

Part 2: Year-terms in the *Book of Mormon*

2.1 Christmas ornaments

To begin this examination of year-terms, an image may be of help that is very different from the images of ink designs on paper or a circular archery target. This new image is of a small grove of 15 evergreen trees decorated for Christmas with 426 shining ornaments. Each ornament hangs from a branch of one of the trees. Some ornaments are gleaming gold or silver stars. Other ornaments are multicolored balls, figurines or toys, each of which includes a gold, silver or bronze portion in addition to the other colors. A ribbon dyed in one of five unique colors attaches each ornament to a tree branch. The branches of each evergreen tree are naturally beautiful and many have no ornaments attached. Seven of the trees are pine, six are fir and two are spruce, thus dividing the grove by the three kinds of trees. Both the ornaments and their ribbons are strong, tangible decorations; so, they may be handled and examined. They visibly decorate the grove and attract admirers. Beyond their durable craftsmanship and physical beauty, however, they symbolize the calendrical and astronomical time of Christmas, the mortal birth of the Messiah long foretold, and the joy of his gospel of love that believers especially associate with the Christmas season.

Of course, the grove of trees represents the *Book of Mormon*, separated into three parts or sets of plates by the different kinds of trees. Each tree represents a major division of the text, usually described as a book. Each of the 426 ornaments represents a year-related expression, which is attached to a tree branch or narrative by a ribbon or narrative-link. The gold and silver stars symbolize year-related expressions that consist of a single word, either *year* or *years*. The multicolored balls represent year-related expressions composed of express year-, time- and number terms. The figurines symbolize year-related expressions composed of express year- and number-terms and the toys signify year-related expressions composed of implied year-terms and express number-terms. This Part of Division 1 presents a detailed introduction to the gold, silver and bronze portions of the ornaments, the three types of year-terms: the express singular *year* and plural *years* and the implied singular *year*.

2.2 Express and implied year-terms

A year-term is the essential component of a year-related expression. Every year-term in the extant text of the *Book of Mormon* is listed in Table 1.A. Year-terms occur with two discrete meanings (singular or plural) and in two linguistic forms (express or implied), but no implied plural year-term occurs in the extant text of the *Book of Mormon*. The express singular noun (*year*) occurs in 282 of the 426 expressions and the express plural noun (*years*) appears in 134 of them. In nine more expressions, the singular noun has been ellipited or omitted and not replaced. In Table 1.A, these nine instances of implied singular year-terms are marked with a tilde (~). Ellipsis is a “common form of compression” in English diction whereby a word or phrase that would provide total clarity is omitted from an expression because the context supplies the meaning.¹ Each of these nine instances of ellipsis occurs within the same clause as the previous express word *year*. The implied year-term may be recognized by its number-term and other closely related words, but none of these nine implied year-terms is accompanied by a time-term.

¹ Chris Baldick, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 77 (ellipsis); *The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary*, I: 845 (ellipsis).

Fourth Nephi 1:1 presents an example of consecutive year-related expressions with express and implied year-terms occurring within the same clause. The following quotation from this verse uses italic font to distinguish the year-related expressions from their narrative-links and the secondary narrative language. “And it came to pass that *the thirty and fourth year* passed away and also *the thirty and fifth*”. In the first of these year-related expressions, the year-term is the express singular noun *year*. No time-term follows the year-term, but the determiner *the* and multipart ordinal number *thirty and fourth* make up the number-term that precedes the year-term and identifies a specific year. The second year-related expression has had its year-term omitted and not replaced by another word. The year-term is implied, however, by four nearby textual cues. The position of the second expression closely follows the first in the same clause. The narrative-link for the second expression (the conjunction *and*) may suggest to the reader that the narrative is about to move forward in time. The additive adverb *also* appears to indicate that the next phrase refers in like manner to a year, i.e., to one that similarly passed away. Lastly, the determiner *the* in the second expression is followed by the next multipart ordinal number *thirty and fifth*. Taken together, the first and fourth closely-related textual cues confirm that the second and third textually suggested expectations are correct. The singular noun *year* following the word *fifth* may be inferred to have been ellipsed. The chronological meaning associated with both year-related expressions is that the 34th and 35th years (apparently measured in the same chronological system) passed away. In the other eight instances of a single clause in which the word *year* has been ellipsed and not replaced by another word,² a similar examination of nearby textual cues may be undertaken and the same result, the inference of the singular noun *year*, will be obtained. These nine instances all are examples of simple ellipsis.

