

The Fulfillment of Lehi's Prophecy

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The central clause of 3 Nephi 1:1 is Mormon's assertion that 600 years had elapsed from the time Lehi left Jerusalem. As I mentioned in the introduction to the chapter on chronological structure, Mormon used a special type of year-end marking phrase ("it was ___ years") to note the passing of the 600th year. This year-end formula phrase appears only one other time in Mormon's extant writings. Following his reports that "a small part of the people ... had revolted ... and taken upon them the name of Lamanites" and that a record keeper named Amos had died, Mormon wrote that "it was an hundred and ninety and four years from the coming of Christ" (4 Nephi 1:20-21). Mormon's understanding seems to have been that from that point forward, the Nephites, as a people, were unwilling to repent and thereby avert their social and political disintegration (as Nephi had prophesied; 1 Nephi 12:11-23; 2 Nephi 26:7-11). The formula phrase ("it was ___ years") was reserved by Mormon to herald (for Lehi's prophecy) or to threaten (for Nephi's prophecy) the times when these ancient prophecies were about to be fulfilled.

3 Nephi, Preface and 1:1-3. In the introduction to this chapter, I summarized the somewhat convoluted history with which the Book of Third Nephi begins. This segment of text includes the preface of the book and its first three verses. Only a few tiny fragments of the original manuscript of this text have survived.¹ It also appears that the earliest complete form of the segment is not the version copied in the printer's manuscript. Royal Skousen has written that the "individuals responsible for producing the printer's manuscript and overseeing the printing—Oliver Cowdery, Martin Harris, and Hyrum Smith—probably fell behind in their copywork and allowed the original manuscript to be used by the printer until they caught up with their copying." This change in the production process occurred "somewhere between verses 7 and 18 in Helaman 13 to the end of Mormon."² Hence, it would appear that the earliest extant form of this segment of the text (3 Nephi, preface and 1:1-3) is the wording typeset from the original manuscript and printed in the 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon.

Since the printer's manuscript for this segment was later copied from the original manuscript, the printer's manuscript and 1830 Book of Mormon can be compared to determine the wording of the original manuscript. Oliver Cowdery was the copyist for this part of the printer's manuscript; however, when Joseph Smith began to prepare for the publication of the second (1837) edition of the Book of Mormon, he "made numerous changes in the printer's manuscript. These marks are found throughout the entire manuscript (including the four gatherings that were never used as the copytext for typesetting the 1830 edition)." In addition, "Joseph's corrections (almost all of which are grammatical in nature) are in heavy black ink...."³ In 3 Nephi, preface and 1:1-3, Joseph Smith changed the word *which* to the word *who* six times, presumably to give the

¹ Royal Skousen, ed., *The Original Manuscript of the Book of Mormon: Typographical Facsimile of the Extant Text* (Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies ["FARMS"], 2001), 512. "[A]bout 25 percent of the current text" of the original manuscript exists today. The remainder was destroyed by water and mold, between 1841 and 1882, while the manuscript was held in the cornerstone of the Nauvoo House, a hotel in Nauvoo, Illinois. *Ibid.*, 6-7.

² The printer's manuscript is a copy of the original manuscript that was intended to be used by the typesetter of the first edition of the Book of Mormon. Royal Skousen, ed., *The Printer's Manuscript of the Book of Mormon: Typographical Facsimile of the Entire Text in Two Parts, Part One: 1 Nephi 1–Alma 17* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2001), 3-4.

³ Skousen, ed., *The Printer's Manuscript of the Book of Mormon, Part One*, 4, 18.

