

Division 1

Research Foundations

Part 1: Focus and Scope of the Research

1.1 Paper and ink

The tangible object examined in this source book is the *Book of Mormon*, a lengthy English language text first published in March 1830 by Joseph Smith.¹ The book contains hundreds of interwoven narratives² and has appeared in more than 20 English editions.³ Beginning with a translation into Danish in 1851, the entire *Book of Mormon* has been translated into at least 90 languages and selections of the book have been prepared in more than 20 other languages.⁴ In January 2018, an official of the Church reported that more than 180 million copies of the book had been printed and distributed worldwide.⁵

1.1.1 Various perspectives

The Church and its millions of members regard Joseph Smith as a prophet, divinely-called to translate and publish an ancient Western Hemisphere scripture known as the *Book of Mormon*.⁶ Joseph and other eye-witnesses said he translated the book “by the gift and power of God” from writings engraved by numerous writers on a multipart set of metal plates with leaves having “the appearance of gold”.⁷ The purposes of this scripture, as stated on the translated title page, were: first, “to shew unto the remnant of the house of Israel how great things the Lord hath done for their fathers”; second, to inform this remnant regarding “the covenants of the Lord”; third, to inform them “that they are not cast off forever”; and fourth, “to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God, manifesting himself unto all nations”.⁸

¹ In the often capitalized typesetting of the 1830 edition, “JOSEPH SMITH, JUNIOR” is identified as the “AUTHOR AND PROPRIETOR” of the book, likely due to the diction of the then-applicable copyright statute, “An act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of Maps, Charts, and Books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned”. Smith, *The Book of Mormon* (1830), [i-ii]; Miriam A. Smith and John W. Welch, “Joseph Smith: ‘Author and Proprietor,’” in John W. Welch, ed., *Reexploring the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1992), 154-57. Joseph Smith, Senior, was living when the 1830 edition was published. Richard Lyman Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), 405. In this source book, Joseph Smith, Jr. is usually referred to as “Joseph Smith” or simply as “Joseph”, in accordance with his followers’ custom of familiarity with their beloved prophet. See also Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, xxii, and Grant Hardy, “Introduction”, in Skousen, ed., *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text*, xi.

² For brief narrative overviews, see Hardy, “Introduction,” in Skousen, ed., *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text*, viii-xi; and Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, 85-88.

³ Twenty English editions (1830 through 1981) are listed in Royal Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon, Part One* (Provo, Utah: BYU FARMS, 2004), 15-16. In 2013, the Church published a new English edition. Various private English editions also have been published, including: Grant Hardy, ed., *The Book of Mormon: A Reader’s Edition* (Champaign, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2003); Joseph Smith, Jr., translator, *The Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ* (New York: Doubleday, 2004); Joseph Smith, Jr., translator, *The Book of Mormon* (New York: Penguin Classics, 2008); and Skousen, ed., *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text*.

⁴ First Presidency Letter (9 October 2017), accessed at [lds.org/bc/content/ldsorg/church/news/2017/11/2-15159_000_letter.pdf?lang=eng](https://www.lds.org/bc/content/ldsorg/church/news/2017/11/2-15159_000_letter.pdf?lang=eng); “Church to translate scriptures in 34 more languages” (10/10/2017), accessed at [lds.org/church/news/church-to-translate-scriptures-in-34-more-languages-will-release-portions-online?lang=eng](https://www.lds.org/church/news/church-to-translate-scriptures-in-34-more-languages-will-release-portions-online?lang=eng); Kai A. Andersen, “In His Own Language”, *Liahona* (06/1997), accessed at [lds.org/liahona/1997/06?lang=eng](https://www.lds.org/liahona/1997/06?lang=eng); “Taking the Scriptures to the World”, *Ensign* (07/2001), accessed at [lds.org/ensign/2001/07?lang=eng](https://www.lds.org/ensign/2001/07?lang=eng).

⁵ “Follow Pres. Monson’s counsel by finding joy in Book of Mormon” (1/11/2018), accessed at [thechurchnews.com/archive/2018-01-11/elder-s-gifford-nielsen-follow-pres-monson-s-counsel-by-finding-joy-in-book-of-mormon-33204](https://www.thechurchnews.com/archive/2018-01-11/elder-s-gifford-nielsen-follow-pres-monson-s-counsel-by-finding-joy-in-book-of-mormon-33204).

⁶ Hardy, “Introduction”, in Skousen, ed., *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text*, xi-xiv.

⁷ Smith, *The Book of Mormon* (1830), title page, preface and testimony of eight witnesses [i, iii]-iv, [590]; Hardy, “Introduction”, in Skousen, ed., *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text*, viii-xiv.

⁸ Skousen, ed., *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text*, [3], italics removed; Smith, *The Book of Mormon* (1830), title page, capitalization modernized. According to Joseph, the title page “is a literal translation, taken from the last leaf, on the left hand side of the collection or book of plates”. Clyde J. Williams, “More Light on Who Wrote the Title Page”, *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 10/2 (2001): 28. See also David B. Honey, “The Secular as Sacred: The Historiography of the Title Page”, *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 3/1 (1994): 94-103.

Neither Joseph's calling as a prophet nor the book's religious purpose has been broadly accepted. In the Pulitzer Prize-winning volume 5 of the *Oxford History of the United States*, Daniel Walker Howe described the *Book of Mormon* as:

a powerful epic written on a grand scale with a host of characters, a narrative of human struggle and conflict, of divine intervention, heroic good and atrocious evil, of prophecy, morality, and law. Its narrative structure is complex. The idiom is that of the King James Version, which most Americans assumed to be appropriate for divine revelation.... [It] should rank among the great achievements of American literature, but it has never been accorded the status it deserves, since Mormons deny Joseph Smith's authorship, and non-Mormons, dismissing the work as a fraud, have been more likely to ridicule than read it.⁹

Similarly, Richard Lyman Bushman, Gouverneur Morris Professor of History, Emeritus, at Columbia University, in his cultural biography *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, described this division in perspectives on the *Book of Mormon* as "[a] text that inspires and engages Mormons" but "baffles outside readers".¹⁰

Mark Twain dismissed it as "chloroform in print." Bernard DeVoto called it "a yeasty fermentation, formless, aimless and inconceivably absurd ... a disintegration." Histories of American literature usually ignore the *Book of Mormon*. It seems subliterate, either simple or unintelligible. Harold Bloom, sympathetic to Mormonism in other respects, could not "recommend that the book be read either fully or closely, because it scarcely sustains such reading."¹¹

Disparaging perspectives have been expressed about the contents of the book since before its publication. A local newspaper anticipated the book as "the result of a gross imposition, and a grosser superstition".¹² In the winter 1832 edition of the *Atlantic Journal and Friend of Knowledge*, Constantine Samuel Rafinesque, a recognized biologist and more recent interpreter of ancient texts, attacked the Church and its *Book of Mormon*.

As early as 1829, I published in the Evening Post a letter to the Rev. Ethan Smith, against the singular but absurd opinion that the American tribes descend from the Hebrews or the ten lost tribes.... It is to me astonishing how in this enlightened age, any such unfounded belief can be sustained.... A new Religion or sect has been founded upon this belief! the Mormonites, thus called after a new Alcoran, or Book of Mormon, (which is not a Jewish name.) Supposed to be written in gold letters more than 2,000 years ago by Mormon[,] leader of the American Jews. This Book which no one has seen nor read but the founder of the sect, the probable writer thereof, has been made the Bible of a new sect. I have tried in vain to procure a copy of the translation, wherein I could certainly detect a crowd of absurdities and incongruities. Meantime a Sect of Fanatics has arisen therefrom, and wandered from New-York to Ohio and Missouri: an evident proof how false beliefs can be spread and made subservient to crafty purposes."¹³

⁹ Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 314.

¹⁰ Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, 84.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 84-85.

¹² *Ibid.*, 88.

¹³ C.S. Rafinesque, ed., "The American Nations and Tribes are not Jews", *Atlantic Journal and Friend of Knowledge* (Philadelphia: William Sharpless, 1832), vol. 1, no. 4, 98-99, nonstandard spelling and punctuation in the original. Rafinesque had been a dedicated biologist

Thus, the tangible object analyzed in this research is read approvingly today by millions of believers, but it is mainly ignored by many more millions of disbelievers and is unknown to billions who have yet to hear of Joseph Smith and his purportedly “crafty purposes”. I am descended from some of Rafinesque’s supposed “Fanatics”, Christian families who read the *Holy Bible* and hoped its promises would be fulfilled. The *Book of Mormon* they were willing to study led them to believe that ancient promises were being realized. Largely as a consequence of their devotion to those beliefs, I have lived with the *Book of Mormon* all my life, have come to believe in its inspired origins and have learned to read it meticulously. My reading is neither sentimental nor unscientific. I disagree that the *Book of Mormon* is a formless, aimless or inept record that cannot sustain a close reading. This source book verifies my disagreement with such notions.

1.1.2 Research focus

With all of that noted, I must also state the focus of this source book is not about opposing beliefs or purposes, but about a tangible object that is available to view, touch, read and analyze. More particularly, the limited focus of this research begins with a single kind of physical device on the pages of the *Book of Mormon*, the designs of ink on paper that symbolize one of the book’s two key chronological terms, the noun *year*.¹⁴ This noun occurs 416 times in express singular and plural forms and is implied ten more times in its singular form. Each of these instances is catalogued in Table 1.A. The extensive use of this noun in the *Book of Mormon* not only records the passage of carefully measured periods of time, but it draws attention to the sophisticated linguistic and semantic decisions made by the writers who composed and placed complex chronological expressions and their related narratives within the book.

1.2 Fundamental purposes

One of the three fundamental purposes of this research is to identify and define each of the writers’ decisions about year-related chronology with as much precision as careful examination and description permit. Such decisions provide a chronological text structure (usually referred to as the “chronological structure” or sometimes simply called the “structure”) in which *Book of Mormon* narratives are organized. The writers’ decisions appear to influence the ways in which they wanted their narratives to be understood. This research begins the work of examining, categorizing and describing the complex ways in which writers’ decisions were made about the components and positioning of chronological expressions in the *Book of Mormon*.

A concomitant purpose of this study is to make the reasons for the writers’ decisions as evident as possible. This aspect of the study is neither vague nor speculative. The research is not a superficial glance at a few selected decisions. The examination identifies an extensive collection of interrelated writers’ decisions regarding chronological expressions and then subjects those decisions to rigorous analysis. When the evidence is analyzed rather than glossed over or derided, the likely reasons for the various chronological expressions begin to be apparent. The issue is not whether an intention may be deduced from a writer’s single decision, but

before becoming fascinated with ancient records. In the previous (autumn 1832) number of his *Atlantic Journal and Friend of Knowledge*, he appears to have been the first to publish (a) an accurate understanding of the Maya bar and dot system for representing numbers, (b) a recognition that the Maya script inscribed at Palenque and written in the Dresden Codex were the same, and (c) a suggestion that the ancient script might be related to the 19th century language of the Maya. Rafinesque, ed., “Second Letter to Mr. Champollion on the Graphic System of America, and the Glyphs of Otolum or Palenque, in Central America—Elements of the Glyphs”, *Atlantic Journal and Friend of Knowledge* (1832), vol. 1, no.3, 40-44, italics and nonstandard capitalization removed; Michael D. Coe, *Breaking the Maya Code* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1992), 89-91.

¹⁴ The noun *day* is the other key chronological term related to vital messages of the book. See Division 10, Part 4, “The Vital Day”.

whether an intention may be reasoned from the circumstances of hundreds of similar and interrelated decisions. Extensive circumstantial evidence suggests the reasons for the writers' decisions.

Within the extant *Book of Mormon* text, the noun *year* occurs 282 times in singular form and 134 times in plural form. Another ten times, the nearby text implies the use of the singular *year*. The occurrence of these 426 tangible textual facts in the extant original manuscript of the *Book of Mormon*,¹⁵ the extant printer's manuscript of the book,¹⁶ and the first printed edition provides an investigative resource that has been overlooked or misunderstood for far too long. This source book is intended to help remedy those impairments by examining the earliest identifiable year-related texts of this epic. This study focuses carefully on the writers' 426 complex compositions associated with the noun *year*.

The third fundamental purpose of this research is to analyze the meanings of the book's chronological expressions in terms of well-established historical chronologies. The analytical paradigm for this part of the research may be stated as a question: when a year-related narrative says "A" with respect to *Book of Mormon* chronology, can "A" be interpreted rationally as being consistent with relevant, well-settled, historical chronologies? This study concludes by proposing that, with respect to five key *Book of Mormon* narratives (each an "A" in the foregoing question), the answer is yes. In the nature of chronological science, established chronologies and histories based on them may change as new information sources are discovered or the understanding of old information sources improves. Rational change may be expected. However, the work of rationality in the chronology of the *Book of Mormon* necessarily must begin with what is reasonably well-settled now.

Thus, this source book concludes by proposing that the noun *year* is the essential component of phrases that evidence the writers' apparent knowledge and use of ancient Middle Eastern¹⁷ and Mesoamerican¹⁸ astronomy and calendars, and the noun *year* thereby appears to provide the foundation for a unique chronology that correlates well with both Middle Eastern and Mesoamerican historical chronologies. This research suggests that distinctive chronological

¹⁵ The extant original manuscript includes only "about 25 percent of the current text" of the *Book of Mormon*. The remainder of the original manuscript was destroyed by water and mold between 1841 and 1882, while the manuscript sat in the cornerstone of the Nauvoo House, a hotel in Nauvoo, Illinois. Skousen, ed., *The Original Manuscript of the Book of Mormon*, 6-7, 37. In the extant original manuscript, 113 (26.5%) of the 426 express and implied uses of the noun *year* occur. See Table 1.A.