In a tenth expression with an implied year-term, the noun *year* has been omitted and replaced by the pronoun *it*. This expression occurs in Helaman 1:13. The nearby text, as in each of the other nine instances of ellipsis, reasonably indicates that the reader should infer the meaning of the word *year*, so as to fully understand the meaning of the shortened year-related expression. Nonetheless, this tenth instance of an implied year-term is quite different from the other nine instances. Understanding these differences is crucial to the following examination of other potential instances of year-term ellipsis.

Consecutive year-related expressions occur in Helaman 1:13. In the following quotation of this text, italic font again separates the year-related expressions from their narrative-links and related secondary narrative language. “And all this was done in *the fortieth year of the reign of the judges*, and *it* had an end”. The year-term of the first expression is the express singular *year*, which is modified by a preceding number-term and a following time-term. Together, these three components form a complete noun phrase with *year* as its head. However, unlike the other nine instances of closely related express and implied year-terms occurring in the same clause, in Helaman 1:13 the ellipsis of the noun *year*: (a) does not occur in the same clause as the express year-term; (b) is not identified by the textual cue of a next larger ordinal number; and (c) is replaced by the third person singular pronoun *it*. This pronoun does not refer to the previous singular noun *reign* because the judges’ reign had not come to an end. Instead, the pronoun *it* functions as the primary textual cue implying the word *year*. One may also note that Helaman 1:14 begins with the words, “And it came to pass in the forty and first year of the reign of the judges”. Hence, the placement, meaning and function of the pronoun *it*, taken together with the immediately preceding and following texts, make the inference of the word *year* and its

² Alma 28:10; 3 Nephi 5:7; 4 Nephi 1:6.

adjectives certain in Helaman 1:13. The pronoun *it* is thus deemed to be an implied year-term. The meanings attributable to the three consecutive clauses in Helaman 1:13-14 are that: (a) the events previously described occurred in the 40th year of the chronological system associated with “the reign of the judges”; (b) the 40th year came to an end; and (c) the events described in the 41st year then began to occur.

There seems to be no reason to question whether the singular noun *year* is implied in the ten instances discussed above. In nine cases, the associated number-term is the primary textual cue that *year* has been ellipted and is to be inferred. In each of these cases, a simple *and* or *to* connects the year-related expressions within the same clause. In the tenth instance, the pronoun *it* plainly implies that the number-, year- and time-terms in the preceding clause are to be inferred. In this tenth instance, a simple *and* connects the two clauses. This clarity in identifying implied year-terms does not always occur in the text, however, because in several cases the word *year* evidently was misspelled as *yea* during the process of producing the 1830 edition of the *Book of Mormon*. These apparent misspellings occurred in texts where the word *year* perhaps might have been ellipted and not replaced.

2.2.1 The misspelled word *year*

The year-related expression in Helaman 3:3 was discussed in Part 1 as an example of a text where Oliver Cowdery seems to have misspelled the word *year* in the original manuscript by dropping the final letter *r*, a habit that also appears in the manuscripts when he wrote the similar word *your*. The textual comments at the end of Table 1.A identify several instances in the extant manuscripts where the noun *year* may have been misspelled as *yea*.³ Three of the instances of *yea* apparently were corrected by Cowdery within the manuscript where the misspelling occurred and one of the three may have merely involved Cowdery running out of ink when he had written *yea* and then immediately rewriting the letter *a* and adding the letter *r* when his quill had more ink.⁴ In a fourth instance, the typesetter noticed a printer’s manuscript misspelling in the year-related expression “the nineteenth *yea* of the reign of the Judges”;⁵ so, he typeset the word *year* correctly. The number-term and time-term on either side of the year-term made the need for this correction obvious. For the misspellings in Alma 48:21 and Helaman 3:3, however, the errors in the printer’s manuscript were typeset into the 1830 edition and were repeated in subsequent printings of the *Book of Mormon*.