1837 edition a less archaic syntax. The content of this segment in the printer's manuscript is a series of words, dashes and a single long line, all without any punctuation.⁴

The Book of Nephi the Son of Nephi Which was the Son of Hela- -man & Helam{a}n was the Son of Helaman wh{[i]c[o]}h was the Son of Alma wh{ic[o]}h w{a}s the Son of Alma being a descendant of Nephi wh{ich[o]} was the Son of {<%Ne%>|L}ehi wh{[i]c[h]} came out of Jerus[a]u]lem in th{e} firs{t} year of the reign of Zedekiah the king of] Judah - - - - Chapter - - || - - - - ----- Now it came to pass that the ninety & first yea{r} had passed away & it <w(-)a^{was} s> six {h}u -ndred years from the time that Lehi left Jerusalem & {e|i}t was in the year that <La con> Lachoneus was the ch{e|i}ef Jud[g]{e} & the governor over the Land <of> ^& Nephi <&> the Son of Hela- -m{a}n had departed out of the land of Zarah[e]m{!}a [g]{e|i}v{e}ing charge unto his Son Nephi w{hi[c]h{o}} was his eldest Son concerning the plates of Brass & all the records wh{[i]c[o]}h had been kept & all those th{e|i}ngs which had been kept sacred from th{e} departure of L(+}ehi out of Jerusal{e}m {t}hen he departed out of the land & wh{e|i}ther he went no man knoweth & h{e|i}s Son Ne- -p{h}i did keep the record in his st{<%l%>|e}ad ye|a| the record of this people⁵

⁴ Royal Skousen, ed., *The Printer's Manuscript of the Book of Mormon: Typographical Facsimile of the Entire Text in Two Parts, Part Two: Alma 17–Moroni 10* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2001), 777.

⁵ This segment of the printer's manuscript has 53 legibility issues and emendations indicated in the typographical facsimile: (1) the letter *a* has been partially overwritten by the letter *a* in the second word *Helaman*; (2) the letter *i* in the second word *which* is partially legible; (3) the letters *i* and *c* in the second word *which* have been overwritten by the letter *o*, during Joseph Smith's editing of the printer's manuscript for the 1837 edition of the Book of Mormon; (4) the letter *o* has been partially overwritten by the letter *o* in Joseph Smith's emendation of the second word *which*; (5) Joseph Smith overwrote the letters *ic* in the third word *which* with the letter *o*; (6) the letter *o* has been overwritten by the letter *o* in Joseph Smith's emendation of the third word *which*; (7) the letter *a* has been partially overwritten by the letter *a* in the fourth word *was*; (8) Joseph Smith overwrote the letters *ich* in the fourth word *which* with the letter *o*; (9) the letter *o* has been overwritten by the letter *o* in Joseph Smith's emendation of the fourth word *which*; (10) the letters *Ne* have been deleted by erasure or blotting and overwritten by the letter *L* in the first word *Lehi*; (11) the letters *i* and *h* in the fifth word *which* are partially legible; (12) Joseph Smith overwrote the letters *ich* in the fifth word *which* with the letter *o*; (13) the letter *o* has been overwritten by the letter *o* in Joseph Smith's emendation of the fifth word *which*; (14) the letter may be *a* or *u* in the first word *Jerusalem*, with the letter *a* preferred or intended; (15) the letter *e* has been partially overwritten by the letter *e* in the word *the* which appears just before the first word *first*; (16) the letter *t* has been partially overwritten by the letter *t* in the first word *first*; (17) the letter *f* is partially legible in the word *of* which appears just before the word *Judah*; (18) Oliver Cowdery inserted the capital letter *I* in line with the dashes and with heavier ink flow after the word *Chapter*; (19) the letter *r* has been partially overwritten by the letter *r* in the word *year* which appears just after the phrase *ninety & first*; (20) the letter *w* is missing a stroke in the word *was* which appears just before the word *six*; (21) the word *was* which appears just before the word *six* has been deleted by crossing out; (22) a new word *was* has been inserted above the word *was* which appears just before the word *six*; (23) the letter *h* has been partially overwritten by the letter *h* in the word *hundred*; (24) the letter *e* has been overwritten by the letter *i* in the word *it* which appears in the phrase *it was in the year*; (25) the letters *La con* have been deleted by crossing out just before the word *Lachoneus*; (26) the letter *e* has been overwritten by the letter *i* in the word *chief*; (27) the letter *g* in the word *Judge* is partially legible; (28) the letter *e* has been partially overwritten by the letter *e* in the word *Judge*; (29) the word *of* after the phrase *over the Land* has been deleted by crossing out; (30) the symbol & has been inserted above the line after the word *of* which was crossed out; (31) the symbol & has been deleted by crossing out between the words *Nephi* and *the*; (32) the letter *a* has been partially overwritten by the letter *a* in the fourth word *Helaman*; (33) the letter *e* is partially legible in the word *Zarahemla*; (34) the letter *l* has been partially overwritten by the letter *l* in the word *Zarahemla*; (35) the letter *g* is partially legible in the word *giving* which appears just after the word *Zarahemla*; (36) the letter *e* has been overwritten by the letter *i* in the word *giving*; (37) the letter *e* has been

