

Lehi's 600-year Prophecy

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To understand the chronological structure of the Book of Mormon, I can most effectively begin by examining the three instances in the small plates of Nephi where he recorded some form of Lehi's 600-year prophecy (1 Nephi 10:4; 19:8; 2 Nephi 25:19). I refer to this as *Lehi's* prophecy because the first instance in which it was recorded is attributed to him and the Nephites measured it for hundreds of years by reference to when he left Jerusalem. The three instances, while closely related, are different as well; so, their earliest extant forms will be examined, differences will be indicated and chronological issues will be identified.

In this source book, a more thorough review is provided for the earliest extant forms of the principal texts that are interpreted directly in the first part of each chapter. In other parts of each chapter, the transmission of the principal texts and any material interpretative issues are briefly covered in the footnotes. The purpose of these reviews is to provide a general awareness and understanding of the types of interpretative issues that might arise out of the dictation, recording, copying and typesetting activities that led to the 1830 printed edition of the Book of Mormon. When such issues are material to the interpretation of the text, I will discuss them.

1 Nephi 10:2-4. The first verse in the Book of Mormon that makes a direct reference to the 600-year prophecy is 1 Nephi 10:4. This verse appears to be part of a three-verse segment (1 Nephi 10:2-4) within Nephi's much longer recounting of how Lehi taught his followers, as they prepared for the journey away from their camp near the Red Sea (1 Nephi 8:2-9:1; 10:1-16). The earliest extant text for this segment is contained in part of the original manuscript that has survived.¹ The content of the original manuscript for this text is a series of words without any punctuation, written by "scribe 3 (unknown)" according to Royal Skousen:²

fo(-)r be[h]old it came to paf{s that after my father had made an End of Speaking the words of his drea{n|m} and also of exort -ing them to all dilagen{e|c}e h(+†)e spake unto them conser(-)n(-)ing the jews how that after they ware destroyd ye even th -at {a|g}reat city Jerusalem and that many ware carried aw^[a]y captive int babalon that acco{nt|rd}ing to the o{ne|wn} due time of -the lord they should ret{u(-)}u{r{e|n} again yea even be braught b{a}ck out of captivity and afte[r] {h|th}at they are braught {o|b}ack out of captivity to possef{s again their land of inherri{d|t}anc -e <[]> yea even six {<%th(-)%>| hu)n(-)dred years from the time that my father left Jerusalem a

¹ Of the original manuscript, "about 25 percent of the current text" exists today. The remainder was destroyed by water and mold, between 1841 and 1882, while the manuscript was held in the cornerstone of the Nauvoo House, a hotel in Nauvoo, Illinois. Royal Skousen, ed., *The Original Manuscript of the Book of Mormon: Typographical Facsimile of the Extant Text* (Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies ["FARMS"], 2001), 6-7.

² "Beginning with 1 Nephi, the scribes for the extant portions of the original manuscript are as follows: ... Oliver Cowdery [1 Nephi 2:2-3:6;] scribe 2 (unknown) [1 Nephi 3:7-4:14;] Oliver Cowdery [1 Nephi 4:15-20;] scribe 3 (unknown) [1 Nephi 4:20-12:8;] scribe 2 (unknown) [1 Nephi 12:9-16:1;] Oliver Cowdery [1 Nephi 16:1-Enos 1:14; Alma 10:31-45:22;] ... Joseph Smith [Alma 45:22;] Oliver Cowdery [Alma 45:22-Ether 15:17]. Nearly all the extant portions of the original manuscript are in Oliver Cowdery's hand." *Ibid.*, 13-14, 95-96.

prophet wo{u}ld the lord god r -ais {u}p among the jews yea even a masiah or in other words a saviour of the world³

The initial wording for this text in the printer's manuscript⁴ is almost the same as in the original.⁵ However, the printer's manuscript was a working document and it became more complex through its use. For this part of the printer's manuscript, Oliver Cowdery was the copyist and there are more than a dozen legibility issues and emendations. John Gilbert, the typesetter for the 1830 printed edition, later added various pencil marks for his purposes. Several years later, Joseph Smith edited directly on the printer's manuscript in heavy black ink as he helped to prepare the 1837 edition.⁶ Skousen has analyzed these changes and concluded that they were not "crucial," but could be described as "stylistic" or "unnecessary."⁷

If the modifications by Gilbert and Smith are set aside, then the only wording change between the printer's manuscript and the original manuscript occurred with Cowdery's phrase "the land of their inheritance." In the original scribe's writing, the phrase was "their land of inheritance." Perhaps this was a scribal error during the initial dictation of the text. Skousen analyzed this possibility and concluded that "the earliest textual reading for 1 Nephi 10:3 is completely understandable. Even though a scribal error may be involved [in the original form of the phrase], it is probably safest to retain this unique reading."⁸

The 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon reproduced the wording of the printer's manuscript, with punctuation and changes to capitalization and spelling added by Gilbert.⁹ In the

³ The original manuscript text has 25 legibility issues and emendations: (1) the letter *o* in the word *for* is missing a stroke; (2) the letter *h* in the word *behold* is partially legible; (3) the letter *n* has been overwritten by the letter *m* in the word *dream*; (4) the letter *e* has been overwritten by the letter *c* in the word *dilagence*; (5) the letter *h* has an extra crossing the word *he*; (6 and 7) the letters *r* and *n* are each missing a stroke in the word *conserving*; (8) the letter *a* has been overwritten by the letter *g* in the word *great*; (9) the letter *a* is partially legible in the line above the word *awy*; (10) the letters *nt* have been overwritten by the letters *rd* in the word *according*; (11) the letters *ne* have been overwritten by the letters *wn* in the word *own*; (12) the letter *u* in the word *return* is missing a stroke and has been overwritten by the letter *u*; (13) the letter *e* has been overwritten by the letter *n* in the word *return*; (14) the letter *a* has been partially overwritten by the letter *a* in the word *back*; (15) the letter *r* in the word *after* is partially legible; (16) the letter *h* has been overwritten by the letters *th* in the word *that*; (17) the letter *o* has been overwritten by the letter *b* in the word *back*; (18) the letter *d* has been overwritten by the letter *t* in the word *inherritanc-e*; (19) a text above the line is completely illegible and has been crossed out; (20 and 21) the letter *h* is missing a stroke and the combined letters *th* have been deleted by erasure or blotting at the beginning of the word *hundred*; (22) the erased or blotted letters *th* at the beginning of the word *hundred* have been overwritten by the letters *hu*; (23) the letter *n* is missing a stroke in the word *hundred*; (24) the letter *u* has been partially overwritten by the letter *u* in the word *would*; and (25) the letter *u* has been partially overwritten by the letter *u* in the word *up*.