¹⁶ The printer's manuscript is a copy of the original that was made for use by the typesetter of the first printed edition. The copy is "fully extant except for about three lines of text missing from the bottom of the first leaf of the manuscript. The missing portions come from verses 7-8 and 20 of the first chapter of 1 Nephi". Skousen, ed., *The Printer's Manuscript of the Book of Mormon, Part One*, 4. All 426 express and implied uses of the noun *year* occur in the extant printer's manuscript. See Table 1.A.

¹⁷ At the beginning of the *Book of Mormon* epic, a mature man named Lehi₁ owned a "house" at Jerusalem, where he had "dwelt ... in all his days" (1 Nephi 1:4, 7). While he was not a Jew, he knew "the learning of the Jews and the language of the Egyptians" (1 Nephi 1:2). His family may have had ancient land ownership and genealogical connections to a region north of Jerusalem. Their principal profession seems to have been metalsmithing. Jeffrey R. Chadwick, "Lehi's House at Jerusalem and the Land of His Inheritance," in John W. Welch, David Rolph Seely and Jo Ann H. Seely, eds., *Glimpses of Lehi's Jerusalem* (Provo, Utah: BYU FARMS, 2004), 81-130. Living for generations in such a context, the family's calendrical knowledge would seem, at least, to have included some elements of the ancient lunar calendars of Canaan and Egypt, as well as the ancient Egyptian mathematical (365-day) civil calendar. Lehi₁ was called to be a prophet to the Jews "in the commencement of the first year of the reign of Zedekiah, king of Judah" (1 Nephi 1:4-20). Zedekiah apparently began to reign in 597 BCE. Donald J. Wiseman, *Chronicles of Chaldean Kings (625-556 B.C.) in the British Museum* (London: Trustees of the British Museum, 1956), 1-33.

¹⁸ The term *Mesoamerica* was created in the last century to describe both a geographic zone in the southern part of the North American continent and the prevailing beliefs and practices in that zone when the Spanish conquered the area. "The term ... was invented by Paul Kirchhoff ["Mesoamerica," *Acta Americana* 1 (1943): 92-107]". Linda Schele and David Freidel, *A Forest of Kings: The Untold Story of the Ancient Maya* (New York: William Morrow, 1990), 420 n.2. Geographically defined, Mesoamerica includes "most of central, southern, and southeastern Mexico (and encompasses the Yucatán Peninsula), Guatemala, Belize, and the westernmost portions of Honduras and El Salvador." Coe, *Breaking the Maya Code*, 58; see also Schele and Freidel, *A Forest of Kings*, 37-38. Ancient Mesoamericans are justly famous for their accurate astronomical observations and record keeping and their complex mathematical calendars.

expressions in the *Book of Mormon* connect the “Nephites”¹⁹ and “Jaredites”²⁰ of the book with at least some of their ancient Mesoamerican neighbors.²¹ The seemingly routine, even monotonous, repetition of the word *year* appears to be one of the book’s key cultural indicators.

As to each of this study’s fundamental purposes, the proposed results must be viewed as exploratory. Neither the identification of authorial decisions about chronology, nor the likely meanings of such decisions, nor the chronology associated with such decisions have been previously examined or analyzed with any sort of rigor. This research is fact-finding and its conclusions are tentative. Nevertheless, the textual facts identified in this study occur in tangible form and are available for detailed examination on the pages of the *Book of Mormon*. In addition, the linguistic precepts used for categorizing the chronological expressions are well-understood. Children are taught about words and phrases in the English language, and about nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, participles, prepositions and conjunctions. The use of such linguistic precepts is not imposed, but arises out of the texts identified and analyzed in this study. Thus, the chronological baseline proposed in this source book, tentative though it may be, appears to be a step forward in understanding the passing of time recorded in the *Book of Mormon*.

1.3 Meanings of the word *year*

Definitions of the noun *year* shortly before 1830 would seem to be helpful to understanding the meanings of the word in the *Book of Mormon*. Joseph Smith filed for copyright protection of the book on or about 11 June “in the fifty-third year of the Independence of the United States of America”, 1829.²² About 14 months before that date, Noah Webster filed for copyright protection of his immense labor in writing a two-volume dictionary entitled *An American Dictionary of the English Language*.²³ Near the end of volume II of his dictionary, Webster stated that the noun *year* was derived from the Sanskrit *jahran*, “probably a course or circle” with its root “signifying to run.” He then listed 17 ways in which this noun was understood and used in the United States of America.²⁴ The first two definitions listed below are in the order given by Webster. The other fifteen definitions appear below in a modified sequence; they are grouped and numerically ordered by their astronomical or cultural associations. Webster’s frequent use of italic font has been removed from the following quotations.

First, Webster defined “the year, in the strict and proper sense of the word”, as the “solar year” or “tropical year”. The length of this year was said to be “[t]he space or period of time in which the sun moves through the twelve signs of the ecliptic, or whole circle, and returns to the same point.... This period comprehends what are called the twelve calendar months, or 365 days, 5 hours, and 49 minutes, within a small fraction”. This definition is filled with words having cultural and observational connotations, some of which are ancient and most of which require

¹⁹ The terms “Nephites” (e.g., 2 Nephi 29:12-13), “people of the Nephites” (e.g., Alma 2:12; 16:15) and “people of Nephi” (e.g., 2 Nephi 5:9; 6:1) refer to the *Book of Mormon* peoples initially led by Nephi₁.

²⁰ The terms “Jaredites” (Moroni 9:23) and “people of Jared” (title page; Moroni 1:1) refer to the *Book of Mormon* people initially led by Jared₂ and his brother. These terms only appear in writings that may be attributed to Moroni₂; so, what the Jaredites called themselves is not necessarily given in the text.

²¹ At least 57 “language groups” that have been part of Mesoamerica had been identified by the mid-1980s. Munro S. Edmonson, *The Book of the Year: Middle American Calendrical Systems* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1988), 1-3.

²² This is the date provided with the acknowledgment of filing printed in the 1830 edition. Smith, *The Book of Mormon* (1830), [ii]; Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, 80.

²³ The date was 14 April “in the fifty-second year of the Independence of the United States of America” [1828]. Noah Webster, LL.D., *An American Dictionary of the English Language*, two vols. (New York: S. Converse, 1828), I: [2], accessed at archive.org.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, II: [948-49] (year).

further specification. A minute, hour, day, month, sign and ecliptic must be understood. A *year*, as thus defined, may be described generally as a temporally lengthy, complex cultural construct associated with solar observation and the quantification of time.

Second, the definition “in popular usage” was expressed as “the year [consisting] of 365 days, and every fourth year of 366; a day being added to February, on account of the 5 hours and 49 minutes”. This definition of an approximate solar year appears to be based on an ancient Roman calendar that numbered days and divided them into months, one of which was given the name February in the English language and had a changeable total number of days. Again, the general definition set forth above seems appropriate.

Third, Webster stated a definition of a “Julian year ... established by Julius Cesar” [sic] consisting of “365 days, 6 hours”. Fourth, the noun *year* could mean the “Gregorian year” that was the “Julian year corrected”. Fifth, the word *year* could mean just the Julian or Gregorian calendar’s “[b]issextile or leap year” consisting of 366 days. Sixth, Webster described a “[s]idereal year” during which the sun, “departing from any fixed star, returns to the same. This is 365 days, 6 hours, 6 minutes, and 11,5 [sic] seconds”. Seventh, a *year* could be the sun’s “[a]nomalistical year” during which it leaves and returns to its orbital apogee, a period of “365 days, 6 hours, 14 minutes”. In each of these instances, the general definition also seems apt.

Webster further noted that a *year* could be measured by planets, stars or the moon. Hence, an eighth definition mentioned a planetary year in which “any planet completes a revolution”, presumably in its orbit around the sun. Ninth, the word *year* could refer to the “great year” in which “the fixed stars make a revolution”. Tenth, he defined a year as meaning a “[l]unar year” consisting of 12 “lunar months”, which he described as 12 iterations of the moon’s sidereal period: “27 days, 7 hours, 43 minutes and 5 seconds”.²⁵ Eleventh, he wrote that a year could be understood as a “[l]unar astronomical year” consisting of 12 “lunar synodical months”, a total period of “354 days, 8 hours, 48 minutes, 36 seconds”. Twelfth, a year could be defined as a “[c]ommon lunar year” consisting of 12 “lunar civil months” or “354 days”. Since the number 354 is not evenly divisible by 12, Webster seems to have assumed that “lunar civil months” were to be measured in pairs corresponding quite closely to two “lunar synodical months”, a 30-day month followed by a 29-day month. Six of such pairs equal 354 days. Thirteenth, the word *year* could mean an “[e]mbolismic or intercalary year” consisting of 13 “lunar civil months” or “384 days”. With this definition, the assumption seems to have been made that a 30-day month was added to a “common lunar year” of 354 days.

A fourteenth definition added the “[c]ivil year”, one that “any nation has contrived for the computation of time” and Webster noted that the “civil or legal year, in England, formerly commenced on the 25th day of March. This practice continued till after the settlement of America, and the first settlers of New England observed it for many years.” Fifteenth, he mentioned a Biblical “Sabbatic year” that occurred every seventh year among the Israelites “when their land was suffered to lie untilled”. Sixteenth, he noted that “[i]n popular language, year is often used for years” and he finished with a 17th definition, “[y]ears, in the plural, is sometimes equivalent to age or old age”. In all of these cases, a *year* seems to be a temporally lengthy, complex cultural construct observed or measured in precise or general ways.²⁶

Presumably, Webster was not attempting to make a list of every type of year used by each of the world’s cultures. He did, however, indicate the fact that the noun *year* represented an

²⁵ Ibid., II: [147] (month). The length of time in this type of lunar year would be about 327.8591 days.

²⁶ See also *The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary*, two vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), II: 3853 (year).

adaptable concept “contrived for the computation of time” in a wide variety of cultural contexts. This study takes Webster’s alternative definitions into account by making four analytical assumptions.

1. Each use of the noun *year* in the *Book of Mormon*, whether singular or plural, express or implied, is deemed to be a subject for analysis without any assumed chronological meaning other than it represents a lengthy period of time (a) established by a people for their own purposes, (b) observed or measured by the procedures they adopted, and (c) in some instances modified from time to time as they saw fit.
2. Each of such uses of the noun *year* is assumed to be not just a tangible textual fact, but an information source equally as valuable as any other use of the noun *year* within the book. Every extant use must be included for the analysis to be as comprehensive as possible.
3. All uses of the word *year* are deemed to be independent of each other in the sense that the information associated with the word *year* may not have the same meaning or express the same purpose when it occurs in a separate narrative context.
4. The uses of the word *year* may be sorted or grouped by means of other closely-related words within the text of the *Book of Mormon*. These other closely-related words are the various adjectives that often modify the noun *year* and the most basic word or phrase that connects the noun *year* to its associated narrative.

With respect to this fourth assumption, I want to be clear that sorting the uses of the word *year* based on a presumption imposed on the *Book of Mormon* is irrational. The noun *year* appears hundreds of times in the *Book of Mormon*. Can it be rationally said that *year* is too vague a word for a reader to pay attention to those hundreds of textual facts? No. The foregoing definitions from Webster’s dictionary are many, the list is likely incomplete and further explication may be valuable, but the definitions are not impossibly vague. Are the narratives in which the word *year* appears such gibberish as to require the noun to be disregarded and replaced by the meaning of some external presumption, such as “tropical year”, “sidereal year” or “Gregorian year”? No. The year-related narratives are simple and clear, even if in some instances words seem obsolete or the grammar appears to be ancient.²⁷

Is the chronology of the *Book of Mormon* based on the principal calendar year used in upstate New York just prior to 1830? The claim can be made, of course, but for it to have even the slightest credibility, one must identify, examine and explain where and how the text of the *Book of Mormon* says so. One may not merely presume the matter is settled by the publication date. Reliance on speculation for purposes of interpretation is irrational because it puts the interpretative cart before the horse. The fact that an object appeared to view in a certain year does not prove the object was created about the same time as that appearance—nor does it prove the opposite. The object and its context must be examined with care. The chronological texts of the *Book of Mormon* and their narrative contexts speak for themselves and speak rationally, if one is willing and able to hear them.

²⁷ In 2009, Royal Skousen noted that “[o]ne of the most remarkable findings of the [Book of Mormon] Critical Text Project is the frequent occurrence of vocabulary from Early Modern English”. Skousen, “Editor’s Preface,” in Skousen, ed., *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text*, xxvii. By 2018, he had concluded that “virtually all the language of the original text of the book dates from the 1530s through the 1730s”. Skousen, “Summary,” in Skousen, *The History of the Text of the Book of Mormon, Part Three*, iv.

1.4 Use of narratives

To make this study as thorough as possible, each of the extant 426 narratives in which the word *year* appears or is implied has been examined and categorized on a case by case basis. These year-related narratives have been viewed separately from the many *Book of Mormon* narratives in which the noun *year* is not used. However, the decision to make the study of the word *year* as comprehensive as possible does not mean that all 426 year-related narratives must be retold in this source book. Chronological expressions evidence consistency in the diction from which textual groupings may be made. The groups of similar expressions and narratives then may be analyzed together. Still, specific elements of some *Book of Mormon* narratives appear to be relevant to the interpretation of chronological expressions. In such instances, when narrative details distinguish the text or clarify the meanings of chronological expressions, the relevant details are included in the discussion.