According to Skousen, only two minor textual issues appear in the wording of this segment. First, “Oliver Cowdery frequently mixed up *whether* and *whither* in the manuscripts. Here in the printer’s manuscript, he originally wrote *whether* but later changed the *e* to *i* (the overwriting is with heavier ink flow).” Certainly, *whither* is the word that fits the context. Second, the printer’s manuscript used the singular word *record* twice in 3 Nephi 1:3, while the 1830 Book of Mormon used the plural *records* first and then the singular *record*. Either use might have been original (see 3 Nephi 1:2, *records*), but Skousen noted that elsewhere, when the text specifically referred to a named record keeper taking the place of another record keeper, the singular *record* was always used.⁶ Neither of these issues is material to an understanding of the text.

I have reviewed these details about the text to indicate how unlikely it is that there might be any material issue associated with the transmission of the text. Since the 1830 Book of Mormon and printer’s manuscript both appear to be copies of the original manuscript (but produced at different times and in separate settings), their agreement on the wording of the text reinforces the inference that there are no vital interpretive issues related to the transmission of this text.

The segment that includes the preface and first three verses of Third Nephi is quoted below. For the preface, I have not used the capitalization or italics typeset for, and published in, the 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon.⁷ This is unlike my usual practice. Instead, I have used the capitalization set forth in the printer’s manuscript combined with the punctuation of the 1830 edition. I have presented my view of the parallel structure of this segment and I have emphasized the parallels with my own use of italics.

I have also deleted the phrase “CHAPTER 1.” that appears to have been inserted by the typesetter after the first “HELAMAN” in the 1830 preface. The printer’s manuscript has “Chapter |I|” inserted at the end of the preface.⁸ If some designation of chapter divisions was part of the original text engraved by Mormon, it does not appear to have had any effect on what I propose as the parallel structure of the segment, nor does the initial phrase “Now it came to pass that” appear to have had any material effect on the proposed structure.

partially overwritten by the letter *e* between the letters *giv* and *ing* of the word *giving*; (38) the letter *c* in the sixth word *which* is partially legible; (39) Joseph Smith overwrote the letters *hich* in the sixth word *which* with the letter *o*; (40) the letter *o* has been overwritten by the letter *o* in Joseph Smith’s emendation of the sixth word *which*; (41) the letter *i* in the seventh word *which* is partially legible; (42) Joseph Smith overwrote the letters *ic* in the seventh word *which* with the letter *o*; (43) the letter *e* has been overwritten by the letter *i* in the word *things*; (44) the letter *e* has been partially overwritten by the letter *e* in the word *the* which appears just before the phrase *departure of Lehi*; (45) the letter *L* has an extra stroke in the word *Lehi* which appears in the phrase *departure of Lehi*; (46) the letter *e* has been partially overwritten by the letter *e* in the third word *Jerusalem*; (47) the letter *t* has been partially overwritten by the letter *t* in the word *then* which appears just after the third word *Jerusalem*; (48) the letter *e* has been overwritten by the letter *i* in the word *whither*; (49) the letter *e* has been overwritten by the letter *i* in the word *his* which appears in the phrase *his Son Nephi*; (50) the letter *h* has been partially overwritten by the letter *h* in the word *Nephi* which appears in the phrase *his Son Nephi*; (51) the letter *l* has been deleted by erasure or blotting from the word *stead*; (52) the erased or blotted letter *l* in the word *stead* has been overwritten by the letter *e*; and (53) the letter *a* has been inserted in the word *yea*, in line between the words *ye* and *the*.