⁴ The printer's manuscript is a copy of the original manuscript, prepared for use by the typesetter of the first edition of the Book of Mormon. Royal Skousen, ed., *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), 3-4.

⁵ Ibid., 78-79.

⁶ Ibid., 3-4, 7, 9-22.

⁷ Royal Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon, Part One* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2004), 194-200.

⁸ Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon, Part One*, 200.

⁹ Joseph Smith, Jr., author and proprietor, *The Book of Mormon* (Palmyra, New York: E.B. Grandin, 1830; Independence, Missouri: Herald Heritage Reprint, 1970), 22; or Wilford C. Wood, *Joseph Smith Begins His*

below quotation of 1 Nephi 10:2-4, I use those elements of the 1830 edition, but I have inserted the unique phrase “their land of inheritance” from the original manuscript. I also have organized it according to what I would propose is the chronological structure of the text (with emphasis added in italics).

For behold, it came to pass
A_{1A} that *after* my father had made an end of speaking the words of his dream,
B₁ and also of exhorting them to all diligence,
B₂ he spake unto them concerning the Jews:

A_{1B} How that *after* they were destroyed,
C₁ yea, even that great city Jerusalem;
C₂ and that many were carried away captive into Babylon;

A₂ that according to *the own due time of the Lord*, they should return again;
D₁ yea, even be brought back out of captivity;
A₁ and *after* they are brought back out of captivity,
D₂ to possess again their land of inheritance.

A₃ Yea, *even six hundred years* from the time that my father left Jerusalem,
E₁ a Prophet would the Lord God raise up among the Jews;
E₂ yea, even a Messiah;
E₃ or, in other words, a Saviour of the world.

The next segment of the text begins, “And he also spake concerning ...” (1 Nephi 10:5; see a discussion of this verse below); so, the above-quoted passage appears to be a distinct unit of Lehi’s teaching about the return of the exiles and the time of the Messiah’s birth. The “A” lines introduce the chronological element, with certain events occurring *after* others had occurred, some events occurring in *the own due time of the Lord*, and the culminating event—the appearance of the Savior—occurring *even six hundred years* from the time of Lehi’s escape. The “B” lines make it clear that Lehi was diligent in teaching and exhorting his followers, and that the prophecies were part of Lehi’s ministry. The “C” lines are focused on the destruction of Jerusalem and the captivity of the Jews.¹⁰ The “D” lines relate to the return of the exiles and the “E” lines set forth the world-redeeming individual associated with that return.

1 Nephi 19:7-9. The second text in the Book of Mormon that makes a direct reference to the 600-year prophecy is 1 Nephi 19:8. This text is part of Nephi’s recounting of things he was taught by an angel who appeared to Nephi, after he sought visionary confirmation of what his father had seen (1 Nephi 11:1-13). As part of Nephi’s vision, he recorded: “I saw the heavens open; and an angel came down and stood before me” (1 Nephi 11:14). The angel then instructed Nephi and showed him visions of the future (1 Nephi 11:14-14:30).

Many years later, after Lehi and his followers had reached their promised land, Nephi made plates and engraved on them “the record of my father, and also our journeyings in the wilderness, and the prophecies of my father; and also many of mine own prophecies” (1 Nephi 19:1). The history of Nephi’s followers also came to be recorded on those plates (1 Nephi 19:2-4). Still later, the Lord commanded Nephi to create another set of plates on which to record “the ministry and the

Work: *Book of Mormon 1830 First Edition Reproduced from Uncut Sheets* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Publisher’s Press, 1958), 22.

¹⁰ See my chapter on Lehi’s escape (in this source book) for a discussion of textual issues in the Book of Mormon concerning when Lehi left Jerusalem and when the city was destroyed.

prophecies, the more plain and precious parts of them ... for the instruction of my people,” “the more sacred things ... kept for the knowledge of my people” (1 Nephi 19:3, 5). Referring to how the worldly reject “the very God of Israel,” Nephi then wrote about the Messiah’s coming. This passage (1 Nephi 19:7-9, italics added) is quoted below, in my proposed conceptual structure:

A_{1A} For *the things which some men esteem to be of great worth,*
 B₁ both to the *body and soul,*
 C_{1A} others *set at nought,*
 C_{2A} and *trample* under their feet.
 A₂ Yea, even *the very God of Israel,*
 C_{2B} do men *trample* under their feet;
 B_{2A} I say, *trample* under their *feet,*
 B_{2B} but I would speak in other *words:*
 C_{1B} They *do set him at nought,*
 C_{3A} and *hearken not* to the voice of his counsels;
 D_{1A} and behold, *he cometh* according to the words of the angel,
 D₂ in six hundred years from the time *my father left* Jerusalem:
 C_{3B} And the world, because of *their iniquity,*
 C_{1C} shall *judge him to be a thing of nought,*
 C_{4A} wherefore, they *scourge* him,
 D_{1B} and he *suffereth* it;
 C_{4B} and they *smite* him,
 D_{1B} and he *suffereth* it.
 C_{4C} Yea, they *spit upon* him,
 D_{1B} and he *suffereth* it,
 A_{1B} because of *his loving kindness*
 A_{1C} and *his long suffering towards the children of men.*¹¹