The analytical policy of this source book is to present narrative details in the way the *Book of Mormon* gives them, as descriptions involving ancient people and events. This policy has been chosen because it is simple, clear and textually-verifiable. No attempt has been made to create a supposedly objective version of each narrative and the reader is not burdened with wading through what otherwise could be idiosyncratic and possibly misleading stories. Furthermore, whether or not a narrative describes perceptions of an ancient reality is irrelevant to the definitions of analytical concepts and to the data collection, sorting and analysis presented in this study. The definitions, data and statistics are based on the physical text of the *Book of Mormon* and on English linguistics, not on whether one accepts or rejects a belief in the ancient reality of narrated events. The chronological expressions of the book are tangible objects that may be rationally studied apart from any associated beliefs.

The above references to the manuscripts and 1830 edition of the *Book of Mormon* also suggest that a further clarification should be made regarding narratives that involve Joseph Smith, Martin Harris, Oliver Cowdery, John Gilbert and others associated with the production of the book. Occasionally, such external narratives are used in this study because, like the narrative details within the book, external narratives sometimes provide clarifying information about the text. For example, the paper, ink, scribal practices and texts of the extant earliest manuscripts of the *Book of Mormon* have been studied in minute detail and with modern scientific instruments by Royal Skousen and his research associates. Meticulous and voluminous facsimile editions and analyses of the manuscripts and text have been published.²⁸ During this painstaking work, the earliest manuscripts were discovered to show Cowdery's tendency to drop the final *r* when writing the words *your* and *year*, i.e., he often misspelled them as other English words, *you* and *yea*.²⁹ Cowdery usually corrected his and other scribes' misspellings while he proofread the original manuscript or copied and proofread the printer's manuscript, and if he failed to do so, Gilbert typically corrected misspellings as he typeset the 1830 edition. With respect to the year-related expression in the original and printer's manuscripts at what is now known as Helaman 3:3, Cowdery initially wrote "the forty and sixth yea" in the original manuscript and he did not later correct it. Gilbert also did not change *yea* to *year* in this text when he typeset the 1830 edition. Indeed, he chose to emphasize *yea* by placing it between commas, so that the printed text would read "the forty and sixth, yea,". Consequently, the chronological expression in Helaman

²⁸ The various volumes and parts of the Book of Mormon Critical Text Project, consisting of thousands of pages, are listed in the Introduction of this source book, footnote 5.

²⁹ See the textual comments at the end of Table 1.A.

3:3 has been presented for nearly two centuries as though the use of the singular *year* is to be inferred after the number *sixth*. Nonetheless, when the spelling, placement and meanings of the misspelled expression in Helaman 3:3 are compared with the same aspects of ten other occurrences of an implied singular *year*, the likelihood of a misspelling in this verse becomes obvious.³⁰ These narratives about Cowdery and Gilbert and the misspelling in Helaman 3:3 are helpful in that they explain and clarify how the error came to exist in the 1830 edition of the *Book of Mormon* and they justify categorizing the word *year* in this verse as an express singular noun rather than an implied one. Of course, whether one believes or rejects such external narratives is irrelevant to the tangible textual facts. The composition, spelling, placement and meanings of chronological expressions exist separately from beliefs about external narratives.

In concluding this mention of *Book of Mormon* narratives, it must be re-emphasized that opinions as to whether such narratives represent perceptions of actual or fictional events are immaterial to this study. Opinions may derive from fallible human judgment and emotions rather than fact. Opinions also may be influenced by familial, tribal, group or other cultural biases. Opinions often may be the consequence of insufficient attention, examination or contemplation. Hence, opinions about the reality of the narratives are irrelevant to the description and analysis of chronological expressions in this study.

1.5 Chronological expressions

The concept of a chronological expression may seem obvious. Chronology occupies a realm of thought uniting basic perceptions of events, time and order. The capacity to tell time may begin with distinguishing events that are *now* or *then*, with *then* at some point including both the memory of past events and the expectation of future events. The mental processes of ordering the present and its memories and expectations also appear to involve temporal concepts like *before* or *after*, *past* or *future*, *first* or *last*, and *distant* or *immediate*, all of which may intersect with observational perceptions of *day*, *night*, *sun*, *moon*, *planets* and *stars* or, when others' perceptions also are involved, with cultural constructs such as a calendrical *day* and its multiples, such as a *week*, *fortnight*, *month*, *year*, *decade*, *century* and *millennium*. Telling time also may sort perceptions of events with definite numerical concepts like the cardinal and ordinal number names *one* and *first*, *two* and *second*, *three* and *third*, and so forth, or with general quantitative ideas such as *few*, *some* or *many*. Each of such words may, in an appropriate context, be part of a chronological expression.

The English adjective *chronological* means “arranged in the order of time”, “[o]f, belonging to, or in accordance with chronology”, or “[r]elating to or dealing with chronology”.³¹ The noun *chronology* broadly represents “[t]he science of computing and adjusting time or periods of time”, the related science “of recording and arranging events in the order of time”, the actual “computation of time”, the “assignation of events to their correct dates” and “[a] chronological table, list, or treatise.”³² These facets of the noun *chronology* and the adjective *chronological* all find application in this study. Furthermore, the noun *expression* as used in this study means “[a] word, phrase, or form of speech” that conveys or represents “a meaning, thought, [or] state of

³⁰ Royal Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon, Part Five* (Provo, Utah: BYU FARMS, 2008), 2901-03. See also Division 1, Part 2, Section 2.2, of this study; Smith, *The Book of Mormon* (1830), 412.

³¹ *The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary*, I: 409 (chronological).

³² *Ibid.*, I: 410 (chronology).

things”.³³ Thus, a chronological expression may be defined generally as any word, phrase or form of speech dealing with some aspect of the various facets of chronology.

This broad definition, while useful in some contexts, describes a topic that is far too general for the purposes of this investigation. For the remainder of this study, seven descriptive terms are used extensively to explain various elements of the chronological texts analyzed in this research. These seven analytical terms are based on the tangible text of the *Book of Mormon*, beginning with and centering on the word *year*.

1. Year-term: This textual fact occurs in the *Book of Mormon* text in three distinct types: an express singular noun (*year*), an express plural noun (*years*) and an implied singular noun (*year*). An implied plural noun (*years*) does not appear to have been intended in any chronological expression. A total of 426 year-terms exist within the extant text of the *Book of Mormon*.

2. Time-term: This adjective identifies the time in which a year-term did exist, does exist or will exist. A time-term may be a single word (e.g., “hence”³⁴) or as many as 22 words (“from the time which the sign was given which was spoken of by the prophets that Christ should come into the world”³⁵). Except in one instance,³⁶ these 154 adjectives follow their year-terms in the text.

3. Number-term: This adjective consists of definite or general language that states or implies the year-term’s quantity or quantitative position. A number-term also may be a single word (e.g., “thirty”³⁷) or as many as seven words (e.g., “the two hundred and thirty and first”³⁸). Except for two instances where part of the number-term occurs after the year-term,³⁹ these 417 adjectives entirely precede their year-terms in the text.

4. Year-related expression: This textual fact is a word or phrase always consisting of at least one textual component (a year-term) and usually including at least one of the two optional components that modify the year-term (a time-term and/or a number-term). By definition, a total of 426 year-related expressions exist within the extant text of the *Book of Mormon*.

5. Narrative-link: This word or phrase is the most basic or primary language used to connect a year-related expression to the other language of its associated narrative. This textual fact occurs in five linguistic types: preposition (e.g., “in”⁴⁰), verb (e.g., “have suffered”⁴¹), participle (e.g., “being”⁴²), conjunction (always “and”⁴³) or adverb (always “yea”⁴⁴). Again by definition, a total of 426 narrative-links appear within the text.

³³ Ibid., I: 934 (expression).

³⁴ Jacob 7:7.

³⁵ 3 Nephi 2:7.

³⁶ 3 Nephi 2:8.

³⁷ 2 Nephi 5:28.

³⁸ 4 Nephi 1:35.

³⁹ Helaman 14:2; Mormon 3:1

⁴⁰ 1 Nephi 19:8.

⁴¹ Mosiah 10:18.

⁴² Mosiah 29:46.

⁴³ E.g., 3 Nephi 2:4.

⁴⁴ E.g., 1 Nephi 10:4.

6. Temporal-expression: At times, clarity requires a combined narrative-link and its year-related expression to be distinguished from other parts of the text. This hyphenated label conveys the technical meaning of these united analytical concepts. A total of 426 temporal-expressions occur in the extant text.

7. Year-related narrative: A narrative that includes a temporal-expression is sometimes referred to as an associated narrative or, more specifically, as a “year-related” narrative. A year-related narrative is composed of three basic elements. First is a year-related expression. Second is a narrative-link, the *primary* narrative language used to connect a year-related expression to the year-related narrative. Third is all of the *secondary* narrative language that makes up the remainder of the year-related narrative. Table 1.B provides a schematic introduction to the relationships of year-, time- and number-terms, narrative-links, and secondary narrative language within a year-related narrative. By definition, a total of 426 year-related narratives exist within the extant text of the *Book of Mormon*.

As the foregoing definitions suggest, the adjectives *primary* and *secondary* are used in a specific way. They do not indicate that some narrative language is of lesser value or ancillary when compared with the language of year-related expressions. A narrative-link performs a vital function as the primary connecting language for a year-related expression. A secondary word, phrase or other textual segment may be crucial to the meaning of a year-related narrative, its narrative-link or its year-related expression. In this study, the adjectives *primary* and *secondary* describe a linguistic order or position rather than a rank or importance.⁴⁵ Thus, each year-related expression (the center of this research) is connected to its year-related narrative by a narrative-link, the *primary* language used to make that connection. The narrative-link is then attached to all the *secondary* language in the rest of the year-related narrative. With respect to the language in the rest of the *Book of Mormon*, the language outside of a specific year-related narrative, the adjective *tertiary* is sometimes used to describe its place or position in this linguistic order.

A brief note regarding other chronological nouns will help to clarify the seven foregoing descriptive terms. The words *day*, *days*, *week*, *moons*, *month* and *months* appear in various expressions within the *Book of Mormon*, but they do not appear to be the most important components of the book’s chronological structure. Instead, the 426 year-terms appear to be the fundamental components of that structure. Year-terms are the central focus of this study, the essential components of the year-related expressions that create the most formal aspects of the chronological structure. A year-related expression may be compared to the bright yellow center of a circular archery target. In this comparison, the narrative-link is the primary red circle of language connecting the center of the target to the secondary blue circle of language in the remainder of the year-related narrative. This secondary blue circle, which sometimes includes chronological nouns like *day* and *month*, then is connected with the tertiary white circle of language in the other parts of the *Book of Mormon*. *Day* and *month* sometimes are secondary language terms within a year-related narrative, but *day*, *days*, *week*, *moons*, *month* and *months* also appear as tertiary language terms, as described above.

The seven defined terms listed above are the critical descriptive terms used in the research detailed in subsequent Parts of this Division and in Divisions 2 through 4 of this source book. They permit the chronological structure and symbolism of the *Book of Mormon* to be analyzed and understood. Of course, just as year-terms appear to be divisible into three types and

⁴⁵ *The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary*, II: 2299 (primary), 2701 (secondary) and 3268-69 (tertiary).

narrative-links appear to be divisible into five types, so time-terms and number-terms seem to be divisible into various types, as indicated in Table 1.B. All of these details related to the use of the word *year* in the *Book of Mormon* lay a foundation for a rational analysis of the connections between *Book of Mormon* chronology and narratives and the chronologies of the ancient lands, polities and histories indicated by such narratives.

However, before probing into the details of year-related expressions and narratives, the most basic stated divisions of *Book of Mormon* narratives must be introduced. The text both declares and implies that it is to be understood as having been engraved on various sets of “plates” and that each set itself was divided into textual segments each of which was formally entitled a “book” or “words”. Following the introduction of “plates” and their “books” or “words”, this Part 1 concludes by introducing the four key chronological textual terms other than *year*, which must be understood to make the analysis of year-related narratives both precise and comprehensible. These key terms are *day*, *week*, *moon* and *month*. All of these introductory discussions begin with an examination of the various sets of “plates”.

1.6 Plates

Book of Mormon narratives (whether they include temporal-expressions or not) also may be divided by language and textual position into three structural parts, which are described in the text as being different sets of “plates”.⁴⁶ The division of the text into plates appears to have an immense impact on the content, placement and meanings of temporal-expressions; so, the separate parts must be introduced, together with the principal writers associated with each set of plates.

The first of the named *Book of Mormon* writers was Nephi₁.⁴⁷ He was the son of Lehi₁, who apparently was the father, grandfather or ancestor of all the other writers.⁴⁸ Lehi₁ was a descendant of the Biblical patriarch Manasseh, a son of Joseph₁.⁴⁹ When Lehi₁'s life became threatened because of his prophetic activities during the reign of Judah's king Zedekiah, Lehi₁ led his wife Sariah and their four sons (Laman₁, Lemuel, Sam and Nephi₁) away from Jerusalem and into the wilderness by the Red Sea.⁵⁰ There they were joined later by Zoram₁, a servant of Laban (one of Lehi₁'s relatives), and by a man named Ishmael₁, who was accompanied by his wife, his married sons and their families, and his five unmarried daughters.⁵¹ Lehi₁ and his followers left the land of Judah before the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem,⁵² an event that has been alternatively dated to 587 or 586 BCE, depending largely on how the 11 regnal years of Judah's king Zedekiah may have been reckoned.⁵³ Lehi₁ and his followers, with children born

⁴⁶ E.g., 1 Nephi 1:17; 6:1, 3, 6; 9:3, 5; 10:1; 19:1-6; 2 Nephi 4:14-15; 5:29-33; Jacob 1:1-4; 3:13-14; 3 Nephi 5:10-11; Mormon 2:17-18; 6:6; 8:5, 14; Ether 4:4. See Division 10, Part 2, “Evidence for the Implied Plates of Moroni”.