2.2.2 The misspelling in Alma 48:21

The text in Alma 48:21 is neither an example of express and implied singular year-terms occurring consecutively within the same clause nor an example of express and implied singular year-terms occurring in consecutive clauses. Hence, this case is unlike the ten clear instances of implied singular year-terms discussed above. Still, because implied singular year-terms appear to be crucial to understanding the chronological structure in the plates of Mormon,⁶ the lack of the express word *year* in Alma 48:21 and the presence of the adverb *yea* must be analyzed carefully.

³ Alma 28:10; 30:4; 48:2, 21; 56:1; Helaman 3:3.

⁴ Alma 28:10; 30:4; 56:1.

⁵ Alma 48:2; Skousen, ed., *The Printer’s Manuscript of the Book of Mormon, Part Two*, 628, italics added.

⁶ See Division 3: Chronological Structure and Symbolism in the Plates of Mormon.

In the unpunctuated text of the extant original manuscript, the correctly spelled word *year* appears in this year-related narrative,⁷ but in the printer’s manuscript, the word *yea* appears in the same textual location. Obviously, the word *year* was misspelled in the printer’s manuscript, but the typesetter had no access to the original manuscript. He was faced with the following series of words and symbols in what is now identified as Alma 48:20-22. Only the noun *Lamanites* was capitalized in this part of the printer’s manuscript. The three year-related expressions in this quotation have been placed in italic font, so that they are readily distinguishable from the narrative-links and secondary narrative language. The typesetter’s punctuation and capitalization decisions associated with this part of the printer’s manuscript have been inserted and marked with brackets. Each ampersand was typeset as the word *and*.

[:] & thus they were free from wars & contentions among themselves[;] yea[,] even for the space of *four years*[.][B]ut as I have said in the latter end of *the nineteenth*[;] yea[,] notwithstanding their peace amongst themselves[,] they were compelled reluctantly to contend with their brethren[,] the Lamanites[;] yea[,] & in fine[,] their wars never did cease for the space of *many years* with the Lamanites[,] notwithstanding their much reluctance[.]⁸

The typesetter chose to punctuate and capitalize this text so that the first clause was conjoined with the previous narrative and ended with the phrase *four years*. The next sentence then began by mentioning the phrase *the latter end of the nineteenth year*, which had been placed almost two printed pages earlier in the text. Hence, contrary to the typical practice in the other ten undeniable instances of implied year-terms, the supposed ellipsis not only does not occur in the same clause or in the immediately following clause, but it is so far removed from the previous, distant mention of the latter end of the 19th year that the reader was expressly reminded of this fact in the text. Furthermore, the intervening plural year-term in the phrase *four years* is unprecedented.

A reader also may well question what semantic value the supposed adverb *yea* has in Alma 48:21. The simple answer is none. Sometimes in the *Book of Mormon*, the word *yea* merely means “yes”,⁹ but that meaning does not fit in this context because no question has been asked.¹⁰ A few times when *yea* is used in the *Book of Mormon*, the word “introduces a subject, with the sense of indeed, verily, truly, it is so”;¹¹ however, that meaning also is inapplicable to this sentence because *yea* does not introduce a subject. Instead, it introduces a prepositional phrase that modifies the subject *they*.¹² Most often, the adverb *yea* is used in the *Book of Mormon* when it “enforces the sense of something preceding; not only so, but more”,¹³ i.e., it introduces “a statement, phrase, or word, stronger or more emphatic than that immediately preceding”.¹⁴ Again, this meaning does not apply to the word *yea* in Alma 48:21 because the prepositional phrase does not strengthen, amplify or emphasize the preceding language, it merely repeats it.¹⁵

⁷ Skousen, ed., *The Original Manuscript of the Book of Mormon*, 399.

⁸ Skousen, ed., *The Printer’s Manuscript of the Book of Mormon, Part Two*, 631; Smith, *The Book of Mormon* (1830), 359.

⁹ Webster, *An American Dictionary of the English Language*, II: [947] (*yea*).

¹⁰ Compare, e.g., 1 Nephi 11:4-5, 21-22; Alma 5:9; 3 Nephi 23:9-10; Ether 3:11-12, 15.

¹¹ Webster, *An American Dictionary of the English Language*, II: [947] (*yea*).