The “A” lines focus on the things that are of great worth to the children of men, which some men understand: the God of Israel and his loving kindness and long suffering. The “B” lines refer to the body (which with its feet can trample things of great worth) and to the soul (which with words can speak iniquitous judgments). The “C” lines refer to the actions of the wicked: they set the Messiah at nought, trample or destroy his work, do not listen to his words (which leaves them open to hear iniquitous words or judgments) and, thus, they proceed to scourge, smite and spit upon him. The “D” lines initially pair the Messiah’s coming to Jerusalem (by implication, to be murdered) and Lehi’s departure (to escape being murdered, as commanded by the Lord). The chronological note appears in this initial pair of “D” lines. The later “D” lines indicate that the Messiah’s coming will result in him suffering greatly at the hands of the wicked. His eventual murder, by crucifixion, is then set forth in the following segment of the text (1 Nephi 19:10-14).

Nephi’s prophecy appears in the preserved portion of the original manuscript, where it reads as follows:¹²

for the things which some men estee{n|m} <{b|to}e> {^} ¹⁰ be of great worth both to the boddy & soul others set at nought & trample under their feet y (-)e[a] [ev]en the verry God of Israel do men trample under their feet I say [tra]mple under their feet but I would [s]peak in other words they do set him at nought & hearken not to the

¹¹ Capitalization, punctuation and spelling are as set forth in Smith, *The Book of Mormon* (1830), 50-51.

¹² Skousen, ed., *The Original Manuscript of the Book of Mormon*, 150-51. The scribe for this part of the original manuscript was Oliver Cowdery. *Ibid.*, 13-14, 150.

voice of his councils & behold he co [-m]eth according to the words of the
 ange{[r|n]}l} in six hundred years from the ti [-m]e my father {<%f%>|l}eft Jerusalem
 & the world because of their {e|i}niquity shall jud{g}e him to be a thing of nought(+†)
 wherefore they scourge him & he suffereth it & they smite him & he suffereth it {&(-)
 |y}ea they spit upon him & he suffereth [it] because of his loveing kindness [&] his
 long suff[f]erring towards the children [o]f men¹³

The printer's manuscript for this text is identical in wording; however, the word *do* in the phrase *do set* is crossed out in the heavy black ink Smith used to edit the printer's manuscript for the 1837 edition of the Book of Mormon.¹⁴ This deletion has not been incorporated in the above quotation.

2 *Nephi 25:17-19*. The third text that refers directly to the 600-year prophecy is Nephi's statement in 2 Nephi 25:19. This verse is part of Nephi's collection of his and others' prophecies set forth in 2 Nephi 25-30. After discussing the conditions to be faced by the Jews after their return from Babylon, Nephi stated, "when the day cometh that the Only Begotten of the Father, yea, even the Father of heaven and earth, shall manifest himself unto them in the flesh, behold, they will reject him, because of their iniquities, and the hardness of their hearts, and the stiffness of their necks" (2 Nephi 25:12). The Jews then would be scattered and scourged by other nations. Even so, after their scattering, "the Lord will set his hand again the second time to restore his people from their lost and fallen state" (2 Nephi 25:17). Then, Nephi prophesied (2 Nephi 25:17-19, italics and conceptual structure added):

A₁ Wherefore, *he will proceed to do a marvelous work,*
 B₁ *and a wonder among the children of men.*
 A₂ Wherefore, he shall *bring forth his words* unto them,
 B₂ *which words shall judge them* at the last day,
 A₃ *for they shall be given them*
 C₁ for the purpose of *convincing them*
 D_{1A} of *the true Messiah,*
 E₁ *who was rejected by them;*
 C₂ and unto *the convincing of them*
 E₂ *that they need not look forward any more*
 D₂ for a *Messiah to come,*

¹³ The original manuscript text has 25 legibility issues and emendations: (1) the letter *n* has been overwritten by the letter *m* in the word *esteem*; (2) the letter *b* has been overwritten by the letters *to* in the word *be*; (3) the word *be* has been deleted by crossing out; (4) an insert mark in the text has been partially overwritten by an insert mark; (5) the word *to* has been inserted above the line; (6) the letters of the word *yea* are split onto two lines, but the hyphen is missing before the letter *e*; (7) the letter *a* in the word *yea* is partially legible; (8) the letters *ev* in the word *even* are partially legible; (9) the letters *tra* in the word *trample* are partially legible; (10) the letter *s* in the word *speak* is partially legible; (11) the hyphen and letter *m* in the word *cometh* are partially legible; (12) the text may be the letter *r* or *n*, with *r* the preferred or intended text in the word *angel*; (13) the letter *r* has been overwritten by the letter *l* in the word *angel*; (14) the hyphen and letter *m* in the word *time* are partially legible; (15) the letter *f* that originally began the word *left* has been deleted by erasure or blotting; (16) the letter *f* that originally began the word *left* has been overwritten by the letter *l*; (17) the letter *e* has been overwritten by the letter *i* in the word *iniquity*; (18) the letter *g* has been partially overwritten by the letter *g* in the word *judge*; (19) the letter *t* in the word *nought* has an extra crossing; (20) the symbol & is missing a stroke; (21) the symbol & has been overwritten by the letter *y* in the word *yea*; (22) the word *it* is partially legible; (23) the symbol & is partially legible; (24) the second letter *f* in the word *sufferring* is partially legible; and (25) the letter *o* in the word *of* is partially legible.

¹⁴ Skousen, ed., *The Printer's Manuscript of the Book of Mormon: Part One*, 128. Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon, Part One*, 403, refers to *do set* as "biblical phraseology."