⁴⁷ The subscript ₁ appearing after Nephi₁'s name has been added to distinguish him from his descendants who bore the same name; e.g., Helaman 3:21 (Nephi₂), 3 Nephi 1:2 (Nephi₃), 4 Nephi title appositive (Nephi₄). In the Index of the *Book of Mormon* published by the Church of Jesus Christ when two or more persons share the same name, they are identified separately using superscript numbers (e.g., Aaron¹, Aaron², Aaron³). This study follows a similar protocol for names, but avoids confusing superscript name numbers and footnote numbers by placing the name numbers in a subscript position.

⁴⁸ 1 Nephi 1:1-4, 14-17; 18:7; Jacob 1:1-4; 7:27; Jarom 1:1, 15; Omni 1:1, 3-4, 8-10, 12, 25; 3 Nephi 5:20; Mormon 1:5; 6:6; 8:1, 13-14.

⁴⁹ 1 Nephi 5:14-16; Alma 10:3; Genesis 41:51; 46:20.

⁵⁰ 1 Nephi 1:18-2:10.

⁵¹ 1 Nephi 4:20-38; 7:1-6; 16:7.

⁵² 1 Nephi 7:13-15; 2 Nephi 25:9-10.

⁵³ This issue and related ones have been studied for many decades. Two chronologies appear to have reached a somewhat acceptable level of confidence among their separate proponents, one that ends Zedekiah's 11-year reign in 587 BCE and the other in 586 BCE. Jeremy

along the way, struggled throughout a lengthy trek in the Arabian Peninsula and an ocean voyage to the Western Hemisphere.⁵⁴ Often during the journey and particularly after Lehi₁'s death, Laman₁ and Nephi₁ competed for leadership of the group. Nephi₁'s leadership would seem to have become certain when he led the inspired work to build the ship that carried them across the sea. However, after the group's arrival and the subsequent death of Lehi₁, Nephi₁'s life again was threatened by those who preferred Laman₁'s leadership. Nephi₁ and his followers escaped this threat, taking with them the family's sacred records and other treasures.⁵⁵ Thus, the stage was set both for continued record keeping by the Nephites in the tradition of Lehi₁ and Nephi₁ and for conflicts with their enemies, who the Nephites usually labeled with the term "Lamanites", whether or not such enemies descended from Nephi₁'s original rival or his followers.⁵⁶

1.6.1 Small plates of Nephi

Some *Book of Mormon* narratives describe generations of writers who wrote on a small set of plates created by Nephi₁ in the sixth century BCE. After writing two books on these plates,⁵⁷ Nephi₁ delivered them to Jacob₂, a younger brother who had been born during the trek of Lehi₁ and his followers through Arabia.⁵⁸ In accordance with Nephi₁'s "commands", Jacob₂ wrote his own book on these plates and several generations of his descendants also recorded their narratives in three more books engraved on the plates.⁵⁹ In this study these plates usually are called the "small plates of Nephi" or just the "small plates".⁶⁰

Amaleki₁, the last of Jacob₂'s descendants to write on these plates, noted that he "began to be old" and was "about to lay down in [his] grave".⁶¹ He had no surviving descendants and his brother had disappeared "into the wilderness", along with a leader named Zeniff and "a considerable number" of other Nephites.⁶² With no family member to receive the small plates, Amaleki₁ decided to give them to king Benjamin, the then-current Nephite ruler and keeper of the collected Nephite records and treasures.⁶³ Apparently, the small plates were kept with the other records, where Mormon₂ found them some five centuries later.⁶⁴

Hughes, *Secrets of the Times: Myth and History in Biblical Chronology*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, Supplement Series 66 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), 229 n.137, listed eleven scholars in favor of 587 BCE and twelve scholars in favor of 586 BCE.

⁵⁴ 1 Nephi 17:4-8; 18:1-6, 8, 23-25.

⁵⁵ 1 Nephi 2:11-24; 3:28-4:5; 7:6-22; 16:17-32, 37-39; 17:17-55; 18:9-22; 2 Nephi 1:28-29; 4:12-14; 5:1-19.

⁵⁶ Nephi₁ and his followers were opposed by the followers of Nephi₁'s older brother, Laman₁ (2 Nephi 4:12-14; 5:1-14). Eventually, the term "Lamanites" became a term used by the Nephites for most of their enemies (e.g., Jacob 1:14).

⁵⁷ These consecutive books on the small plates were both originally entitled by Nephi₁ "The Book of Nephi". Two more consecutive books in Mormon₂'s set of plates also were entitled "The Book of Nephi". In the printer's manuscript, Oliver Cowdery inserted "first" and "second" into the titles of Nephi₁'s books and these modified titles have appeared in the *Book of Mormon* since 1830. In the 1879 Church edition, the editor Orson Pratt added the prefixes "III Nephi" and "IV Nephi" to the titles of the books in Mormon₂'s set of plates. In the 1920 Church edition, these prefixes were changed to "Third Nephi" and "Fourth Nephi". Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon, Part One*, 42-43.

⁵⁸ 1 Nephi 18:7; Jacob 1:1-4.

⁵⁹ Jacob 7:27; see also 1 Nephi 1:16-17; 6:1-3; 9:2-5; 10:1; 19:1-4; 2 Nephi 5:30-32; Jacob 1:1-4; 3:13-14; Words of Mormon 1:3-4.

⁶⁰ After Nephi₁'s death, this set of plates that he had given to his brother Jacob₂ seems, at least for a time, to have been known as the "plates of Jacob" (Jacob 1:1-5; 3:14). By the time of Jacob₂'s grandson Jarom, however, the name of these plates may have reverted to being known as the "plates of Nephi" (1 Nephi 9:2-4) because they could be distinguished from "the other plates of Nephi" kept by the Nephite kings (Jacob 1:1-5; Jarom 1:2, 14, italics added).

⁶¹ Omni 1:25, 30.

⁶² Omni 1:25, 27-30.

⁶³ Omni 1:25; Mosiah 1:1-8, 15-17.

⁶⁴ Words of Mormon 1:2-7, 10-11.

Of particular note are Amaleki₁'s final words, "these plates are full, and I make an end of my speaking".⁶⁵ Despite these words, the small plates of Nephi appear to have had sufficient blank space⁶⁶ for Mormon₂ to add his own words to the plates.⁶⁷ Mormon₂ differentiated the various writings that had been entitled with the noun *book* on the small plates of Nephi (e.g., the "Book of Jarom") from his own writings, which he entitled the "Words of Mormon". In a few words, he described how he found the small plates and noted his intention to keep them, rather than bury them again with all the other records.⁶⁸ Thus, Mormon₂ "finish[ed] [his] record upon ... these plates" by creating an explanatory bridge between the narratives contained in the small plates of Nephi and his own collection of narratives on a separate set of plates.⁶⁹

1.6.2 Plates of Mormon

Book of Mormon narratives describe Mormon₂ as a Nephite military leader in the fourth century CE.⁷⁰ When his life was ended by Lamanites,⁷¹ he also had been the Nephites' official record keeper for about sixty-four years.⁷² Near the end of his life, he condensed the records of his people and his own observations⁷³ into seven small books⁷⁴ that were engraved on a few⁷⁵ metal plates he had "made with [his] own hands".⁷⁶ His first six books were given the names of earlier notable record keepers: Lehi,⁷⁷ Mosiah,⁷⁸ Alma, Helaman, and Nephi (two books). His seventh small book, which he entitled with his own name, contained a brief "record of the things which I [Mormon₂] have seen with mine own eyes".⁷⁹ Just before his death, he delivered these few plates and the small plates of Nephi to his son, Moroni₂, who became the final Nephite record keeper.⁸⁰ In this study, the plates containing Mormon₂'s seven books usually are called the "plates of Mormon".

When Mormon₂ gave his son the responsibility of finishing the seventh book, Mormon₂ noted: "it supposeth me that [Moroni₂] will witness the entire destruction of my people. But may God grant that he may survive them, that he may write somewhat concerning them and somewhat concerning Christ".⁸¹ When Moroni₂ finally could fulfill what he perceived as his

⁶⁵ Omni 1:30.

⁶⁶ See Division 10, Part 2, "Evidence for the Implied Plates of Moroni".

⁶⁷ Words of Mormon 1:3-4, 6 ("these plates"), 5 ("these things").

⁶⁸ Words of Mormon 1:1-8.

⁶⁹ Words of Mormon 1:5-6, 9-18.

⁷⁰ 3 Nephi 5:20; Mormon 1:5, 8-9; 2:1-9, 23-29; 3:1-13; 5:1-7; 6:1-11.

⁷¹ Mormon 6:10; 8:1-3.

⁷² 4 Nephi 1:48; Mormon 1:1-5; 6:5-10; 8:1-3.

⁷³ 3 Nephi 5:14-17; 4 Nephi 1:48; Mormon 1:2-5; 4:16-23; 6:1-6.

⁷⁴ The division of Nephite history into seven books appears to have been Mormon₂'s choice. See Helaman 2:13-14 ("the book of Helaman"); Mosiah 1:8 ("this book", in which Mormon₂ abridged the record concerning the preparation of king Benjamin's sons for the kingship); 3 Nephi 5:7-8 ("this book", in which Mormon₂ abridged the chronicles of a certain 25-year period). See Division 10, Part 3, "Identifying Major Divisions in the Plates".

⁷⁵ Mormon 6:6. The adjective *few* means "[n]ot many" or "small in number." Webster, *An American Dictionary of the English Language*, I: [743] (*few*). *Few* usually modifies "a plural [subject] expressed or to be supplied from context." *The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary*, I: 990.

⁷⁶ 3 Nephi 5:11; Mormon 6:6.

⁷⁷ The original manuscript containing Mormon₂'s first book, the Book of Lehi, was lost before it could be copied. Smith, *The Book of Mormon* (1830), [iii]-iv. See Section 1.7 of this Part.

⁷⁸ Only the latter part of the Book of Mosiah has survived. See Section 1.7 of this Part.

⁷⁹ 3 Nephi 5:17.

⁸⁰ Mormon 6:5-6; 8:1-13; Moroni 9:24.

⁸¹ Words of Mormon 1:2.

father's commands, he began by introducing himself and his goal: "Behold, I Moroni do finish the record of my father Mormon. Behold, I have but few things to write, which things I have been commanded of my father." Then he noted he had no "room" on the plates of Mormon to write everything he wanted, but he made a brief religious statement, reported the final destruction of the Nephites, added a chronological note concluding a 400-year period and finished by stating, "Behold, I am Moroni. And were it possible I would make all things known unto you. Behold, I make an end of speaking concerning this people. I am the son of Mormon, and my father was the descendant of Nephi".⁸² This statement appears to have been engraved late in the fourth century CE and to have ended Moroni₂'s engravings on his father's plates.⁸³

1.6.3 Plates of Moroni

Sometime later Moroni₂ again began to write, but with no apparent concern that the plates of Mormon had no room on them or that the Words of Mormon had used the remaining space on the small plates of Nephi. This time Moroni₂ recorded counsel, testimony and prophecy as part of an extended conclusion to his father's book.⁸⁴ Then he engraved an abridgment of the Book of Ether, which contained ancient Jaredite narratives and genealogy. Mormon₂ had stated his intent to include Jaredite narratives in the *Book of Mormon*,⁸⁵ but his time to do so apparently ran out. Moroni₂, after engraving the Book of Ether, noted that he had "not as yet perished", but he remained alone because of the "hatred" of his enemies and their "exceeding fierce" wars, and he "wander[ed] whithersoever [he could] for the safety of [his] own life".⁸⁶ Under those conditions, he decided to "write a few more things"; so, he added his own book, the Book of Moroni, to the expanding record and he included within it ancient church policies and quotations of some of his father's other writings.⁸⁷ Moroni₂ ended this last book with more counsel and testimony in which he reported that "more than four hundred and twenty years has passed away since the sign was given of the coming of Christ".⁸⁸

All of this writing by Moroni₂ ended more than two decades after he stated that he had no room on the plates of Mormon to record what he wanted to write. Thus, his extended conclusion of his father's personal book and his writing of two more books indicate that Moroni₂ had obtained blank plates. Perhaps he made them, which presumably would have been a very difficult task to accomplish while remaining alone and in hiding.⁸⁹ More likely, since he also began working with the Book of Ether, Moroni₂ gained access to the accumulated Nephite records that his father had buried and there Moroni₂ found blank "plates of Nephi" on which to write.⁹⁰ Whatever the source of the additional blank plates, this study distinguishes them from the plates of Mormon by calling them the "plates of Moroni".⁹¹ Moroni₂ apparently attached the

⁸² Mormon 8:1-13.

⁸³ See Division 10, Part 2, "Evidence for the Implied Plates of Moroni".

⁸⁴ Mormon 8:14-9:37.

⁸⁵ Mosiah 28:10-19.

⁸⁶ Moroni 1:1-3.