⁶ Royal Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon, Part Five* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2008), 3178-80.

⁷ For a reproduction of the capitalization and italics typeset for the 1830 Book of Mormon preface to Third Nephi, see part one, “Mormon’s Statement about the First Year of Zedekiah,” page 1, in my chapter on “Lehi’s Escape.”

⁸ Skousen, ed., *The Original Manuscript of the Book of Mormon*, 512; idem, *The Printer’s Manuscript of the Book of Mormon, Part Two*, 777.

A_{1A} *The Book of Nephi,*
 B_{1A} the Son of *Nephi,*
 C_{1A} Which was *the Son of Helaman.*
 C_{1B} And Helaman was *the Son of Helaman,*
 C_{1C} which was *the Son of Alma,*
 C_{1C} which was *the Son of Alma,*
 B₂ being a descendant of *Nephi,*
 C_{1D} which was *the Son of Lehi,*
 D_{1A} which came out of Jerusalem
 E₁ *in the first year*
 F₁ *of the reign of Zedekiah, the king of Judah.*

Chapter II

Now it came to pass that

G₁ the *ninety and first year had passed away,*
 G₂ and it was *six hundred years* from the time
 D_{1B} that Lehi *left Jerusalem;*
 E₂ and it was *in the year*
 F₂ that *Lachoneus was the Chief Judge and the governor over the land.*
 B_{1B} And *Nephi,*
 C_{2A} *the son of Helaman,*
 D_{2A} *had departed out of the land of Zarahemla,*
 B_{3A} giving charge unto his son *Nephi,*
 C_{2B} which was *his eldest son,*
 A_{2A} concerning the *plates* of brass,
 A_{2B} and all the *records* which had been kept,
 A_{2C} and all those *things* which had been kept sacred,
 D_{1C} from *the departure* of Lehi out of Jerusalem:
 D_{2B} then he *departed out* of the land,
 D₃ and whither he *went,* no man knoweth;
 B_{3B} and his son *Nephi*
 A_{2D} did keep the *records* in his stead,
 A_{1B} yea, *the record of this people.*⁹

The “A” lines refer to records and other sacred things to be preserved by the official record keepers of the Nephites, including the new Book of Nephi. The “B” lines refer to various men named Nephi and the “C” lines identify father-son relationships. The “D” lines refer to two different departures: Lehi from Jerusalem and Nephi, the son of Helaman, from Zarahemla. Singular years are identified by the “E” lines, while the “F” lines describe the names of rulers (Zedekiah; Lachoneus), their positions (king; Chief Judge and governor) and their lands (Judah; “the land,” meaning “the land of Zarahemla,” see line D_{2A}). Finally, the “G” lines specify the time periods that had just elapsed, set forth in the order in which they ended.

One element contributing to the complexity of this segment of the text is Mormon’s apparent desire to honor the names of six record keepers whose faithfulness eventually led to his own receipt of the record keeping responsibility and all the sacred things that were to be kept and

⁹ Capitalization (except for the portion of the preface that has been reproduced in upper and lower case), punctuation and spelling are as set forth in Joseph Smith, Jr., author and proprietor, *The Book of Mormon* (Palmyra, New York: E.B. Grandin, 1830; Independence, Missouri: Herald Heritage Reprint, 1970), 452; or Wilford C. Wood, *Joseph Smith Begins His Work: Book of Mormon 1830 First Edition Reproduced from Uncut Sheets* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Publisher’s Press, 1958), 452.

protected. Another element of complexity arises from Mormon's choice to link this preface back to his ancestral prophets, Lehi and Nephi. A third element that adds to the complexity is Mormon's use of parallels (both accurate and, as to the *first* year of Zedekiah, mistaken)¹⁰ associated with the official rulers, Zedekiah and Lachoneus (the "E" and "F" lines).