E₃ for *there should not any come,*
 D₃ save it should be a *false Messiah,*
 C₃ which should *deceive the people:*
 D_{1B} for there is save *one Messiah*
 A₄ *spoken of by the Prophets,*
 D_{1C} and *that Messiah is he*
 E₄ which should be *rejected of the Jews.*
 A₄ For according to *the words of the Prophets,*
 D₄ *the Messiah cometh* in six hundred years
 D₅ from the time that *my father left* Jerusalem;
 A₄ and according to *the words of the Prophets,*
 A₅ and also *the word of the Angel of God,*
 D₆ his name shall be *Jesus Christ*
 D₇ *the Son of God.*¹⁵

The “A” lines of this segment of text begin by referring to the Lord (who is mentioned in the first sentence of 2 Nephi 25:17) and to his marvelous work, by which he will bring forth his words through his prophets and angels to the children of men. The “B” lines refer to a “wonder among the children of men” that will be his “words [that] shall judge them at the last day.” The “C” lines refer to words that are given to convince people about the true Messiah, in opposition to words of a false Messiah that may deceive them. The “D” lines expressly define the one, true Messiah who would come 600 years after Lehi’s escape, whose name had been revealed to be Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Finally, the “E” lines reveal that the true Messiah would be rejected by the children of men and, once that rejection took place, there would be no need to look forward because only a false Messiah could follow him.

Fragments of the original manuscript for 2 Nephi 25 have survived, including a small part of 2 Nephi 25:18, which confirms the wording in the 1830 Book of Mormon.¹⁶ The earliest extant version of the entire passage is that copied by Oliver Cowdery in the printer’s manuscript:¹⁷

wherefore he will procede to do a marvelous work & a won -der among the children
 of men wherefore he shall bring forth his words unto them w{h}ich words shall Judge
 them at th{e} last day for t{h}ey sh{a}ll be given them for the purpose of con
 -vincing t{h}em of the true Messiah who was rejected by t{h}em {&(-)}& onto the
 convincing of them that they need not look forw{a}rd any mo{r}e for a Mess{e|i}ah
 to come for there should not any come save it should be a fals Messi(-)a{h} which
 should deceive the People for there is save one Messiah spoken of by the <People>
 <Prop{p|h}jets> Prophets & that {M}essiah is he which should be re{j}ected of the [J]ews
 for according t(+)}o the words of the Prophets the M{e}ssiah cometh in s{e|i}x
 hundred years from the time that my father lef -t Jerusale{m} & ac{c}ording to the
 words of the Prophets & also the word of the Angel of {G} -od his name should be
 Jesus Christ the Son of God¹⁸

¹⁵ Capitalization, punctuation and spelling are as set forth in Smith, *The Book of Mormon* (1830), 104-5.

¹⁶ Skousen, ed., *The Original Manuscript of the Book of Mormon*, 189-90. The scribe for this part of the original manuscript was Oliver Cowdery. *Ibid.*, 13-14, 189-90.

¹⁷ Skousen, ed., *The Printer’s Manuscript of the Book of Mormon: Part One*, 7, 9-15, 213-14.

¹⁸ The typesetter’s marks have not been reproduced in the quoted text. The printer’s manuscript text has 25 legibility issues and emendations: (1) the first letter *h* has been partially overwritten by the letter *h* in the word *which*; (2) the letter *e* has been partially overwritten by the letter *e* in the word *the*; (3) the letter *h* has

The only difference in wording between the printer's manuscript and the 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon is in the last clause, where *should* was changed to *shall*. According to Skousen, this change was made by the 1830 typesetter "probably because here the historically past-tense *should* is readily interpreted as the conditional *should*, as if the clause meant 'his name ought to be Jesus Christ'. Of course, the actual meaning is 'his name will be Jesus Christ'."¹⁹

Lehi's Escape. The earliest event referenced by Lehi's prophecy is presented in virtually identical diction in all three texts: *the time [that] my father left Jerusalem*. I placed brackets around the word *that* because it appears in only two of the texts (1 Nephi 10:4; 2 Nephi 25:19). The other text (1 Nephi 19:8), which has been preserved in the original manuscript, does not include the word *that*. Nonetheless, the meanings are identical. The starting point for measuring Lehi's prophecy was the time when he escaped from Jerusalem with his family (1 Nephi 2:1-4).

Identifying the time when Lehi escaped from Jerusalem, in terms of the history of the period and relevant calendars, requires interpretation. Nearly a millennium after Lehi's escape, Mormon wrote a preface to the book now known as Third Nephi, in which Mormon identified his ancestor as "Lehi, who came out of Jerusalem in the first year of Zedekiah, the king of Judah." Mormon's very late identification of the year of Lehi's escape appears to contradict the historical reports written by Nephi (a participant in the escape and, hence, a better witness) about when he and his family left Jerusalem (particularly 1 Nephi 7:12-15 and 2 Nephi 25:9-10). I have devoted a chapter of this source book to examine this complex issue (see "Lehi's Escape").

Fully 600 Years. A second chronological issue arises from the three instances in which the 600-year prophecy was recorded. Was the prophesied period of years considered a precise period (600 years) or a general one (something close to 600 years, such as 590 to 610 years)? In 1 Nephi 10:2-4, the word *even* is used four times, the third of which occurs just before the phrase *six hundred years*. There, the word *even* is used as an adverb that, according to Noah Webster's 1828 dictionary, notes certain things "emphatically" or brings "something within a description, which is unexpected."²⁰ The Oxford English Dictionary defines *even* as "an intensive or emphatic