⁸⁷ Moroni 1:4; 2-9.

⁸⁸ Moroni 10:1.

⁸⁹ Mormon 8:1-5.

⁹⁰ Mormon 1:4; 2:17-18.

⁹¹ Since the point of division between the plates of Mormon and the plates of Moroni is not expressly mentioned in the *Book of Mormon*, that point must be inferred; otherwise, Moroni₂'s report that the plates of Mormon had insufficient room on them (Mormon 8:5) would seem to be a material error in the text. See Division 10, Part 2, "Evidence for the Implied Plates of Moroni", for a discussion of the textual evidence and three lines of reasoning that support the conclusion that the use of the plates of Moroni at Mormon 8:14 may be inferred.

plates of Mormon, plates of Moroni and small plates of Nephi to each other and this collection of writings then became the basis for the text of the original manuscript of the *Book of Mormon*.⁹²

Perhaps it will be helpful to restate here the analytical policy of this study. One may accept or reject the belief that these narratives about plates are based on ancient reality. The truthfulness of the narratives is not the reason they are mentioned here. The reason is that the text provides narratives that separate temporal-expressions into three fundamental groups. Table 1.C lists the three sets of plates, names their major divisions and principal writers, provides a general guide in Western calendrical terms as to when the text indicates that the plates initially began to be engraved, and lists the extant numbers of temporal-expressions in each major division. All of this information is based on what the text says about itself and its constituent parts called “plates”.

1.7 Books and words

As depicted in Table 1.C, the works of most *Book of Mormon* writers are found within a single set of plates. However, the writings of the last two Nephite record keepers, Mormon₂ and Moroni₂, appear in more than one set of plates. Mormon₂'s seven books are listed in the plates of Mormon, but the Words of Mormon conclude the small plates of Nephi. Moroni₂'s additions to his father's personal book appear at the end of the plates of Mormon and are extended into the plates of Moroni. Moroni₂ also engraved two more books in the plates of Moroni.

1.7.1 The lost texts

In the printer's manuscript and subsequent printed editions of the *Book of Mormon*, the writings on the small plates of Nephi and the plates of Moroni are complete.⁹³ However, as Table 1.C also indicates, Mormon₂'s composition of seven books on the plates of Mormon has been altered substantially. This revision began to occur when the first 116 pages of the original manuscript were lost before they could be copied. In the first half of 1828, Joseph Smith and his then-principal scribe, Martin Harris, produced more than 116 pages of original manuscript. During July 1828, Harris lost the first 116 manuscript pages when he took them to show his family. These pages contained the complete text of Mormon₂'s first book, the Book of Lehi,⁹⁴ and perhaps a small initial part of Mormon₂'s second book, the Book of Mosiah.⁹⁵ For months, the writing of the original manuscript was stalled. Skousen noted that “Joseph Smith retained

⁹² A fourth set of plates, sealed together in some manner, also was attached to the three principal sets from which the *Book of Mormon* was translated. Joseph was commanded not to break the seal or attempt to translate the writings on this fourth set. Kirk B. Henriksen, compiler, “How Witnesses Described the ‘Gold Plates’”, *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 10/1 (2001): 16-21, 78.

⁹³ “Virtually all of the printer's manuscript is extant (99.98 percent). Occasionally, at the end or beginning of a line, one or two letters may be missing, but this occurs quite rarely. The only place with any substantial degree of missing text occurs at the bottom of the first leaf, where approximately one and a half lines of text are missing on each side of the leaf (namely, portions of 1 Nephi 1:7-8 and 1 Nephi 1:20).” The conjectured text for the missing letters and lines is that which appears in the 1830 printed edition of the book and, in part, in a fragment of the first leaf that is now missing, but was photographed by E.H. Tordoff during 1922-23. Skousen, ed., *The Printer's Manuscript of the Book of Mormon, Part One*, 20-21, 52-55, Plate 1.

⁹⁴ Smith, *The Book of Mormon* (1830), [iii]-iv; Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, 66-68; Skousen, ed., *The Original Manuscript of the Book of Mormon*, 5-6.

⁹⁵ Typical scribal practice concluded one book and started another on the same manuscript page. The only known exceptions occurred at the conclusions of the Book of Mormon (on a page that also ended a gathering of pages) and the Book of Ether (which concluded at the bottom of a page). Skousen, ed., *The Original Manuscript of the Book of Mormon*, 13-16, 34-37, 164-65 (1 Nephi/2 Nephi), 208-09 (Jacob/Enos), 486-87 (Alma/Helaman), 512-13 (Helaman/3 Nephi); idem, *The Printer's Manuscript of the Book of Mormon, Part One*, 9-15, 31-33, 142-43 (1 Nephi/2 Nephi), 240-41 (2 Nephi/Jacob), 270-71 (Jacob/Enos), 274-75 (Enos/Jarom), 276-77 (Jarom/Omni), 280-81 (Omni/Words of Mormon), 284-85 (Words of Mormon/Mosiah), 388-89 (Mosiah/Alma); idem, *The Printer's Manuscript of the Book of Mormon, Part Two*, 710-11 (Alma/Helaman), 776-77 (Helaman/3 Nephi), 870-71 (3 Nephi/4 Nephi), 876-77 (4 Nephi/Mormon), 906-09 (Mormon/Ether), 956-59 (Ether/Moroni).

from the summer of 1828 some small portion of the translation ... and may have added a few additional pages translated in March 1829 ... just prior to Oliver Cowdery's arrival the following month". Skousen also theorized that the original manuscript pages existing at the end of March 1829 included some part of the Book of Mosiah dealing with the reigns of king Mosiah₁ and his son king Benjamin.⁹⁶ In April 1829, Cowdery became Joseph's principal scribe and the writing process re-commenced probably somewhere in the Book of Mosiah, where it had left off in March 1829.⁹⁷ About this same time, Joseph decided to substitute narratives in the small plates of Nephi for the narratives in the plates of Mormon that had been part of the lost 116 pages. The small plates of Nephi apparently covered much of the same period.⁹⁸

When the time came for Cowdery to begin preparing the printer's manuscript, the earliest extant Nephiite narratives were those in the original manuscript text of the small plates of Nephi. Whatever then remained of the initial part of the Book of Mosiah apparently was not copied into the printer's manuscript. Thus, the portion of the text that is referred to in this study as the "lost texts" included, first, the 116 original manuscript pages that contained the Book of Lehi and perhaps the title and other beginning texts of the Book of Mosiah and, second, the portion of the original manuscript that contained the initial part of the Book of Mosiah describing the reigns of king Mosiah₁ and his son, king Benjamin. This initial part of the Book of Mosiah not only was not copied into the printer's manuscript, it apparently was later destroyed by water and mold when the original manuscript lay inside the cornerstone of a building in Nauvoo, Illinois.⁹⁹

1.7.2 Fifteen major divisions

While the damage to Mormon₂'s original design of seven books was repaired somewhat by the partial replacement of the lost texts with narratives recorded in the small plates of Nephi, Mormon₂'s Book of Lehi disappeared entirely and was replaced with six books that had been written hundreds of years earlier, plus the Words of Mormon that had been added to the small plates of Nephi. The six books in the small plates of Nephi included two more entitled the Book of Nephi (now sometimes called First Nephi and Second Nephi), the Book of Jacob (named after Nephi₁'s younger brother Jacob₂), and the tiny books named after Enos₂, Jarom and Omni, three of the descendants of Jacob₂. As discussed above, many years after Mormon₂'s death, his son Moroni₂ created two more books, the Book of Ether (named after the book that Moroni₂ translated and abridged) and the Book of Moroni.

Thus, with Moroni₂'s writings, the number of books in the *Book of Mormon* increased anciently from seven to nine and they were accompanied by the six books and Words of Mormon engraved on the small plates. The number of books to be published as the *Book of Mormon*

⁹⁶ Royal Skousen, "Critical Methodology and the Text of the Book of Mormon", *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 6/1 (1994): 137-39. Skousen's theory of two initial chapters in the Book of Mosiah is not unquestionable. Compare the chapter designation for the Book of Omni ("Chapter first") with the original chapter designations for the Words of Mormon ("Chapter 2.d") and the perhaps as yet untitled Book of Mosiah ("Chapter III"), which suggest that Cowdery may have initially identified "Chapter III" as the third chapter in the Book of Omni before the title "the Book of Mosiah" was inserted above the line in that part of the text. Skousen, ed., *The Printer's Manuscript of the Book of Mormon, Part One*, 276, 281, 284.

⁹⁷ John W. Welch and Tim Rathbone, "How Long Did It Take to Translate the Book of Mormon?" in Welch, ed., *Reexploring the Book of Mormon*, 1-8. See also John W. Welch, "The Miraculous Translation of the Book of Mormon", in John W. Welch, ed., *Opening the Heavens: Accounts of Divine Manifestations, 1820-1844*, 2nd ed. (Provo, Utah: BYU Press and Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book, 2017), 99-104, 107.

⁹⁸ Words of Mormon 1:3-11. See also Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, 66-69; Skousen, ed., *The Original Manuscript of the Book of Mormon*, 5-6; Welch, "The Miraculous Translation of the Book of Mormon", in Welch, ed., *Opening the Heavens: Accounts of Divine Manifestations, 1820-1844*, 96, 106-07; *The Doctrine and Covenants* (Salt Lake City, Utah: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1981), Section 3 (Introduction) and Section 10.

⁹⁹ Skousen, ed., *The Original Manuscript of the Book of Mormon*, 6-7, 37.

decreased in 1828 to eight because of the lost texts and then in 1829 expanded to 14, plus a 15th major division, the Words of Mormon, when the narratives of the small plates of Nephi were inserted into, and made a part of, the 19th century *Book of Mormon*. These 15 extant major divisions appear to separate temporal-expressions in ways that must be taken into account. The separations can be consciously disregarded when the analysis suggests that step is appropriate, but these major divisions appear to exercise a major influence on the content, placement and meaning of temporal-expressions in the *Book of Mormon*.

1.8 Other plates used as sources

Book of Mormon narratives not only describe three structural parts or sets of plates on which the text was engraved, but they mention additional sets of plates that writers used as their sources. In this study, these source plates usually are identified as the “brass plates”, the “official plates of Nephi”, the “plates of Zeniff” and the “plates of Ether”. These source plates also may affect the ways that some temporal-expressions appear to be grouped.

The creation of source plates apparently began before Lehi₁'s first prophetic vision, which Nephi₁ implied had occurred in the first year of Judah's king Zedekiah.¹⁰⁰ Craftsmen had made “plates of brass” on which was engraved a text that Lehi₁ initially called “the record of the Jews and also a genealogy of my forefathers”, who were descendants of Manasseh.¹⁰¹ Nephi₁, at his father's request and with both help and hindrance from his older brothers, obtained these plates from Laban's treasury in Jerusalem.¹⁰² Lehi₁'s family found that the brass plates contained “a genealogy of [their] forefathers”,¹⁰³ together with “the five books of Moses ... and also a record of the Jews from the beginning ... down to the commencement of the reign of Zedekiah, king of Judah, and also the prophecies of the holy prophets ... down to the commencement of the reign of Zedekiah, and also many prophecies which have been spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah”.¹⁰⁴ The engravings on the brass plates were made in “the language of the Egyptians”,¹⁰⁵ a language understood by Lehi₁ and his son Nephi₁.¹⁰⁶ Hundreds of years later, king Benjamin emphasized to his sons the significance of these plates to Nephite culture when he transferred the record keeping responsibility to his eldest son, Mosiah₂. “I say unto you my sons: Were it not for these things which have been kept and preserved by the hand of God, that we might read and understand of his mysteries and have his commandments always before our eyes, that even our fathers would have dwindled in unbelief, and we should have been like unto our brethren the Lamanites”.¹⁰⁷ In other words, the most vital cultural divide in the *Book of Mormon*, the gulf separating Nephites from their neighbors, was attributed to Nephite preservation and study of the writings on the brass plates.

Official Nephite record keepers also believed their own writings were valuable and sacred; so, they engraved them on plates kept in what became an extensive library known as the “book”

¹⁰⁰ 1 Nephi 1:4-6; 5:10-13.

¹⁰¹ 1 Nephi 3:3; Alma 10:3.

¹⁰² 1 Nephi 3-4.

¹⁰³ 1 Nephi 5:14-16.

¹⁰⁴ 1 Nephi 5:11-13.

¹⁰⁵ Mosiah 1:4.

¹⁰⁶ 1 Nephi 1:1-3.