¹² Compare, e.g., Alma 26:22; 32:17.

¹³ Webster, *An American Dictionary of the English Language*, II: [947] (*yea*).

¹⁴ *The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary*, II: 3853 (*yea*).

¹⁵ Compare, e.g., 1 Nephi 1:13, 15, 18, 20; Alma 1:6-7, 22; 3 Nephi 21:26; Mormon 9:22; Ether 9:12.

Based on all these considerations, the typesetter's insertion of a semicolon before this particular *yea* in the text of the 1830 edition merely served to compound the misspelling that is obvious from the extant original manuscript. He should have corrected the spelling by adding the letter *r* to the letters *yea*. Editors of the 1849 Church edition and subsequent Church editions did not remedy the misspelling of *year* by removing the semicolon and spelling the word correctly. They inserted a correctly spelled *year*, but then seem to have assumed the prerogative to follow it with the unwarranted semicolon and superfluous adverb *yea*.¹⁶ The Yale text reflects Royal Skousen's deletion of the typesetter's needless semicolon and correction of the misspelling in accordance with the text of the original manuscript. In this study, the year-term in Alma 48:21 is categorized as an express singular *year*.

2.2.3 The misspelling in Helaman 3:3

In Helaman 3:3, the question of a possible misspelling of *year* has an answer that is quite different from that for Alma 48:21, but it is just as important to the analysis of implied year-terms in the plates of Mormon. When discussing the misspelled word *year* in Helaman 3:3, Skousen did not mention the serious degeneration of conditions among the Nephite people nor did he mention their emigration to the lands northward. He did note a text-based expectation that *yea* should either amplify or modify "what has just been stated", but he immediately asserted that the use of *yea* in this verse "stands out as an isolated use of the word, with no narrative purpose, except to sound biblical".¹⁷ That assessment is not accurate. The issues in Helaman 3:3 are not the isolated placement and empty meaning of *yea*, as they are in Alma 48:21. The adverb *yea*, if it had been intended for its location, would have emphasized the great contentions and emigration that occurred. Rather, the issue in Helaman 3:3 is the apparently unique and bizarre use of ellipsis at the beginning of one of the most important year-related narratives in the Book of Helaman.

The textual facts are straight forward. Both manuscripts spell the word *yea* and there is no indication of any attempt to correct either spelling. In the original manuscript, however, five of the seven immediately following words are misspelled: (a) "there" written as "thhere" and not corrected; (b) "much" originally started as "no" and then overwritten with the correctly spelled word; (c) "contentious" written as "contenteous" and then the second letter *e* was overwritten with a letter *i*; (d) "many" originally written as "nany" and then the first letter *n* was overwritten with a letter *m*; and (e) "dissensions" originally written as "dессensions" and then the first letter *e* was overwritten with the letter *i*.¹⁸ With so much misspelling and correcting at this point in the original manuscript, one would not be surprised if Oliver Cowdery dropped the final letter *r* from the word "year" and did not correct it.

The unpunctuated text of the printer's manuscript gave the typesetter the following series of words and symbols in what is now identified as Helaman 3:1-3. Three of the words were capitalized in this section of the manuscript: the initial conjunction *And*, the noun *Judges* and the noun *Nephi*. The five year-related expressions in this quotation again have been placed in italic font, so that they are distinct from the narrative-links and secondary narrative language. The typesetter's punctuation and capitalization decisions have been inserted and marked with

¹⁶ Royal Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon, Part Four* (Provo, Utah: BYU FARMS, 2007), 2597-98.

¹⁷ Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon, Part Five*, 2902.

¹⁸ Skousen, ed., *The Original Manuscript of the Book of Mormon*, 497; idem, *The Printer's Manuscript of the Book of Mormon, Part Two*, 718.

brackets. Each ampersand was replaced by the word *and*, but after each typeset period, the *And* also was capitalized as the first word of a sentence.