been partially overwritten by the letter *h* in the word *they*; (4) the letter *a* has been partially overwritten by the letter *a* in the word *shall*; (5) the letter *h* has been partially overwritten by the letter *h* in the word *them*; (6) the letter *h* has been partially overwritten by the letter *h* in the next word *them*; (7) the symbol & is missing a stroke; (8) the symbol & has been overwritten by another symbol &; (9) the letter *a* has been partially overwritten by the letter *a* in the word *forward*; (10) the letter *r* has been partially overwritten by the letter *r* in the word *more*; (11) the second letter *e* in the word *Messiah* has been overwritten by the letter *i*; (12) the letter *i* in the word *Messiah* is missing its dot; (13) the letter *h* has been partially overwritten by the letter *h* in the word *Messiah*; (14) the word *People* is crossed out; (15) the third letter *p* in the supralinear word *Prophets* has been overwritten by the letter *h*; (16) the supralinear word *Prophets* is crossed out; (17) the letter *M* has been partially overwritten by the letter *M* in the word *Messiah*; (18) the letter *j* has been partially overwritten by the letter *j* in the word *rejected*; (19) the letter *J* in the word *Jews* is partially legible; (20) the letter *t* in the word *to* has a weak first crossing and an extra crossing; (21) the letter *e* has been partially overwritten by the letter *e* in the word *Messiah*; (22) the letter *e* in the word *six* has been overwritten by the letter *i*; (23) the letter *m* has been partially overwritten by the letter *m* in the word *Jerusalem*; (24) the letter *c* has been partially overwritten by the letter *c* in the word *according*; and (25) the letter *G* has been partially overwritten by the letter *G* in the word *God*. Two non-textual marks also appear on the manuscript. A stray ink stroke exists above the last letter *e* of the first word *wherefore* and a stray ink dot appears near the letter *i* of the word *children*.

¹⁹ Royal Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon, Part Two* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2005), 820-21 (emphasis in original).

²⁰ Noah Webster, LL.D., *American Dictionary of the English Language*, two vols. (New York: S. Converse, 1828), I: [691] ("even"), accessed at www.archive.org/details/americanlectiona01websrich.

particle” (meaning something akin to *quite, to be sure, fully, exactly or precisely*), so as to emphasize the “identity” of the subject, object, predicate or qualifying circumstance.²¹

The use of the adverb *even* followed by a number that describes the quantity of something is not unique to this passage in the Book of Mormon. Several times, a general term is mentioned, followed by a precise number emphasized by the word *even*. For example, in Mosiah 7:2-5, Ammon’s group of strong men “wandered many days in the wilderness, even forty days did they wander.” Hence, many days, as a general period, were made precisely forty. In Mosiah 18:18, “Alma, having authority from God, ordained priests; even one priest to every fifty of their number did he ordain....” Priests, in general, were ordained, but precisely one per fifty people. In Alma 58:39, Helaman reported that “those sons of the people of Ammon, of whom I have so highly spoken, are with me in the city of Manti; and the Lord has supported them, yea, and kept them from falling by the sword, insomuch that even one soul has not been slain.” The sons, as a general group, survived the war, but emphatically, not one soul was lost. King Limhi’s report in Mosiah 7:22 acknowledged that his Nephite subjects “at this time do pay tribute to the king of the Lamanites, to the amount of one half of our corn, and our barley, and even all our grain of every kind, and one half of the increase of our flocks and our herds; and even one half of all we have or possess the king of the Lamanites doth exact of us, or our lives.” Tribute was mentioned generally, but specifically one-half of all the grain and, more emphatically, one-half of all they possessed (see also Mosiah 19:15, 26). Again, in Helaman 4:9-10, the armies of Moronihah “regained many cities which had fallen into the hands of the Lamanites.” In the following year, “they succeeded in regaining even the half of all their possessions.” Many cities were mentioned generally, followed by a more precise one-half of all their possessions.

The foregoing pattern also appears in Nephi’s first presentation of Lehi’s prophecy (1 Nephi 10:2-4). Certain events generally will follow *after* others and some will just occur in *the own due time of the Lord*. However, a prophet would be raised up *even six hundred years* after Lehi’s departure. This adverbial emphasis suggests that the appearance of the Messiah was prophesied by Lehi to occur *fully* 600 years following Lehi’s escape from Jerusalem.

This chronological issue is important because subsequent references to the 600-year prophecy did not carry forward the emphatic word *even*. In the other two texts (1 Nephi 19:8; 2 Nephi 25:19), the Messiah was prophesied to come *in six hundred years*. That textual fact may suggest to some that by the change in wording, the period was acknowledged by Nephi to be approximate. Later references to the prophecy were in fact vague (Jacob 4:4; 7:7: “many hundred years;” Enos 1:8: “many years”).

The phrase *in six hundred years* is certainly to be distinguished from the hypothetical phrase *in the six hundredth year* (e.g., Alma 1:23; 4:1, “in the ___ year”), which is about something happening within the period of a specific year. Nephi did not use the precise phrase, *in the six hundredth year*. Nor did Nephi write *in about six hundred years* (e.g., Mormon 1:12, “about ___ years”), which would have been expressly imprecise. He also did not use phrases such as *after the space of six hundred years* (e.g., Mosiah 12:1; Ether 14:3, “after the space of ___ years”), *six hundred years hence* (Jacob 7:7, “___ hundred years hence”), *six hundred years before* (e.g., Jacob 4:4; Helaman 8:18; 11:24, “___ years before”) or *six hundred years pass away before* (Enos 1:8, “___ years pass away before”), any of which (if it had been used) might be considered more specific than Nephi’s phrase *in six hundred years*.

²¹ *The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary*, two vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), I: 906 (“even”).

The interpretive challenge of the phrase *in six hundred years* is the ambiguity of the preposition *in*, which Webster's 1828 dictionary defines as denoting something "present or inclosed, surrounded by limits" or "present in time."²² The Oxford English Dictionary is more clear with respect to time: the preposition *in* can mean "within the limits of a period or space of time" or "at the expiration" of a "limit of time."²³ However, if I apply the principles of rational interpretation, it is possible to make a sound choice between these alternative definitions. The principles of thoroughness and consistency indicate that Nephi's two later phrases are to be interpreted in a way that is consistent with his original expression (or perhaps his copying of Lehi's expression), unless there is a clear reason for choosing otherwise. I have not found one. The prophecies are about the same event. The period prophesied in each case is 600 years from the time Lehi escaped from Jerusalem. The prophetic discussions that accompany each 600-year prophecy have similarities. The righteous Nephites counted 600 years and then expected to see the signs of the Messiah's birth (3 Nephi 1:1-8). Thus, a principled interpretation would resolve the ambiguity in favor of defining the period as *at the expiration of 600 years* or *fully 600 years* in the future.