A fourth element of complexity appears in the first two clauses of 3 Nephi 1:1 (the "G" lines). They present the two year-counts in a specific order. The 91st year of the reign of the judges passed away and then 600 years of Lehi's era ended. The sequence of these year-end statements is not coincidental. Mormon did not place the end of the 91st year before the end of the 600th year and the events of the 91st year (3 Nephi 1:2-3) merely to increase the complexity of the segment. The same sequence of year-counts appears in the other two reports where the years counted from Lehi's escape were linked to the end of king Mosiah's reign.

*The Judges Begin to Rule.*¹¹ The year-ending sequence of the two year-counts was instituted when the judges began to reign over the Nephites. Prior to the end of the 509th year of Lehi's era, king Mosiah's four sons all refused the throne (Mosiah 28:1-10; 29:46). At that time, he proclaimed the end of the Nephite monarchy and established the reign of judges chosen by the "voices" of the people (Mosiah 29:1-33, 39). These events closed a long period of Nephite monarchy. King Zedekiah had ruled Lehi and Nephi in Judah (1 Nephi 1:4). In their promised land, Nephi instituted a monarchical form of government among the Nephites (Jacob 1:9-11). The last of the Nephite kings, Mosiah, instituted the new form of government; however, in some sort of co-regency with the judges, Mosiah continued to reign (Mosiah 29:11). Then, Mormon concluded (Mosiah 29:44-47, structure and italics added):

A₁ *and thus commenced* the reign of the judges
 B₁ throughout *all the land of Zarahemla*,
 B_{2A} among *all the people which was called the Nephites*:
 C₁ and *Alma* was the first and chief judge.
 And now it came to pass that
 C₂ *his father* died,
 D_{1A} being eighty and two *years* old,
 E₁ having lived *to fulfill the commandments of God*.
 And it came to pass that
 C₃ *Mosiah* died also,
 D₂ in the thirty and third *year* of his reign,
 D_{1B} being sixty and three *years* old;
 D₃ making in the whole, five hundred and nine *years*
 E₂ from the time *Lehi left Jerusalem*;
 A_{2A} *and thus ended* the reign of the kings
 B_{2B} over *the people of Nephi*;
 A_{2B} *and thus ended* the days of *Alma*,
 E₃ who was *the founder of their church*.¹²

¹⁰ For an examination of Mormon's reference to Zedekiah's first year, see the chapter on "Lehi's Escape."

¹¹ Several chronological issues are linked to the commencement of the reign of the judges and the end of the 509th year of Lehi's era, but they are beyond the scope of this chapter. Those issues will be examined in the chapter on "Proposed Chronology."

¹² Capitalization, punctuation and spelling are as set forth in Smith, *The Book of Mormon* (1830), 220-21. The earliest extant text of this verse is found in the printer's manuscript. Skousen, ed., *The Printer's Manuscript of the Book of Mormon, Part One*, 388-89. There is one interpretive issue related to the transmission of this text. The printer's manuscript did not include the word *old* after the phrase *being sixty*

The “A” lines summarize what began or ended before the 509th year of Lehi’s era passed away. The “B” lines refer to the land and people ruled by the judges. The “C” lines refer to three of the principal men involved in the transition of rule: Alma, who became the first chief judge; his father, Alma, who founded a church among Nephites residing in the land of Nephi and later brought his group of Nephites into the land of Zarahemla (Mosiah 17:1-4; 18; 23-25); and king Mosiah. The “D” lines are the chronological statements. The “E” lines are about keeping the commandments of God. Alma (the elder) did it when he founded the church, left the land of Nephi with his people, and accepted Mosiah’s appointment to establish the church throughout the land of Zarahemla. Lehi also did it when he brought his followers from Jerusalem to the promised land.

In the introduction to the chapter on chronological structure, I defined the statement “making in the whole” 509 years from the time Lehi left Jerusalem (Mosiah 29:46) to mean “bringing up the sum of years to the total and full amount” of 509 years from the time of Lehi’s escape. This closing out of the 509th year of Lehi’s era occurred after the judges began to rule in Zarahemla (line A₁).