And now it came to pass in *the forty & third year of the reign of the Judges*[,] there was no contention among the people of Nephi[,] save it ware a little pride which was in the church[,] which did cause some little dissensions among the people[,] which affairs were settled in the ending of *the forty & third year*[,] & there was no contention among the people in *the forty & fourth year*[:;] neither was there much contention in *the forty & fifth year*[,] & it came to pass in *the forty & sixth*[,] *yea*[,] there were much contentions and many dissensions[:;]¹⁹

As thus capitalized, punctuated and spelled, the clause containing the possibly misspelled *year* follows two sentences, each of which uses the express noun *year* twice. These four immediately preceding instances of the singular *year* might be thought to indicate that Mormon₂ could have omitted the word *year* from the fifth of these closely positioned, consecutive, year-related expressions. Furthermore, the next larger ordinal numbers appear in the third, fourth and fifth number-terms of this text; so, these ordinal numbers also might be thought to indicate a point in the text where the word *year* could have been ellipped and still reasonably been implied.

In addition, the meaning of the adverb *yea* seems appropriate where it follows the last of the five year-related expressions. The narrative of Helaman 3:1 states that “some little dissensions” were settled in the 43rd year. In the narratives of Helaman 3:2, “no contention” was reported for the 44th year and not “much contention” occurred in the 45th year. Then, however, at the beginning of Helaman 3:3, the narrative for the 46th year seems to report that “yea, there were much contentions and many dissensions”. In this very limited view of the nearby words, the adverb *yea* “enforces the sense of something preceding”²⁰ and introduces a narrative that is “stronger or more emphatic than that immediately preceding”.²¹ The minor contentions and dissensions reported for the previous years increased in the 46th year to perilous “much contentions and many dissensions” among the people, indeed, “disturbances and wars”.²² Arguably, in this view of the year-related narratives, the adverb *yea* emphatically introduces an appallingly swift cultural deterioration. Hence, Helaman 3:3 seems to present a narrative in which the nearby number-terms and year-terms make the ellipsis of a singular noun *year* understandable and the adverb *yea* emphasizes the change from small contentions and dissensions in a couple of the three previous years to the sudden eruption of contentions, dissensions, disturbances and wars among the people in the 46th year.

This view of these year-related narratives seems acceptable as far as it goes, but the perspective is too narrow. The narratives at the beginning of the Book of Helaman are not taken into account nor does the narrow view comprehend the narratives of the three years that begin with the 46th year. In the first two chapters of Helaman, the narratives describe intense conflicts that occurred within the land of Zarahemla during a three-year period. In the 40th year of the reign of the judges, two successive chief judges died, the first apparently of natural causes. One of his many sons was appointed by the people as the new chief judge, but a brother of the new chief judge agitated for revolt. The rebel brother was captured and executed. Then a secret band of his supporters assassinated the new chief judge. Another brother was appointed chief judge by

¹⁹ Skousen, ed., *The Printer's Manuscript of the Book of Mormon, Part Two*, 718; Smith, *The Book of Mormon* (1830), 412.

²⁰ Webster, *An American Dictionary of the English Language*, II: [947] (*yea*).

²¹ *The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary*, II: 3853 (*yea*).

²² Helaman 3:17-18.

the people, but in the 41st year, he was killed during a surprise Lamanite invasion and conquest of the Nephite capitol city, Zarahemla. Eventually, the Nephite armies drove the Lamanites from the land that year and, in the 42nd year, despite revitalized contentions, a new chief judge named Helaman₃ was appointed by the people. The secret band of assassins then attempted to kill Helaman₃, but the plot was foiled and the assassins (led by a rebel named Gadianton) fled out of the land of the Nephites. At that point, the 42nd year of the reign of the judges came to an end. A careful reader cannot help but notice that the corresponding narratives of contentions and chief judge appointments in the 40th and 42nd years were separated by the 41st year in which a devastating war with the Lamanites occurred.

Chapter 3 of the Book of Helaman then begins with the narratives about the following three-year period. These narratives concern the beginning years of Helaman₃'s rule as chief judge and tell of almost no contention in the 43rd year, no contention at all in the 44th year, and not "much contention" in the 45th year. This relatively calm three-year period seems to present an antithetical parallel to the prior three-year period. The two periods of great contention and leadership change (the 40th and 42nd years) parallel two periods with leadership stability and little contention under the new chief judge Helaman₃ (the 43rd and 45th years). The two central years of each three-year period (the 41st and 44th) contrast a destructive Lamanite war with total peace among the people of Nephi. Only after this six-year introduction to the Book of Helaman is the "forty and sixth[,] yea" mentioned.