The Unknown Calendar. Having reached what would appear to be solid definitional ground as to the fullness of the period being considered, a third chronological issue arises. What did Nephi mean by *years*? If his *year* was measured with an Egyptian 365-day calendar (Lehi and Nephi apparently knew the Egyptian language; 1 Nephi 1:2), then *fully 600 years* would be the equivalent of at least 219,000 days. However, rather than counting and recording every single day to keep track of that kind of calendar, Lehi and Nephi (at least in the early period of their history) might have measured the year with a traveler's simple 12-moon calendar. (They spent eight years in the wilderness and probably several more years building their ship and sailing half way around the world; 1 Nephi 17:4; 18:1-23.) If they used this simple calendar, then *fully 600 years* would be the equivalent of at least 212,620 days. The difference in the two hypothetical periods (a result of simply using alternative ancient calendars) would be nearly 17.5 solar years.

The chronological issue is not whether the 600-year period was ambiguous to Lehi, Nephi and others because they did not know what sort of a *year* to measure. They immediately measured and recorded their *year* and *years* (1 Nephi 1:4; 17:4). However, no Book of Mormon writer ever directly defined the calendar that he used. Hence, the only way to determine the length of the 600-year period is to examine the relevant texts in accordance with rational principles of interpretation. This issue also is a complex one; so, I intend to devote a chapter of this source book to the issue. (The work of preparing that chapter is not yet finished.) Nonetheless, it is critical to an understanding of Lehi's 600-year prophecy that the existence of the calendric issue be acknowledged at the outset.

Holy Prophets. Because there are three passages expressly dealing with the 600-year prophecy and all were written by Nephi, it is instructive to consider that the deliverer of the prophecy (as stated by Nephi) changed each time. Lehi taught his followers (1 Nephi 10:2-4), the angel restated Lehi's prophecy to Nephi (1 Nephi 19:7-9) and unnamed prophets delivered the message (2 Nephi 25:17-19). The development between the first two instances was described by Nephi. Speaking with the Spirit of the Lord, he said, "I desire to behold the things which my father saw" (1 Nephi 11:3). The confirming vision, including the angelic visitation, then followed. However, with Nephi's reference to unnamed prophets in the third instance (2 Nephi 25:17-19), the development is not immediately clear.

²² Webster, *American Dictionary of the English Language*, I: [946] ("in").

²³ *The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary*, I: 1395 ("in").

Of course, I might begin by assuming that the prophets mentioned by Nephi were the same ones his father mentioned in the verses immediately following Nephi's first recorded reference to his father's 600-year prophecy (1 Nephi 10:2-4). Lehi also referred to unnamed prophets ("how great a number"), but a couple of sentences later, Lehi clearly paraphrased Isaiah 40:3 in describing a prophet who would prepare the way for the Messiah (1 Nephi 10:5-10). Hence, Lehi's reference to a great number of prophets may have related, principally, to Isaiah, "the first of the great literary prophets to come from Jerusalem, to pursue his prophetic calling there, and to address himself primarily to [Judah]" and then to Isaiah's many unnamed disciples who carried his prophecies beyond Isaiah's immediate circle of influence.²⁴

I might also assume that Nephi's unnamed prophets were like those explicitly mentioned by Nephi in the verse immediately following Nephi's second reference to the 600-year prophecy (1 Nephi 19:7-9). There, he wrote about the testimony of three named prophets concerning the Messiah's rejection, suffering and death (1 Nephi 19:10, italics and conceptual structure added):

A₁ And the God of *our fathers*,
 B₁ which were *led out of Egypt*,
 C₁ out of *bondage*,
 D₁ and also *were preserved* in the wilderness by him;
 A_{2A} yea, the God of *Abraham*, and of *Isaac*, and the God of *Jacob*,
 B₂ *yieldeth himself* according to the words of the angel,
 C₂ *as a man, into the hands of wicked men*,
 D₂ *to be lifted up* according to the words of Zenock,
 D₃ *and to be crucified*, according to the words of Neum,
 D₄ *and to be buried* in a sepulchre, and according to the words of Zenos,
 E₁ which he spake, concerning the *three days of darkness*,
 E₂ which should be *a sign given of his death*,
 B₃ unto them who should *inhabit the isles of the sea*;
 A_{2B} more especially given unto them which are of *the House of Israel*.²⁵

The "A" lines refer to "our fathers" (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) and to the descendants of Jacob, the House of Israel. The "B" lines contrast God's leading the children of Israel out of Egypt (where they were in bondage) and his yielding himself into their hands (to be crucified). The reference to those who had been in Egypt also contrasts with those in the isles of the sea (some of whom were scattered Israel and would be given a sign of the Messiah's death). The "C" lines expressly detail bondage at the hands of wicked men. The "D" lines also contrast God's preservation of the children of Israel with their crucifixion and burial of the Messiah. Finally, the "E" lines provide the three-day sign of the Messiah's death.

These prophecies also appear in the preserved portion of the original manuscript, where they are recorded as follows:²⁶

[&] t[h]e [G]od of our fa[t]hers whi[c]h were lead out of Egypt out of Bond[ag]e [&]
 [a]lso were preserved in t[h]e wilderness by him y[e]a the God of Abraha[m] & of
 (I)[saac] [&] the God of <Isa> Jacob {e|y}ieldeth himself according to the words of

²⁴ James Hastings, ed., *Dictionary of the Bible*, Rev. ed., Frederick C. Grant and H. H. Rowley, eds. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1963), 423 ("Isaiah"); 424-27 ("Isaiah, Book of").