¹⁰⁷ Mosiah 1:5.

or “plates” of Nephi.¹⁰⁸ To distinguish this eventually large collection of plates of Nephi from the small plates of Nephi, this study usually will refer to the large collection as the official plates of Nephi. Mormon₂ was the second to last of the official Nephite record keepers¹⁰⁹ in a scribal line extending back more than 900 years to their common ancestors, Lehi₁ and Nephi₁.¹¹⁰ When Mormon₂ was “about ten years of age”, he was informed by Ammaron, the then-current record keeper, that the official plates of Nephi had been hidden “unto the Lord” at the hill Shim.¹¹¹ Ammaron commanded Mormon₂ to remember the things that he saw “concerning this people”, go to the hill when he was “about twenty and four years old”, take blank “plates of Nephi” and engrave on them “all the things that ye have observed concerning this people”, but to keep all the other records “in the place where they are”.¹¹² When Mormon₂ reached the required age, he began to record his memories and observations on blank “plates of Nephi”, so as to fulfill the commands of Ammaron.¹¹³ After another forty years had passed, “the Lamanites were about to overthrow the land” of the Nephites. Mormon₂ apparently believed that he needed to move the official plates of Nephi to preserve them from the Lamanites; so, he went to the hill Shim and removed “all the records which Ammaron had hid up unto the Lord”. The retreat of the Nephites continued until they reached the land of Cumorah, where the records eventually were hidden in the earth again.¹¹⁴ This final burial apparently ended Mormon₂’s work with the official plates of Nephi. At Cumorah, the Nephites made their final stand and were almost entirely destroyed.¹¹⁵

Two other sets of source plates are described as having been created by groups that were separate from the main body of the Nephites. During the reign of king Benjamin, a large group of Nephites then living in the land of Zarahemla were led by a man named Zeniff back to an area that had once been the Nephite homeland, known by them as the land of Nephi. This land had fallen under Lamanite rule, but arrangements were made by Zeniff for him to become the king of this group of Nephites and for them to occupy the land and make it productive.¹¹⁶ They did so, but conditions later imposed in the land of Nephi by the more powerful Lamanites became unbearable for the Nephites.¹¹⁷ Zeniff’s grandson, king Limhi, escaped with his people and returned to the land of Zarahemla, taking with them metal plates containing the “record of Zeniff” and the “records of the people of Zeniff”. King Mosiah₂ welcomed the refugees, settled them in his lands and apparently placed their records with the official plates of Nephi.¹¹⁸ In this study, the collective records brought by king Limhi to king Mosiah₂ are usually called the plates of Zeniff.

Before king Limhi and his people finally escaped to the land of Zarahemla, he sent out a search party to find the route they should take. The search party became lost, but found the remains of a people that had been destroyed, including 24 plates of “pure gold” engraved with writings the search party could not read. The search party eventually found its way back to the

¹⁰⁸ 1 Nephi 1:17; 9:1-5; 19:5-6; Jacob 1:1-4, 18-19; Words of Mormon 1:10-11; Mosiah 1:1-7; 28:10-20; Alma 37:1-5, 14-16, 47; 50:38; 63:1, 11-13; 3 Nephi 1:2; 4 Nephi 1:48-49; Mormon 1:2-5; 2:17-18; 4:23; 5:8-9, 12-21; 6:6; Moroni 9:24.

¹⁰⁹ His son Moroni₂ became the last of these record keepers. Mormon 6:6; 8:1-4, 14-16; Moroni 9:22-24.

¹¹⁰ 1 Nephi 2:1-10; 3 Nephi 1:1; 2:4-8; 4 Nephi 1:48.

¹¹¹ Mormon 1:3-4.

¹¹² 4 Nephi 1:48-49; Mormon 1:2-5.

¹¹³ Mormon 2:17-18.

¹¹⁴ Mormon 4:16-5:7; 6:6

¹¹⁵ Mormon 6; 8:1-3.

¹¹⁶ Omni 1:27-29; Mosiah 9:1-9.

¹¹⁷ Mosiah 7:14-15, 21-24; 21:1-8, 11-22.

¹¹⁸ Mosiah 8:5; 9; heading-10:22; 11-22; 25:5.

land of Nephi and gave king Limhi the 24 plates. These plates were later delivered by king Limhi to king Mosiah₂, who translated them. They were found to contain a book written by Ether, a Jaredite prophet.¹¹⁹ In this study, these plates typically are called the plates of Ether.

Thus, seven sets of metal plates are described in the *Book of Mormon*. Four of them (the brass plates, official plates of Nephi, plates of Zeniff and plates of Ether) served as sources for many of the narratives and quotations engraved on the other three sets of plates (the plates of Mormon, plates of Moroni and small plates of Nephi). These latter three sets of plates were combined by Moroni₂ into a single set and hidden in the earth. Some fourteen centuries later, Joseph Smith reported that Moroni₂, as an angel, delivered the combined set of plates to him for the purpose of translating them.¹²⁰

Seven sets of plates, however, apparently do not make the *Book of Mormon* narratives complicated enough. In this source book, the original writings of Lehi₁ are referred to as the “record of Lehi” because Nephi₁ mentioned “the record of my father” as one of his sources. Nephi₁ also noted that he was not making “a full account of the things which my father hath written, for he hath written many things which he saw in visions and in dreams. And he also hath written many things which he prophesied and spake unto his children”.¹²¹ At some point, the record of Lehi apparently was engraved on metal plates,¹²² which in this study usually are called the “plates of Lehi.” While the plates of Lehi are not mentioned in the extant text of the *Book of Mormon*, they are mentioned in the preface of the 1830 edition, where Joseph Smith noted that the plates of Lehi had been abridged by Mormon₂ when he wrote the Book of Lehi.¹²³ Hence, Nephi₁’s comments about the record of Lehi and Joseph’s statement in the 1830 preface suggest that Lehi₁’s writings had been engraved on the plates of Lehi and that some part of those writings are now contained in Nephi₁’s abridgment of his father’s record in the small plates of Nephi. Presumably, the plates of Lehi, like the brass plates, the small plates of Nephi, the plates of Zeniff and the plates of Ether, at some point were stored with the official plates of Nephi. Finally, a ninth set of plates, sealed together in some manner, has been described by witnesses as also being attached to the three principal sets from which the *Book of Mormon* was translated. Apparently, Joseph was commanded not to break the seal or attempt to translate the writings on this set of plates; so, this ninth set of plates may or may not have been a source for some of the writings in the extant *Book of Mormon*. According to Orson Pratt, one of Joseph’s associates, these sealed plates contain a vision that a Jaredite prophet recorded, but it is “reserved to come forth in due time”.¹²⁴

1.9 Other defined chronological expressions

Besides the observation of time moving from intervals that were “then”, “before”, “that time” or “times of old”,¹²⁵ to “now”, “this time” or “this present time”,¹²⁶ and to “then”, “after”,

¹¹⁹ Mosiah 8:7-14; 22:11-14.

¹²⁰ Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, 41-46; Hardy, “Introduction,” in Skousen, ed., *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text*, xi-xiv.

¹²¹ 1 Nephi 1:16-17.

¹²² Nephi₁ indicates that this was done to obey a record keeping commandment of the Lord. 1 Nephi 19:1-2.

¹²³ Smith, *The Book of Mormon* (1830), [iii].

¹²⁴ Henrichsen, compiler, “How Witnesses Described the ‘Gold Plates’”, *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 10/1 (2001): 16-21, 78.

¹²⁵ E.g., 1 Nephi 4:35; 8:11, 37; 10:17, 19; 11:1; 2 Nephi 26:22; Alma 12:30; 29:10; 36:24; 4 Nephi 1:25; Mormon 3:12; 9:27; Ether 3:26.

¹²⁶ E.g., 1 Nephi 3:20; 5:8; 12:18; 20:7; Mosiah 1:3-4; 2:12; Alma 30:32; 3 Nephi 9:13; Mormon 6:21; Ether 3:16; Moroni 7:2-3.

“hence”, “henceforth” or “times to come”,¹²⁷ the *Book of Mormon* also mentions a general “space” or “period” of time¹²⁸ and specific natural and cultural divisions of time in addition to the year. Two of the more frequently mentioned divisions of time are both simply called a “day”. The noun *day*, in singular, plural and combined forms such as *daily*, *mid-day*, *today* or *yesterday*, occurs more than 600 times in the extant text.¹²⁹ Some of these occurrences clearly refer just to “[t]hat part of the time of the earth’s revolution on its axis, in which its surface is presented to the sun; ... or the space of time between the rising and setting of the sun; called the artificial day.”¹³⁰ Other occurrences of *day* refer to “the whole time or period of one revolution of the earth on its axis”, a day with periods of sunlight and darkness, which Webster’s 1828 dictionary called a “natural day”.¹³¹ Occasionally, a *Book of Mormon* narrative is unclear which kind of day is meant because both kinds of day could be numbered and aggregated into longer periods. However, to understand *Book of Mormon* chronology, one must also know the limits of a natural day because natural days seem to have been treated as civil or calendrical days and aggregated into units called a week, month and year.

1.9.1 Natural day

A Nephite natural day began when the previous night came to an end. The evidence for this assertion includes the *Book of Mormon* use of the related nouns *night*, *day*, *morrow*, *tomorrow*, and *morning*. The singular noun *night* appears in the small plates of Nephi,¹³² the plates of Mormon¹³³ and the plates of Moroni.¹³⁴ The plural noun *nights* also occurs in the plates of Mormon.¹³⁵ The combined noun *nighttime* is used in the small plates of Nephi and the plates of Mormon.¹³⁶ Each of these words refers to a time of darkness that is part of a natural day.¹³⁷ Many instances of *night* and *nights* occur without being expressly contrasted with a word or phrase suggesting the period of sunlight,¹³⁸ but many more references to the period of darkness are clearly contrasted with the artificial day. The basic phrase *day and night* occurs in the plates of Mormon.¹³⁹ The more complex phrase *by day and by night* and related instances where *by day* appears shortly before *by night* occur in the small plates of Nephi, the plates of Mormon and the plates of Moroni.¹⁴⁰ Similarly, within the plates of Mormon, the passage of time is described as occurring on *two days and two nights*,¹⁴¹ on *three days and three nights* and *for three days and*

¹²⁷ E.g., 1 Nephi 1:17; 10:3, 19; 12:18; 13:42; 2 Nephi 29:9; Jacob 7:7; Alma 3:14, 17; 9:26; 16:20; 32:17; Helaman 12:19; Ether 4:15-16; 13:10-11; Moroni 7:3; 10:2.

¹²⁸ E.g., Mosiah 2:28; Alma 9:11, 17; 40:9; 53:19; 56:50.

¹²⁹ See Division 10, Part 4, “The Vital Day”.

¹³⁰ Webster, *An American Dictionary of the English Language*, I: [525] (*day*), punctuation and spelling in, and italics removed from, the original.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² E.g., 1 Nephi 4:5, 22; 16:9; 2 Nephi 9:52; 10:3; 14:5; Enos 1:4.

¹³³ E.g., Mosiah 9:18; 22:6, 11, 15; Alma 2:20; 34:33; 47:10; 51:33; 56:16, 22, 38; Helaman 2:6; 14:3-4; 3 Nephi 1:8, 13-15, 19; 3:14.

¹³⁴ E.g., Ether 6:9; 7:18; 8:5; 13:13-14; Moroni 7:15.

¹³⁵ E.g., Mosiah 27:23; Alma 18:43; 19:1, 5; 36:10, 16; 38:8; 57:9.

¹³⁶ E.g., 2 Nephi 4:23; Mosiah 24:18; Alma 47:13; 55:22; 58:27; 3 Nephi 4:24-25.

¹³⁷ “The sense may be dark, black, or it may be the decline of the day ... [or t]hat part of the natural day when the sun is beneath the horizon, or the time from sunset to sunrise.” Webster, *An American Dictionary of the English Language*, II: [180] (*night*).

¹³⁸ 1 Nephi 4:5, 22; 2 Nephi 27:3; Mosiah 21:21; 22:6, 11; Alma 55:29; 57:8-10; Helaman 2:6; 3 Nephi 27:33; Ether 7:18; 8:5; 14:5.

¹³⁹ 3 Nephi 3:14; 5:3.

¹⁴⁰ 1 Nephi 17:30; 2 Nephi 9:52; 14:5; 33:3; Alma 56:16; 3 Nephi 4:21; Ether 13:13; 14:23.

¹⁴¹ Mosiah 27:23; Alma 18:43; 19:1, 5.

for three nights.¹⁴² Following the same order, *all the day* occurs before the following *night* once in each principal set of plates.¹⁴³ The phrase *one day* is followed by the word *night* in the plates of Mormon.¹⁴⁴ Likewise, there are references to *this day* or *that day* followed by the word *night* in the plates of Mormon and the plates of Moroni.¹⁴⁵ This word order (day before night) indicates that throughout the time of the Nephites and at least by the end of the Jaredite period, a natural day was understood to begin with an artificial day and to last through the ensuing night.

Two texts in the plates of Mormon use the reverse word order (night before day), but this use appears to be literary rather than calendrical. The first text is in Helaman₂'s letter (quoted in part by Mormon₂) that describes the military operations of Helaman₂'s army.¹⁴⁶ When his young troops arrived at the Nephite city of Judea, Helaman₂ "found Antipus and his men toiling with their might to fortify the city. Yea, and they were depressed in body as well as in spirit, for they had fought valiantly *by day* and toiled *by night* to maintain their cities".¹⁴⁷ In this part of his letter, Helaman₂ used the typical word order (day before night).

Later, he wrote that after the arrival of his reinforcements, the Lamanites ceased their attacks on the city and the Nephites completed their defensive preparations.¹⁴⁸ Then he noted that "we kept spies out round about to watch the movements of the Lamanites, that they might not pass us *by night* or *by day* to make an attack upon our other cities, which were on the northward".¹⁴⁹ Helaman₂'s change in word order (night before day) seems to have been made to emphasize the importance of his army's night maneuvers. Nephite spies, perhaps including some of his fresh warriors, were active night and day.