*The New Reckoning of Years.*¹³ Having examined the first of the reports where years counted from Lehi’s escape were linked to the end of Mosiah’s days, I now turn to the last of those reports. Following the signs that heralded the Messiah’s birth, the Nephites continued the year-counts of Lehi’s era and the reign of the judges for more than nine years (3 Nephi 1:4, 26-28; 2:1, 4-8). Within their related year-counting systems, the believers apparently remembered and their record keeper recorded the dates when the night without darkness occurred and the following day when the Redeemer was prophesied to be born (see 3 Nephi 8:1-4). Mormon then recorded a change in the principal year-counting system to be used by the Nephites (3 Nephi 2:5-8, structure and italics added):

- A₁ and also an hundred *years* had passed away,
- B₁ *since* the days of Mosiah,
- C₁ which was *king* over the people of the Nephites.
- A₂ And six hundred and nine *years* had passed away,
- B₂ *since* Lehi left Jerusalem;
- A_{3A} and nine *years* had passed away,
- B_{3A} *from* the time which the sign was given,
- C₂ which was spoken of by the *prophets*,
- C₃ that *Christ* should come into the world.
- A₄ Now the Nephites began to reckon *their time*
- B_{3B} *from* this period which the sign was given,
- B_{3C} or *from* the coming of Christ;
- A_{3B} therefore, nine *years* had passed away,¹⁴

and three years. The 1830 typesetter inserted the word *old*. Elsewhere in the Book of Mormon text, “a specification of age is always followed by either the word *old* or the phrase *of age*.... The verb in all these cases is *be*. Whenever the *be* verb is finite (*was* or *are*), the form is ‘X years old’ (five times), but when the *be* verb is the present participial *being*, we can get either *old* or *of age* (three times for *old* and two times for *of age*). ... Ultimately, it is difficult to tell which reading was the original one in Mosiah 29:46. But ‘X years old’ is clearly more frequent in the text, and ‘X years of age’ otherwise appears only in Mormon 1. Moreover, skipping one word (*old*) is more probable than skipping two (*of age*).” Royal Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon, Part Three* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2006), 1570-71.

¹³ Several chronological issues are linked to the time when the Nephites instituted their Christian era. Those issues will be examined in the chapter on “Proposed Chronology.”

¹⁴ Capitalization, punctuation and spelling are as set forth in Smith, *The Book of Mormon* (1830), 455. For this part of the 1830 edition, the typesetter may have worked directly from the original manuscript rather than

In this part of the text, the “A” lines refer to the Nephite’s three separate year-counts. The “B” lines use prepositional phrases that identify the initial event or period associated with the start of each of the Nephite year-counts. The “C” lines share references to the Nephites’ last consecrated king (Mosiah 6:3; compare Jacob 1:9: “anointed”), their prophets, and Lehi’s predicted prophet, a Messiah (1 Nephi 10:4). Mormon used the name *Christ* for this prophet, a name that had been revealed to Nephi shortly after Lehi left Jerusalem.¹⁵

Just before 3 Nephi 2:5-8, Mormon referred to the 91st through 99th years without expressly stating that these years were counted in the era of the judges (3 Nephi 1:1, 4, 26-28; 2:1, 4). This practice was a change from his handling of the 86th through 90th years in the last chapter of the Book of Helaman, where each of the years was explicitly identified as being in the reign of the judges (Helaman 16:9-13, 24). Adding to this change, in writing the text of 3 Nephi 2:5, Mormon referred to a period of 100 years “since the days of Mosiah” rather than to the 100th year of the reign of the judges. All of these distinct changes in phraseology appear to have been planned to draw attention to 3 Nephi 2:5-8, where Mormon specifically mentioned events involving Lehi, Mosiah and Christ, the three leaders whose lives were linked to the inauguration dates of the Nephites’ three different year-counts (the “B” lines).