²⁵ Capitalization, punctuation and spelling are as set forth in Smith, *The Book of Mormon* (1830), 51.

²⁶ Skousen, ed., *The Original Manuscript of the Book of Mormon*, 151. The scribe for this part of the original manuscript was Oliver Cowdery. *Ibid.*, 13-14, 150.

the (A)[ng]el [a]s a man into th(-)e hands of wicke[d] men to be {li}fted up according to [the] words of Ze(n)ock & to be crucified [a]ccording to the words [o]f Neum & [to] be buried in a supulc[h]ar & according to the words of Zenos which he [sp]a[k]e concerning the three days of darkness which [s]hould be a sign given [o]f [h]is death [u]nto them <whos(-)shoull> who should <in{b|h}abed> inhabit the is{e|l}es of the <[f th]e> Sea more es[p]e{ia|si}ally given u[n]to t[h]em which are of th(-)e house of I{s}rael²⁷

Skousen proposed that “Oliver Cowdery may have made as many as three scribal errors as he wrote down Joseph Smith’s dictation in the original manuscript: (1) the skipping of *the God* in ‘and the God of Isaac’, (2) the omission of the word *up* from ‘yieldeth himself up’, and (3) the addition of an extra *and* before ‘according to the words of Zenos’.”²⁸ None of such possible errors, if indeed they are such, would be chronologically material. The printer’s manuscript maintains the same diction as the original manuscript.²⁹

Zenock, Neum and Zenos taught about the Messiah’s death and, specifically as to Zenock and Zenos, and presumably as to Neum, their words were recorded in the brass plates (3 Nephi 10:14-17). The prophet Neum is only mentioned this once in the Book of Mormon, but the words of Zenock were used by Nephi (1 Nephi 19:10), Alma (Alma 33:15-16; 34:7), Samuel the Lamanite (Helaman 8:20) and Mormon (3 Nephi 10:16). The words of Zenos, who was slain for his bold testimony (Helaman 8:19), were relied on by Nephi (1 Nephi 19:10, 12, 16), his brother Jacob

²⁷ The original manuscript text has 49 legibility issues and emendations: (1) the ampersand & is partially legible; (2) the letter *h* in the word *the* is partially legible; (3) the letter *G* in the word *God* is partially legible; (4) the letter *t* in the word *fathers* is partially legible; (5) the letter *c* in the word *which* is partially legible; (6) the letters *ag* in the word *Bondage* are partially legible; (7) the ampersand & is partially legible; (8) the letter *a* in the word *also* is partially legible; (9) the letter *h* in the word *the* is partially legible; (10) the letter *e* in the word *yea* is partially legible; (11) the letter *m* in the word *Abraham* is partially legible; (12) the capital letter *I* in the word *Isaac* is partially missing due to a lacuna; (13) the letters *saac* in the word *Isaac* are partially legible; (14) the ampersand & is partially legible; (15) the letters *Isa* have been deleted by crossing out; (16) the initial letter *e* has been overwritten by the letter *y* in the word *yieldeth*; (17) the capital letter *A* in the word *Angel* is partially missing due to a lacuna; (18) the letters *ng* in the word *Angel* are partially legible; (19) the letter *a* in the word *as* is partially legible; (20) the letter *h* is missing a stroke in the word *the*; (21) the letter *d* in the word *wicked* is partially legible; (22) the letters *li* in the word *lifted* have been partially overwritten by the letters *li*; (23) the word *the* is partially legible; (24) the letter *n* in the name *Zenock* has been partially overwritten by the letter *n*; (25) the letter *a* in the word *according* is partially legible; (26) the letter *o* in the word *of* is partially legible; (27) the word *to* is partially legible; (28) the letter *h* in the word *supulchar* is partially legible; (29) the letters *sp* in the word *spake* are partially legible; (30) the letter *k* in the word *spake* is partially legible; (31) the letter *s* in the word *should* is partially legible; (32) the letter *o* in the word *of* is partially legible; (33) the letters *hi* in the word *his* are completely illegible, but assumed to be the letters *hi*; (34) the letter *u* in the word *unto* is partially legible; (35) the letter *s* in the partial word *whos* is missing a stroke; (36) the letters *whosshoull* have been deleted by crossing out; (37) the letter *b* has been overwritten by the letter *h* in the word *inhabed*; (38) the word *inhabed* has been deleted by crossing out; (39) the letter *e* has been overwritten by the letter *l* in the word *isles*; (40) the letter *o* in the word *of* is completely illegible; (41) the letter *f* in the word *of* is partially legible; (42) the letters *th* in the word *the* are partially legible; (43) the letters *f the* have been deleted by crossing out; (44) the letter *p* in the word *espesially* is partially legible; (45) the letters *ia* have been overwritten by the letters *si* in the word *espesially*; (46) the letter *n* in the word *unto* is partially legible; (47) the letter *h* in the word *them* is partially legible; (48) the letter *h* in the word *the* is missing a stroke; and (49) the letter *s* in the word *Israel* has been partially overwritten by the letter *s*.

²⁸ Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon, Part One*, 411 (italics in the original); see also 403-11 for Skousen’s discussion of these possible errors.

²⁹ Skousen, ed., *The Printer’s Manuscript of the Book of Mormon: Part One*, 128-29.

(Jacob 5:1-6:1), Alma (Alma 33:3-13, 15; 34:7), Samuel the Lamanite (Helaman 8:19; 15:11) and Mormon (3 Nephi 10:16).