In the remainder of his letter, the words *night* and *nights* occur eight times and the word *nighttime* occurs once,¹⁵⁰ while the artificial day is only mentioned twice.¹⁵¹ When the "strongest army of the Lamanites" was duped into leaving the city of Antiparah to destroy Helaman₂'s small army, a great chase occurred with Helaman₂'s troops trying to avoid being overtaken by the Lamanites and the Nephite army of Antipus pursuing the Lamanites. Each army encamped for the night, but it appears that Nephite observers monitored the Lamanite activities that night because Helaman₂'s army was aware that "before the dawn of the morning, behold, the Lamanites were pursuing us".¹⁵² Helaman₂ also reported that on another occasion, Nephite forces surrounded the Lamanite-occupied city of Cumeni "by night," laid siege to the city for "many nights" and established guards so "the Lamanites could not come upon us by night and slay us, which they attempted many times". The Nephites also captured provisions for the city that the Lamanites attempted to deliver "by night." Largely because of the Nephites' effectual night operations, the besieged city eventually capitulated to the Nephites.¹⁵³

¹⁴² Alma 36:10, 16; 38:8.

¹⁴³ Enos 1:4; Alma 41:5; Ether 6:9.

¹⁴⁴ Mosiah 9:18; Helaman 14:4; 3 Nephi 1:8.

¹⁴⁵ Alma 34:33; 62:19-20; 3 Nephi 1:8; Ether 15:17, 20, 24-25.

¹⁴⁶ Alma 56-58.

¹⁴⁷ Alma 56:15-16, italics added.

¹⁴⁸ Alma 56:18-20.

¹⁴⁹ Alma 56:21-22, italics added.

¹⁵⁰ Alma 56:38; 57:8-10; 58:25-27.

¹⁵¹ Alma 56:40, 42. The phrases *many days* and *from day to day* also occur with respect to natural days (Alma 57:12; 58:5, 40), but unlike the artificial day, these references are not directly comparable to *night*.

¹⁵² Alma 56:30-39.

¹⁵³ Alma 57:7-12.

A similar strategy seems to have been attempted against a vastly superior Lamanite force occupying the city of Manti. Before the city could be surrounded, Lamanite spies discovered the approaching Nephites. To prevent a siege, the Lamanite army left the city in the hands of guards and set out to meet the Nephites in battle. Small groups of Nephite warriors were hidden, so they could slay the Lamanite spies and guards and retake the city, which they did later that day. The remainder of the Nephite army retreated into the wilderness, drawing the larger Lamanite army far from the city. That night, the Lamanites pitched their tents, apparently on the assumption that the entire Nephite army had done so, too. Thus, the Lamanites “took no thought concerning the city of Manti” and, during the night, Helaman₂ ordered his men to “march forward by another way towards the land of Manti.” As a result, “on the morrow [they] were beyond the Lamanites, insomuch that [they] did arrive before [the Lamanites] to the city of Manti”.¹⁵⁴ Thus, in connection with reinforcing the city of Judea and retaking the cities of Antiparah, Cumeni and Manti, Helaman₂’s army was often engaged in military operations at night. He seems to have emphasized these times of night warfare by referring to night so often and by reversing the word order from day before night in Alma 56:16 to night before day in Alma 56:22.

Third Nephi 4:16-22 provides further evidence that the reversal of the word order in Alma 56 may have been for literary emphasis, rather than for reporting different calendrical practices. The “armies” of the Gadianton robbers besieged the Nephites, who were prepared for the siege “because of their much provision which they had laid up in store”. The robbers, however, did not have sufficient wild game and other provisions available to maintain their strength. The Nephites then went on the offensive and “were continually marching out *by day and by night* and falling upon [the Gadianton] armies” (italics added). The Nephites’ success caused their enemies to withdraw the attempted siege “because of the great destruction which came upon them *by night and by day*” (italics added). Thus, it appears that the reversal of the word order from day before night to night before day in Third Nephi was again to emphasize Nephite strength and tactics in a literary way, rather than to describe an alternate method for defining the limits of a calendrical or natural day.

The conclusion that the night before day word pattern was used for literary emphasis rather than to describe a different civil or calendrical day also is supported by *Book of Mormon* texts that use the word *morrow*. The noun *morrow* and the combined noun *tomorrow* occur in the small plates of Nephi,¹⁵⁵ the plates of Mormon¹⁵⁶ and the plates of Moroni.¹⁵⁷ In 14 passages, the *Book of Mormon* makes it clear that the morrow followed the previous night¹⁵⁸ and in two texts this evidence is supported by references to the morrow commencing with the morning.¹⁵⁹ In Webster’s 1828 dictionary, the noun *morrow* was defined as “[t]he day next after the present” and “*To morrow* is equivalent to *on the morrow*.”¹⁶⁰ Hence, since the morrow was preceded by night and began with a morning, the “day next” and each succeeding “day next” also may be assumed to have begun with a morning.

¹⁵⁴ Alma 58:13-28.

¹⁵⁵ 1 Nephi 16:9; 18:6; 2 Nephi 9:54; 28:7-8; Jacob 2:11; 7:16-17.

¹⁵⁶ Mosiah 1:10; 7:3, 14, 17; 24:16; Alma 2:23; 14:20; 19:8, 11; 47:31; 52:22; 57:17; 58:14, 27; 62:38; Helaman 9:10; 13:34; 3 Nephi 1:13; 3:8; 4:25; 13:30, 34; 17:3; 19:2-4; 26:16; Mormon 6:11.

¹⁵⁷ Ether 14:1; 15:8, 17, 21, 23-24, 26, 29; Moroni 10:7.

¹⁵⁸ 2 Nephi 9:54; 10:3; Mosiah 24:16, 18; Alma 2:20, 23; 52:22; 58:27; 62:35, 38; 3 Nephi 1:13; 4:25; 19:2-4; Ether 15:16-17, 20-26.

¹⁵⁹ 1 Nephi 16:9-10; Mosiah 24:16, 19.

¹⁶⁰ Webster, *An American Dictionary of the English Language*, II: [150-51] (“morrow”), italics in the original.

1.9.2 Limits of a natural day

Book of Mormon people typically awoke and arose in the morning.¹⁶¹ Their day began with “the dawn of the day”, “the dawn of the morning” or “the light of the morning”.¹⁶² At the time the *Book of Mormon* was first published, the noun *dawn* could be defined as “[t]he break of day; the first appearance of light, in the morning.... The word may express the whole time from the first appearance of light to sunrise.”¹⁶³ Despite this general beginning of a natural day, a Lamanite prophet named Samuel₂ seems to have identified the precise beginning of a natural day with “the rising of the sun” on that day.¹⁶⁴ According to his contemporary named Nephi₃, when “the sun did rise in the morning again, according to its proper order,” the people then “knew that it was the day that the Lord should be born”.¹⁶⁵ That is, the appearance of the sun in the east that morning unquestionably signaled the beginning of the Nephite artificial and natural day. Moroni₂ similarly used the sun in the expression “from the morning even until the going down of the sun”¹⁶⁶ to refer to the artificial day and to function as the equivalent of the word *day* in his temporal word patterns in the Book of Ether.¹⁶⁷ One implication of Moroni₂’s statement may be that as the artificial day unquestionably ended with “the going down of the sun,” it just as certainly began with “the rising of the sun”, even though dawn preceded the rising of the sun and dusk followed the setting of the sun. Finally, during a time of war, “the Lamanites awoke on the first morning of the first month” and realized that the Nephites were “ready to give them battle on that day”.¹⁶⁸ According to these texts, the beginning of the natural or artificial day appears to have been anticipated with the earliest light or dawn of the morning and perhaps to have been formally acknowledged as a civil or calendrical day at the moment of sunrise. This pattern does not appear to be negated anywhere in the *Book of Mormon*. The transposing of the typical day before night word order in Alma 56 and 3 Nephi 4 seems to have been used only for literary emphasis and does not require the assumption that an alternative calendrical day (with night before day) existed among the Nephites.

1.9.3 Numbering days

In the plates of Mormon, a natural day is specified by a definite ordinal number indicating the position of that day within a calendrical period called a “week” or a “month”.¹⁶⁹ In addition, a “third day”¹⁷⁰ and a “fourth day”¹⁷¹ depict the numbering of natural days from the start of events that extended for several days. Definite cardinal numbers also are used to number natural and artificial days. The phrase *one day*, with the probable meaning of all or part of a natural or artificial day, occurs in the small plates of Nephi and the plates of Mormon.¹⁷² In both sets of

¹⁶¹ 1 Nephi 16:10; 2 Nephi 15:11; Alma 37:37; 52:1; 55:22.

¹⁶² Alma 47:14; 56:39, 41.

¹⁶³ Webster, *An American Dictionary of the English Language*, I: [525] (“dawn”).

¹⁶⁴ Helaman 14:4.

¹⁶⁵ 3 Nephi 1:19.

¹⁶⁶ Ether 12:3.

¹⁶⁷ See Division 4: Randall P. Spackman, “Interpreting *Forty and Two Years* in the Book of Mormon”, 13.

¹⁶⁸ Alma 52:1.

¹⁶⁹ Alma 56:1 (second); Alma 56:42 (third); Alma 10:6; 3 Nephi 8:5 (fourth); Alma 16:1 (fifth); Mosiah 13:18 (seventh); Alma 49:1 (tenth); Alma 14:23 (twelfth).

¹⁷⁰ Mosiah 3:10.

¹⁷¹ 1 Nephi 18:14.

¹⁷² 2 Nephi 19:14; 20:17; Mosiah 9:18; 18:25; 20:2; Alma 9:4; 16:10; 31:12; 40:8; Helaman 14:4; 3 Nephi 1:8.

plates, the term *one day* also may mean the time of a future natural day.¹⁷³ The phrase *a day*, which often can be substituted for *one day* and vice versa, also occurs in both sets of plates.¹⁷⁴ In dozens of instances occurring in the three principal sets of plates, the word *days* (sometimes meaning artificial days because the words *nights* or *night* also are mentioned) has been modified by a cardinal number larger than one.¹⁷⁵ Periods of days also are described with general quantitative terms: “a few more”;¹⁷⁶ “many”;¹⁷⁷ and “not many”.¹⁷⁸ There can be no doubt that natural and artificial days are numbered in the *Book of Mormon* and that a natural or civil day, perhaps recognized formally with the morning appearance of the sun, is the basic interval for measuring other calendrical periods.

1.9.4 Nephite week

Calendrical periods composed of multiple natural or civil days include the shortest of these periods, the “week”. When the *Book of Mormon* was first published, the noun *week* was understood to mean “[t]he space of seven days.”¹⁷⁹ The word *week* occurs three times in the *Book of Mormon*, all in the plates of Mormon, and in each instance *week* appears to mean a seven-day period.¹⁸⁰ The first of these instances occurs in the teachings of Alma₁. He was a priest to a wicked Nephite king named Noah₂, but when the king ordered his priests to kill the Nephite prophet Abinadi, Alma₁ opposed the murderous act and then had to go into hiding to save his own life.¹⁸¹ Prior to Alma₁’s escape, Abinadi had read Mosaic law to king Noah₂ and his priests, including labor and calendrical elements of the law: “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work; but the seventh day, the sabbath of the Lord thy God, thou shalt not do any work”.¹⁸² Subsequent to Abinadi’s execution, Alma₁ secretly began to organize “the church of God, or the church of Christ” among the people of king Noah₂ and, as part of that reform, Alma₁ “commanded” his followers “that they should observe the sabbath day and keep it holy”.¹⁸³ In that regard, he further defined their duties on the sabbath: to gather, to teach (and by implication, to be taught) and to unite in worship “one day in every *week*”.¹⁸⁴ Thus, Alma₁ enjoined his followers to observe a seven-day week in accordance with Mosaic law.

The other two references to a week occur in connection with a Nephite mission to an apostate people led by a rebellious group of elite Nephites who called themselves Zoramites after the name of their leader Zoram₂.¹⁸⁵ They seem to have enjoyed dishonoring the ancient name of

¹⁷³ Jacob 3:6; Alma 34:41.

¹⁷⁴ 1 Nephi 21:8; Alma 11:3; 22:32; Helaman 14:4; 3 Nephi 1:9; Mormon 8:26-29, 31-32.

¹⁷⁵ Mosiah 7:8; 22:16; 27:23; Alma 18:43; 19:1, 5; Helaman 14:4 (two); 1 Nephi preface; 1 Nephi 2:6; 18:13; 19:10; 2 Nephi 25:13; Mosiah 17:6; Alma 8:6; 14:18; 17:26; 36:10, 16; 38:8; Helaman 14:20, 27; 3 Nephi 8:3, 23; 10:9; 26:13; Ether 13:28; 14:26 (three); 1 Nephi 16:13; 18:15 (four); Mosiah 13:17, 19 (six); Mosiah 23:3 (eight); Mosiah 24:25 (twelve); Mosiah 7:4-5 (forty); Ether 6:11 (three hundred and forty and four).

¹⁷⁶ 2 Nephi 1:14.

¹⁷⁷ E.g., 1 Nephi 16:15, 17; 2 Nephi 5:7; Jacob 5:6; Mosiah 7:4; Alma 5:46; Helaman 5:22; Ether 9:3, 15.

¹⁷⁸ E.g., 2 Nephi 4:13; Mosiah 21:26; Alma 3:20.

¹⁷⁹ Webster, *An American Dictionary of the English Language*, II: [914] (week).

¹⁸⁰ Mosiah 18:25; Alma 31:12; 32:11.

¹⁸¹ Mosiah 17:1-4.

¹⁸² Mosiah 13:16-19.

¹⁸³ Mosiah 18:17, 23.

¹⁸⁴ Mosiah 18:25, italics added.

