 1335a-b.
 26. K. Freeman, *The Work and Life of Solon* (Cardiff: Humphrey Milford, 1928), pp. 213-14; see also W. Schadewaldt, "Lebenszeit und Greisenalter im fruhen Greiechentum," *Die Antike IX* (1933); W. H. Roscher, *Die Hebdomadenelehre der griechischen Philosophie und Artze*, 1906.