The 46th year began a new and dangerous three-year period, one very different from the prior three years of peace and little contention. In fact, this third three-year period paralleled the first three-year period described in the Book of Helaman. When the narratives in Helaman 3:3-22 are considered in this light, a distinct textual block appears in which Mormon₂ seems intent on detailing both the "justice and equity" provided by Helaman₃ (a duly appointed chief judge) and the internal wars among the Nephites that led to the emigration of large numbers of people into the land northward. Mormon₂ also mentions the subsequent unification of the emigrants with the Lamanites to the north of the land of Zarahemla.

Hence, in the three-year period recorded in the first two chapters of Helaman, the origination of the secret Gadianton band of assassins and robbers is detailed and, in parallel with that development, the wars in the land of Zarahemla in the three-year period beginning with the 46th year resulted in many Nephites migrating north and eventually reinforcing the Lamanite population. For Mormon₂, these three-year periods would seem to have been crucial years of conflict balanced on either side of a three-year period of relative peace. Hundreds of years later, the great destroyers of the Nephites were the secret society of Gadianton murderers and robbers who infested the Nephite lands²³ and the huge numbers of Lamanite warriors who invaded those lands.²⁴ Here, in Helaman chapters 1 through 3, the origins of these two destructive forces appear to be identified. From this broader perspective, Mormon₂ appears to have focused intently on these origins by emphasizing the parallelism and antithetical parallelism of events in the nine-year period.

When all this crucial history and literary structure in the record of this period are examined, one may well question why Mormon₂ would choose to use ellipsis to introduce the 46th year, an extremely serious point in the narratives. He does not use ellipsis 15 verses later when he reports the end of this year of civil war, nor does he use ellipsis when he provides the brief narratives

²³ E.g., 4 Nephi 1:42, 46; Mormon 1:18-19; 2:8, 10, 27-28.

²⁴ E.g., Mormon 2:3-9; 4:10-14, 16-23; 5:1-7; 6:1-15.

associated with the contentious 47th and 48th years. Ellipsis of the singular noun *year* does not occur anywhere else in Mormon₂'s abridgment of the records kept by the chief judge Helaman₃. Indeed, none of the other ten clear examples of year-term ellipsis in the plates of Mormon occurs when a crucial year-related narrative begins. Furthermore, none of the nine instances of ellipsis within a single clause is connected to its preceding express year-term by any word other than a simple *and* or *to* and the tenth instance of ellipsis within two consecutive clauses uses just the word *and* to connect the clauses. In Helaman 3:3, however, the connecting words between the two clauses are "And it came to pass in", a phrase similar to ones used with many other year-related expressions in these early chapters of the Book of Helaman. In none of these other year-related expressions is the noun *year* omitted.

Thus, once the year-related narratives that begin the Book of Helaman are examined and the use of parallelism and antithetical parallelism with three-year periods is taken into account, Helaman 3:3 appears to be a very unlikely place in the narratives to omit the word *year*. The issue is neither the placement nor the meaning of *yea* in this verse. The issue is whether the use of ellipsis was likely to have been intended by Mormon₂ for this crucial point in the narratives. He was introducing a third, decisive, parallel and antithetical parallel, three-year period. Almost certainly, he would not have omitted the word *year* at the critical point of introducing the great migrations into the north that seem to have resulted in immense Lamanite armies destroying Mormon₂ and his people several hundred years later. Ellipsis at this point in the narratives would have been truly unusual. And not to be forgotten is the textual fact that Oliver Cowdery often misspelled the words *year* and *your* by dropping the final letter *r*. The word *year* certainly could have been misspelled in the original manuscript, copied into the printer's manuscript without being corrected, and then copied by the typesetter of the 1830 edition. The Yale text views *yea* as a misspelling of the word *year*²⁵ and this study accepts that view as being consistent with the manuscript evidence and narrative context, and much more likely than a bizarre ellipsis at this critical point in the narratives. The year-term in Helaman 3:3 is categorized as an express singular *year* and not as an implied singular *year*.