¹⁸⁵ Alma 30:58-60; 31:1-7.

one of the great friends of Nephi₁.¹⁸⁶ Upon the missionaries arrival in the Zoramites' land, they were astonished to find that "the Zoramites had built synagogues and that they did gather themselves together on one day of the *week*, which day they did call the day of the Lord, and they did worship after a manner which [the missionaries] had never beheld".¹⁸⁷ Note that the record does not refer to one day of *their* week, but to one day of *the* week, presumably meaning the seven-day period familiar to both the missionaries and the apostate Nephites. Mormon₂ described the memorized "prayer" that the apostates, one by one, performed at the top of a platform raised in the center of each synagogue. The recitation seems to have been designed to mock Nephite worship. This pageant was performed once each week (though not necessarily on the sabbath day of the believing Nephites) and then the apostates returned to their homes, "never speaking of their God again" until the next "day of the Lord." Mormon₂'s report also described the religious and economic bigotry the apostates enforced through their priests against "the poor class of people [who were] cast out of the synagogues," ostensibly because the poor could not acquire expensive costumes for the weekly display of social perfection.¹⁸⁸

The missionaries "began to preach the word of God unto the people, entering into their synagogues and into their houses; yea, and even they did preach the word in their streets." They "began to have success among the poor class of people", who questioned where they could go to worship God.¹⁸⁹ One of the missionaries, Alma₂, responded with his own questions: "Do ye suppose that ye cannot worship God save it be in your synagogues only? And moreover, I would ask: Do ye suppose that ye must not worship God, only once in a *week*?"¹⁹⁰ Note again that Alma₂ does not use the noun phrase *your week*, but simply *a week*, apparently assuming that even the impoverished Nephite dissenters understood this seven-day period. Thus, from these three express references to a week, the text appears to define this Nephite calendrical period as a seven-day interval of time that, at least among those who obeyed Mosaic law, concluded with a sabbath day.

The believing Nephites appear to have maintained sabbath day observance and obedience to Mosaic law as part of their religious practice for hundreds of years.¹⁹¹ Moreover, even though the word *week* is not used in Mormon₂'s later books or in the plates of Moroni, there does not appear to be any textual reason for assuming that the commandment of sabbath day observance was done away or that the length of the seven-day Nephite week was changed to some other number of days. Consistency with the risen Lord's requirement that the people persevere in keeping his commandments (except for those commandments and ordinances associated with animal sacrifice) suggests that a seven-day week continued to be observed after the Lord's visit to the Nephites.¹⁹² Finally, there is no express use of numbers that would evidence the counting of weeks within a month or a year. With respect to Nephite months, however, the express use of numbers clearly evidences the counting of days within a month and within some calendar years.

¹⁸⁶ 1 Nephi 4:20-38; 16:7; 2 Nephi 1:30-32; 5:6.

¹⁸⁷ Alma 31:12, italics added.

¹⁸⁸ Alma 31:12-23; 32:2-3.

¹⁸⁹ Alma 32:1-2.

¹⁹⁰ Alma 32:9-11, italics added.

¹⁹¹ 2 Nephi 5:10; Jarom 1:5, 11; Alma 30:3; Helaman 13:1; 3 Nephi 1:24-25.

¹⁹² E.g., 2 Nephi 9:52; 32:8-9; Mosiah 18:24-26; 26:39; Alma 6:6; 34:17-27, 37-39; Helaman 3:35; 3 Nephi 8:20-23; 9:1, 15-20; 12:46-47; 15:1-5, 10; 18:22-25; 4 Nephi 1:12; Moroni 6:5-6.

1.9.5 Nephite months and moons

The noun *month*, in singular and plural forms, occurs 16 times in the extant text of the plates of Mormon, but only in the books of Alma and Third Nephi.¹⁹³ This word placement does not mean the Nephites did not observe months during the time covered by Mormon₂'s other extant books. The Nephites actively measured years during that time;¹⁹⁴ so, months seem likely to have been measured as well. In both Alma and Third Nephi, Mormon₂ also separated the locations where months were mentioned. Within Alma chapters 10-16, four instances of the word occur, but the remaining seven instances in this book do not occur until chapters 49-58. Similarly, three instances of the word *month* occur near each other in 3 Nephi chapters 3-4, while the other two instances do not appear until chapter 8. Thus, Mormon₂ seems to have used the word *month* in four intentionally separated groups, two in Alma and two in Third Nephi.

Webster's 1828 dictionary initially defined the noun *month* as "[a] space or period of time constituting a division of the year".¹⁹⁵ This general definition is the one assumed for this study. This suggests that the number of months in a year and the number of days in any month would depend on the length and number of cultural divisions recognized by the people. Webster's dictionary further noted that "[m]onth originally signified the time of one revolution of the moon, a lunation, or the period from one change or conjunction of the moon with the sun to another, a period of 27 days, 7 hours, 43 minutes and 5 seconds." Webster also called this interval "the periodical month" or "lunar month" and he noted that "[i]n this sense we still use the word month".¹⁹⁶ This definition, while accurate in some respects, confuses two quite different intervals measured with the moon. The interval from one conjunction of the moon with the sun to another, or from new moon to new moon, is a lunation or "synodical month".¹⁹⁷ Webster was fully aware of the length of the synodical month because he defined it as "the period from one conjunction of the moon with the sun to another. This is called also a lunation, because in the course of it the moon exhibits all its phases. This month consists of 29 days, 12 hours, 44 minutes, 3 seconds and 11 thirds".¹⁹⁸ (Presumably, the expression "11 thirds" is a transcription or typesetting error and "11 thirtieths" of a second was intended.) The shorter interval mistakenly identified in Webster's definition of the noun *month* represents what is sometimes called a sidereal or periodical month, the interval that consists of a single revolution of the moon about the earth from one conjunction with a star to another.¹⁹⁹ Based on Webster's stated month lengths, a lunation or mean synodical month in 1828 was about 29.53059 days and a periodical month or mean sidereal month was approximately 27.32153 days.

Webster's dictionary also defined the noun *month* in three more ways. First, he described it as "the space of time in which the sun passes through one sign, or a twelfth part of the zodiac. This period contains 30 days, 10 hours, 29 minutes, 5 seconds, and is called a solar month". He also noted that "[i]n the year, there are twelve solar months, and thirteen lunar months".²⁰⁰

¹⁹³ Alma 10:6; 14:23; 16:1 (twice); 49:1 (twice); 52:1; 56:1, 27, 42; 58:7; 3 Nephi 3:8; 4:7, 11; 8:5 (twice).

¹⁹⁴ E.g., Mosiah 29:46; Helaman 16:9-24; 4 Nephi 1:1-6; Mormon 2:2-9.

¹⁹⁵ Webster, *An American Dictionary of the English Language*, II: [147] (month).

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, italics removed.

¹⁹⁷ *The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary*, I: 1678 (lunar and lunation); II: 3211 (synodical).

¹⁹⁸ Webster, *An American Dictionary of the English Language*, II: [723] (synodical).

¹⁹⁹ Webster does not refer to the sidereal month in his definition of the adjective *sidereal*. Compare Webster, *An American Dictionary of the English Language*, II: [591] (sideral, sidereal), with *The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary*, II: 2134 (periodical); 2817 (sideral).

²⁰⁰ Webster, *An American Dictionary of the English Language*, II: [147] (month), italics removed.

Twelve solar months would aggregate about 365.2423 days according to his calculations and, thus, the “year” referred to in his definition would appear to be the solar or tropical year. Thirteen synodical months would be about 383.89767 days, which would be more than 18 days longer than a solar or tropical year. Thus, in this definition of a month, Webster seems to indicate that the period of “lunar months” was to be measured with 13 sidereal months, hence, a year of about 355.17989 days. (The phrase “lunar month” typically refers to a synodical month, but it can also refer to a sidereal month.²⁰¹) Second, Webster stated that “[i]n popular language, four weeks are called a month, being nearly the length of the lunar month”. And third, he noted further that a “calendar month differs in some degree from a solar month; consisting of twenty eight, twenty nine, thirty or thirty one days, as the months stand in calendars or almanacks”.²⁰²

The confusion of lunar periods also seems to reoccur in Webster’s definition of the noun *moon*. According to his understanding, the moon revolved “round the earth in 27 days, 7 hours, 43 minutes”, thus constituting a “lunar month”. Clearly, he referred to the sidereal or periodical month, which is measured by consecutive conjunctions of the moon with a star. In addition, however, he noted that “rude nations use the name of the moon” to mean a “month”.²⁰³ In this regard, Webster seemed to mean a lunation or synodical month, an interval defined by consecutive conjunctions of the moon with the sun.²⁰⁴

Hence, Webster’s 1828 dictionary, despite its apparent confusions, appears to have been intended to identify five specific types of months. First, an interval described as a lunation, synodical month or moon was based on observed or calculated conjunctions of the moon and sun and exhibited a mean period of about 29.53059 days. Second, a lunar or periodical month also known as a sidereal month was based on observed or calculated conjunctions of the moon and a star and exhibited a mean period of about 27.32153 days. Third, a solar month was based on the observed or calculated movement of the sun through the ecliptic or the 12 signs of the zodiac and exhibited a mean period of approximately 30.43685 days. Fourth, a popular use of the noun *month* could mean a calculated period of four weeks or 28 days. Fifth, a calendar month consisted of a calculated 28, 29, 30 or 31 days, depending on the assigned number of days in the Julian or Gregorian calendar.

These specific definitions may be important to *Book of Mormon* chronology because, while the noun *month* does not occur in the small plates of Nephi, the phrase “nine moons” does occur there.²⁰⁵ The Nephite writer Amaleki₁ described this period of time in a record apparently intended to be read by other Nephites.²⁰⁶ He used the noun *moons* as a temporal term that could be numbered to quantify an interval during the time when Nephite years were numbered “since Lehi left Jerusalem”.²⁰⁷ This may suggest that the calendar used in this period measured time with *moons* rather than with the *months* identified with later Nephite chronological systems. In Division 2, which focuses on the small plates of Nephi, this issue is examined in depth.

In the plates of Mormon, the position of a month within a year is numbered with a definite ordinal number or by reference to a definite ordinal number stated previously in association with

²⁰¹ *The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary*, I: 1843 (month).

²⁰² Webster, *An American Dictionary of the English Language*, II: [147] (month), non-hyphenated spelling of compound numbers and older spelling of “almanacks” in the original.

²⁰³ Webster, *An American Dictionary of the English Language*, II: [147] (moon).

²⁰⁴ *The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary*, I: 1678 (lunation); 1845 (moon); II: 3211 (synodical).

²⁰⁵ Omni 1:21.

²⁰⁶ Omni 1:12-18, 23-30.

²⁰⁷ 3 Nephi 2:6.

the word *month*.²⁰⁸ However, neither the total number of months in a year nor the total number of days in a month is mentioned in the *Book of Mormon*. The months in the latter two Nephite chronological systems (i.e., “of the reign of the judges”²⁰⁹ and “from the coming of Christ”²¹⁰) are nowhere expressly described as the same length as each other or as the moons possibly related to the system that numbered years “since Lehi left Jerusalem”. Furthermore, no *Book of Mormon* text mentions the word *month* in connection with the first Nephite system. Nevertheless, because the calendars in the first and second Nephite chronological systems appear to have maintained similar year lengths,²¹¹ and because the nouns *moon* and *month* are cognate English words, it seems possible that Amaleki₁’s moons and the judges’ months also were similar or identical in length.

Are any of the periods meant by the words *month* and *moons* in the *Book of Mormon* similar to the definitions of these words in Webster’s 1828 dictionary? How would the correct interval be determined from the text? These are questions addressed in Divisions 2 and 3 of this study, where the simple phrase *nine moons* in the small plates of Nephi and the use of *month* in the plates of Mormon are analyzed and compared.

1.10 Conclusion

This concludes Part 1, an introduction to the focus and scope of this source book for the chronology of the *Book of Mormon*. Interpretative assumptions associated with the meanings of the noun *year* have been noted, together with precise definitions used for identifying and analyzing year-terms, time-terms, number-terms, narrative-links, year-related expressions, temporal-expressions and year-related narratives within sets of plates and their major divisions and narratives. Year-terms and their adjectives and narrative-links have been described generally as expressions that transform hundreds of narratives in the *Book of Mormon* by creating complex structures and distinctive meanings for the cultural and historical chronologies materialized in paper and ink.

These general descriptions now require detailed explanation. This Part is the first of six Parts in Division 1 to present the rational footings on which this research has been constructed. Part 2 expands this presentation with a more thorough discussion of the year-term, the essential component of a year-related expression. Parts 3 through 6 complete Division 1 with in-depth introductions to the use of time-terms, number-terms, narrative-links and temporal-expressions. A comprehensive analysis of the use and meanings of temporal-expressions in the small plates of Nephi is presented in Division 2 and is followed by analyses of temporal-expressions in the plates of Mormon (in Division 3) and in the plates of Moroni (in Division 4). With the foundation described in these four Divisions, the following Divisions 5 through 9 then examine the dates, chronological systems and proposed historical chronology indicated by the extant text of the *Book of Mormon*.

²⁰⁸ Alma 52:1; 56:1; 3 Nephi 8:5 (first); Alma 16:1; 56:27 (second); 3 Nephi 4:7, 11 (sixth); Alma 10:6; 56:42 (seventh); Alma 14:23 (tenth); Alma 49:1 (eleventh).

²⁰⁹ E.g., Alma 1:33; Helaman 1:13.

²¹⁰ E.g., 3 Nephi 3:1; 4 Nephi 1:21; Mormon 3:4.

²¹¹ Compare Mosiah 29:41-47 (509) with 3 Nephi 1:1 (91/600); 2:5-6 (100/609).