According to the foregoing assumptions, Nephi might have been referring to many prophets from Judah and Israel, who testified concerning the need for, and birth, work and death of, a redeeming Messiah and whose prophecies were contained in the brass plates. However, if Nephi mentioned a few of such prophets by name, I must question why he did not mention others by name. In addition, I cannot ignore or overlook the content of Nephi's third statement—multiple prophets had testified of *four* beliefs about the Messiah: (1) there would be one Messiah; (2) he would be rejected by the Jews; (3) he would come 600 years after Lehi left Jerusalem; and (4) he would be named Jesus Christ, the Son of God (2 Nephi 25:17-19). While some of those beliefs might be connected with pre-exilic prophets of Judah and Israel, not all of them can.

I also cannot assume that Nephi's statement meant that he and his father had delivered all four precepts to their followers because there is no evidence that Lehi used the name by which the Messiah later would be known. Nephi appears to have been told the name *Jesus Christ* by an angel, while Lehi was alive (1 Nephi 12:18); however, the name may not have been taught to others by Nephi until confirmed by his brother, Jacob.³⁰ Sometime during the first forty years after Lehi's escape (2 Nephi 5:34), Jacob presented a two-day discourse on the Messiah to the people of Nephi. On the first day, he relied heavily on passages quoted from Isaiah (2 Nephi 6-9), but on the second day, he announced that an angel had spoken with him during the night and revealed the name *Christ*, by which the Messiah would be known (2 Nephi 10:3). Jacob also had seen the Messiah in vision (2 Nephi 2:1-4; 11:2-3) and he taught "the doctrine of Christ," which was associated with the 600-year prophecy (Jacob 7:1-23) and other prophecies (2 Nephi 25-31; particularly 25:12-19; 31:2-21). Jacob and his younger brother, Joseph, were consecrated "priests and teachers over the land" (2 Nephi 5:26). Jacob reported that he had "been called of God, and ordained after the manner of his holy order" (2 Nephi 6:2) and that "we also had many revelations, and the spirit of much prophecy; wherefore, we knew of Christ and his kingdom, which should come" (Jacob 1:6). He spoke "by the Spirit unto prophesying" (Jacob 4:15).

Hence, I might be tempted to stop with the assumption that Nephi meant that he, Jacob, Lehi and certain pre-exilic prophets of Judah and Israel had testified as to some or all of the four precepts. However, that would not be consistent with the principle of thoroughness. I suggest that the record contains evidence about other unnamed prophets among the Nephites who were teaching the same Messianic message.

³⁰ The text of 1 Nephi 12:16-18 is extant in the original manuscript. Skousen, ed., *The Original Manuscript of the Book of Mormon*, 110-11. In copying this text for the printer's manuscript, Oliver Cowdery misread *sword* as *word*, an error that continues in the 1981 edition of the Book of Mormon. Skousen, ed., *The Printer's Manuscript of the Book of Mormon: Part One*, 88. As reproduced in the 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon (and with *sword* acknowledged as the proper word), the relevant part reads as follows: "And the angel spake unto me, saying: ... And a great and terrible gulf divideth them; yea, even the [s]word of the justice of the Eternal God, and Jesus Christ, which is the Lamb of God, of whom the Holy Ghost beareth record, from the beginning of the world until this time, and from this time henceforth and forever." Smith, *The Book of Mormon* (1830), 27-28. When Joseph Smith edited the printer's manuscript prior to the production of the 1837 edition of the Book of Mormon, he replaced *Jesus Christ* in this text with *Messiah*. The 1981 edition continues this emendation, with the added *the*. However, Skousen argues that the name *Jesus Christ* is appropriate in this text because it was dictated originally and provides the revelation in which Nephi learned the name, which he later apparently referred to in 2 Nephi 25:19. Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon, Part One*, 258-59.

Jacob's son, Enos, referred favorably to the work of "exceedingly many prophets among us" (Enos 1:22-23). Jacob's grandson, Jarom, wrote that "the prophets, and the priests, and the teachers, did labor diligently, exhorting with all long-suffering the people to diligence; teaching the law of Moses, and the intent for which it was given; persuading them to look forward unto the Messiah, and believe in him to come as though he already was" (Jarom 1:11). In addition to the apparent creation of this "holy order" of prophets, priests and teachers during Nephi's and Jacob's lifetimes, the 600-year prophecy was integrated into the Nephite method for measuring their history (compare 2 Nephi 5:28 with Jacob 1:1). Time was calculated according to the number of years that "had passed away from the time that our father Lehi left Jerusalem" (Enos 1:25; see also Mosiah 6:4; 29:46; 3 Nephi 2:6). By the time of king Benjamin, the record is explicit that there were both "false prophets, and false preachers and teachers among the people" and there were "holy prophets" among the people who assisted king Benjamin, a believer in Christ (Words of Mormon 1:16-18; Mosiah 2-6). Thus, when Nephi wrote that there were prophets teaching about the coming Messiah, the record indicates that the referenced group included Nephi, Jacob, their father Lehi, certain prophets of Judah and Israel whose words were included in the brass plates *and* many Nephite prophets associated with a "holy order" that taught the four prophetic beliefs listed by Nephi and used an organized count of years to measure time from Lehi's escape to the birth of the prophesied Messiah.

In conclusion, Lehi's prophetic ministry for the Messiah at Jerusalem (1 Nephi 1:4-20), his escape from being murdered there (1 Nephi 2:1-4) and his understanding of the 600-year prophecy (1 Nephi 10:2-4) all set the narrative of the Book of Mormon on a lengthy geographic and chronological course. As to the underlying religious aspects of Lehi's work, the course was crucial for his descendants and followers. To the extent they did not rebel (like Laman and Lemuel; e.g., 1 Nephi 2:8-14; 7:6-21; 16:34-39; 17:17-55; 18:9-22; 2 Nephi 4:13-5:8, 34), they were the bearers of an ancient and, at the same time, re-inspired religion, which included specific and newly revealed information about the expected Messiah. "And, notwithstanding we believe in Christ, we keep the law of Moses, and look forward with steadfastness unto Christ, until the law shall be fulfilled. For, for this end was the law given.... And we talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ, and we write according to our prophecies, that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins" (2 Nephi 25:24-26).