2.2.4 Coordinated single years and ellipsis

In two more year-related expressions, Mormon₂'s number-terms contain two coordinated ordinal numbers: "the fifty and eighth and ninth years" and "the twenty and sixth and seventh years".²⁶ The ordinal numbers of the first expression might have been written as "fifty and eighth *and fifty* and ninth" (italics added), but the unnecessary "and fifty" was omitted. Similarly, the ordinal numbers of the second expression might have been written as "twenty and sixth *and twenty* and seventh" (italics added), but the superfluous "and twenty" was omitted. In each year-related expression, the omitted words are clearly implied. In addition, one cannot reasonably assume that a singular *year* followed the first ordinal number in each expression ("fifty and eighth *year* and ninth years" and "twenty and sixth *year* and seventh years"), but then was also omitted. The only required year-term for each expression is the plural word *years*. Neither of these plural year-terms is extant in the surviving portions of the original manuscript,²⁷ but in the printer's manuscript, the word *years* is clearly transcribed as the last word of each expression.²⁸

²⁵ Skousen, ed., *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text*, 513; Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon, Part Five*, 2901-03. See also Division 1, Part 1, Section 1.4, of this source book; Smith, *The Book of Mormon* (1830), 412.

²⁶ Helaman 4:8; 3 Nephi 6:4.

²⁷ Skousen, ed., *The Original Manuscript of the Book of Mormon*, 37.

²⁸ Skousen, ed., *The Printer's Manuscript of the Book of Mormon, Part Two*, 724, 796.

Thus, no reason exists to assume an implied year-term associated with the first ordinal number in each expression.

2.3 Year-terms in the three sets of plates

Table 2.A sets forth the numbers and percentages of the three types of year-terms in the small plates of Nephi, the plates of Mormon and the plates of Moroni. Totals for all the plates also are presented. While most year-terms in the plates of Mormon are express singular nouns (272 or 74.9% of the 363 year-terms in these plates), most of the year-terms in the small plates of Nephi (25 or 86.2% of the 29 year-terms) and the plates of Moroni (28 or 82.4% of the 34 year-terms) are express plural nouns. The ten year-related expressions with implied year-terms only appear in the plates of Mormon.

These statistics seems to indicate different approaches to historical writing between the plates of Mormon and the other two sets of plates. On the one hand, the plates of Mormon expressly contain “a small abridgment” of the official plates of Nephi,²⁹ which from their very beginning were designed to record “a full account of the history” of the people of Nephi, “an account of the reigns of the kings and the wars and contentions of my people”.³⁰ This abridgment, at least the part of it that is extant in the current *Book of Mormon*, includes 272 narratives associated with singular year-terms, which usually are numbered with definite ordinal numbers. On the other hand, the “special purpose” of the small plates of Nephi was to record “an account ... of the ministry” of the Nephites and their “prophecies”, “preaching ... or revelation”.³¹ The small plates contain a sketch of historical events occurring over more than four hundred years.³² The small plates include just four singular year-terms referring to three definite years. The plates of Moroni include two different types of records: Moroni₂'s religious witness (including quotations of some of his father's writings, ancient church practices, preaching, personal testimony and prophecy)³³ and his abridgment of hundreds of years of Jaredite history represented on the plates of Ether, into which Moroni₂ inserted a personal commentary.³⁴ As Table 2.A indicates, the plates of Moroni contain 34 express year-terms, of which 28 are plural year-terms associated with relatively short periods usually associated with the lives of specific individuals.

2.4 Year-terms in the major divisions

Table 2.B depicts the numbers of the three types of year-terms in the major divisions of the *Book of Mormon*. The small plates of Nephi contain six complete books (First Nephi, Second Nephi, Jacob, Enos, Jarom and Omni) together with the Words of Mormon. In the plates of Mormon, the major divisions consist of the extant text of the Book of Mosiah and five complete books (Alma, Helaman, Third Nephi, Fourth Nephi and Mormon). The plates of Moroni contain two complete books (Ether and Moroni).

As might be expected from the numbers for the three sets of plates presented in Table 2.A, the plural noun *years* appears most often in every book and the Words of Mormon in the small

²⁹ Mormon 5:8-9

³⁰ 1 Nephi 9:2, 4; see also Words of Mormon 1:3-5, 9; Mosiah 1:6; 3 Nephi 5:9-20.

