

A Rational Chronology

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The purpose of this source book is to present the temporal foundation, the chronology, on which a rational understanding of events recorded in the Book of Mormon may be built. The chronology of the Book of Mormon has barely begun to be studied. This source book seeks to remedy part of that omission.

This is not a source book about the 19th century chronology of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. This also is not a bibliography, anthology or collection of archival sources for studying the internal chronology of the Book of Mormon. Those kinds of source books may be created once the topic has been studied by scholars trained in the underlying disciplines. As part of such studies, legitimate interpretive issues will be identified, rational methods for evaluating the issues will be adopted, original sources of information will be identified and evaluated, and comparisons of alternative interpretations will occur.

The focus of this source book centers on the interpretive process. The rational process used in this source book seeks to avoid or overcome approaches taken by scholars and commentators in the past, which at times seems to have led their thinking astray into insupportable speculation or interpretive inconsistencies. In this source book, I seek to identify valid textual issues and present my best effort to apply rational interpretive principles to those issues. Where I am successful, this source book provides a solid foundation for understanding Book of Mormon chronology in terms of such principles.

The chronology presented here is a work in progress, not unlike every chronology and the histories which depend on them. Of course, some chronologies are more settled than others, but every chronology is subject to revision as new sources of information become available or established sources become better understood.

In its current form, this source book is composed of a series of studies presented in separate PDF files, which, while subject to copyright protection, may without further permission be reproduced and used, without alteration, addition or deletion, for any non-pecuniary or non-publishing purpose. The studies are the culmination of nearly three decades of reading and analysis directed at understanding chronological issues within the text of the Book of Mormon. While bits and pieces of my research have been published by the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies or "FARMS,"¹ in February 2010 I began posting these studies online in this source book format.

In the Table of Contents, each study or posting is identified by a date. The date indicates the approximate date when the particular form of the PDF file for the study was created. This system of identifying studies or postings by a date in the Table of Contents should be more easy to use than identifying updated studies by PDF file names with larger and larger end numbers (.1, .2, .3, etc.). Hereafter, the most recent PDF file will have the same general file name as earlier versions, but the updated version will be indicated by a new date in the Table of Contents.

In addition, as this source book has grown in complexity, the process of keeping track of chapters and parts has become more complicated. With the changes to the Table of Contents noted above, each study or posting will be identified in a heading on each page of the PDF file by the appropriate chapter and part. Thus, each page will include both an identifying heading

(containing the chapter and part) and an identifying footer (containing the page number and copyright notice).

Quotations from the Book of Mormon usually rely on the capitalization, punctuation and spelling of the 1981 edition published by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. However, for many passages (which are appropriately footnoted), I have also used the capitalization, punctuation, diction and spelling of the original (1830) edition. In addition, for some of the more significant texts (which also are suitably footnoted), I have relied on Royal Skousen's monumental textual work for details about the original and printer's manuscripts from which the 1830 edition was typeset.²

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¹ Randall P. Spackman, "Introduction to Book of Mormon Chronology: The Principal Prophecies, Calendars, and Dates," *FARMS Preliminary Report SPA-93* (Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies ["FARMS"], 1993); idem, "The Jewish/Nephite Lunar Calendar," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 7/1 (1998): 48-59; idem, Review of "Thomas O. Moore. *A Detailed Chronology of the Book of Mormon* (Wall Chart)," in *FARMS Review of Books* 10/1 (1998):1-11; idem "Interpreting Book of Mormon Geography," in *The FARMS Review* 15/1 (2003):19-46.

² The series consists of nine volumes so far. Royal Skousen, ed., *The Original Manuscript of the Book of Mormon: Typographical Facsimile of the Extant Text* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2001); idem, *The Printer's Manuscript of the Book of Mormon: Typographical Facsimile of the Entire Text in Two Parts, Part One: 1 Nephi 1–Alma 17* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2001); idem, *The Printer's Manuscript of the Book of Mormon: Typographical Facsimile of the Entire Text in Two Parts, Part Two: Alma 17–Moroni 10* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2001); and six volumes authored by Royal Skousen, entitled *Analysis of Textual Variants in the Book of Mormon* and published by FARMS in 2004 through 2009.