In summary, the order of the Nephites’ first two year-counts was established at the start of the reign of the judges (Mosiah 29:44, 46). Mormon maintained that order in 3 Nephi 1:1 and he continued it in 3 Nephi 2:5-6. Just as the 509th year of Lehi’s era passed away after the judges began to reign, and just as the 600th year of Lehi’s era passed away after the end of the 91st year of the judges; so, the 609th year of Lehi’s era passed away after the end of the 100th year since the days of Mosiah. The associated arithmetic is elementary: $509+91 = 600$ and $509+100 = 609$. Nonetheless, the two eras did have some overlap, so that the 92nd year of the judges’ era commenced before the 600th year of Lehi’s era ended.¹⁶

Lehi’s Prophecy Fulfilled. The complex text of 3 Nephi 1:1 (understood within its broad context) records the fulfillment of Lehi’s 600-year prophecy. In the first clause of 3 Nephi 1:1, Mormon recorded that the 91st year of the judges had passed away. In the third clause of that verse, Mormon noted that the time was then *in* the reign of the chief judge, Lachoneus.

In the second clause of 3 Nephi 1:1, the pronoun *it* is the nominative of the verb *to be*, which is set forth in its passive past tense *was*. In such a statement, “*it* refers to the subject of thought, attention, or inquiry ... in a sentence asking or stating what or who this”¹⁷ *was*. Hence, in composing the second clause of 3 Nephi 1:1, Mormon focused on the question: What was this time (according to 3 Nephi 1:4, “the commencement” of the 92nd year of the judges) in terms of the year-count measured from Lehi’s escape from Jerusalem?

from the printer’s manuscript. Skousen, ed., *The Printer’s Manuscript of the Book of Mormon, Part One*, 3-4; idem, *The Original Manuscript of the Book of Mormon*, 6. There are no material interpretive issues related to the textual transmission of these verses. Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon, Part Five*, 3205. The wording of the printer’s manuscript is the same as the 1830 edition, indicating that the wording of the original manuscript was identical to these two copies. Skousen, ed., *The Printer’s Manuscript of the Book of Mormon, Part Two*, 781-82.

¹⁵ See part one, “Lehi’s 600-year Prophecy,” in the chapter on “Chronological Structure,” 10 n.24 and the accompanying text.

¹⁶ The length of the overlap is one of the chronological issues to be addressed in the chapter on “Calendars.”

¹⁷ *The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary*, two vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), I: 1492-93 (“It”).

To answer that question, Mormon used a year-end marking statement that drew attention to the fulfillment of Lehi's prophecy. He did not write "thus ended" the 600th year of Lehi's era, nor did he engrave a report that the 600th year or 600 years had "passed away." He did not write "making in the whole" 600 years from the time of Lehi's escape. Instead, he used a simple formula phrase that he had reserved for heralding the end of Lehi's prophecy: *it was 600 years from the time that Lehi left Jerusalem. Six hundred years from Lehi's departure had existed in fact and had come to an end in the commencement of the 92nd year of the judges.*¹⁸

Lehi was recorded by his son Nephi as prophesying that "even six hundred years" (1 Nephi 10:4), that is, a full period of 600 years, would elapse between his escape from Jerusalem and the Messiah's birth.¹⁹ Nephi later noted that the latter event would be made known to his descendants by one or more signs (2 Nephi 26:3). Angels, who would declare the Messiah's coming to just and holy men, also were expected (Alma 13:21-26). Samuel's five-year prophecy provided the expected signs: a night without darkness, signs and wonders in heaven, and the appearance of a new star, "such an one as ye never have beheld" (Helaman 14:2-6). The next part of this chapter examines the fulfillment of Samuel's five-year prophecy.

¹⁸ Jeffrey R. Chadwick has published an article in which he proposes an interpretation of 3 Nephi 1:1 that differs from the one set forth herein. Jeffrey R. Chadwick, "Dating the Birth of Jesus Christ," *BYU Studies* 49/4 (2010): 4-38. Chadwick's chronology of the Messiah's birth is founded on *a priori* assumptions that are not rationally sustainable. I will examine his chronology in an appendix to this chapter.

¹⁹ See part one, "Lehi's 600-year Prophecy," in the chapter on "Chronological Structure."