³¹ 1 Nephi 9:3; 19:3; Jacob 1:2-4.

³² E.g., 1 Nephi 1:4; 2:1-5; 7:6-15; 2 Nephi 5:28, 34; 25:10; Jacob 1:1; Omni 1:4-5, 8-12, 25; Mosiah 6:4-5.

³³ Mormon 8:14-9:37; Moroni 1-10.

³⁴ E.g., Ether 1:1-5; 2:9-13; 3:17-20; 4:1-6:1; 8:19-9:1; 12:6-13:1.

plates of Nephi and in both books in the plates of Moroni. In the plates of Mormon, the express singular noun *year* appears most often in four of the six books, but in Mosiah and Fourth Nephi, instances of the express plural *years* occur most often. However, if instances of the implied singular *year* are added to instances of the express singular *year*, then Fourth Nephi joins the other four complete books in the plates of Mormon which express and imply more singular nouns than plural nouns in the year-terms. This way of grouping year-terms leaves the extant Book of Mosiah as the only major division in the plates of Mormon with more plural year-terms than singular year-terms.

2.5 The placement of year-terms

Table 2.C presents the textual location of each year-term in the sequence in which it appears in the printer's manuscript, the plates and their major divisions. All 426 year-terms are represented. To assist in analyzing the placement of year-terms and to simplify the following discussion, each type of year-term has been labeled with a capital letter: A = express singular *year*; B = express plural *years*; and C = implied singular *year*. When consecutive year-terms are of the same type, they are grouped together along with the chapter and verse references for their locations. Occasionally, a single verse will include multiple consecutive year-terms of the same type; however, the verse is only listed once for these year-terms. If a single verse includes year-terms of different types, the verse is referenced more than once. The analytical use of these three letter labels is detailed in the following discussions of letter patterns, letter-sets and letter-groups.

2.5.1 Letter patterns

A and B year-terms occur in all three sets of plates, but A year-terms only occur in the books of First and Second Nephi in the small plates of Nephi and only in the Book of Ether in the plates of Moroni. A and B year-terms occur in all the books in the plates of Mormon. In addition, Alma and Helaman each has a single C year-term; Third Nephi has two consecutive C year-terms; and Fourth Nephi has six C year-terms positioned closely together in a pattern with a single year-term, three consecutive year-terms and then two consecutive year-terms.

Examining Table 2.C more closely, one may notice that two consecutive A year-terms occur in 1 Nephi 1:4. They are followed by eleven consecutive B year-terms in 1 Nephi 10:4 through 2 Nephi 5:34 and then followed by a single A year-term in 2 Nephi 16:1, a single B year-term in 2 Nephi 17:8, another single A year-term in 2 Nephi 24:28 and another single B year-term in 2 Nephi 25:19. All of the following books in the small plates of Nephi only use B year-terms. In this study, each of these separately labeled year-terms or groups of identically-labeled consecutive year-terms is viewed as being part of what is called a "letter pattern". In the case of the 17 year-terms at the beginning of the small plates of Nephi, an AB letter pattern occurs in First Nephi, but in Second Nephi, the pattern is BABAB. Later writers in the small plates of Nephi (including Mormon₂) continued to use only B year-terms in their year-related expressions.

To simplify the letter patterns of the six books and the Words of Mormon, it may be assumed for analytical purposes that the narratives in the small plates of Nephi are separated only by the different types of year-related expressions, rather than by the major divisions of the text. In other words, one may recognize that time runs forward moment by moment without any regard for human divisions that might occur within it (such as a birth, enthronement, death, or writing of a book). Thus, if the major divisions in the small plates of Nephi are disregarded, this set of plates may be said to have an ABABAB letter pattern. The B year-terms that conclude

First Nephi merge with the B year-terms that commence Second Nephi and the B year-term that concludes Second Nephi merges with the B year-terms in the following major divisions of the small plates of Nephi.

2.5.2 Letter-sets and letter-groups

Each separate part of a letter pattern such as ABABAB, whether an A or a B, is sometimes referred to in this study as a “letter-set”, even though many letter-sets only represent a single year-term. For clarity of presentation, a letter-set is enclosed by parentheses or, depending on its position in certain types of letter patterns to be described below, sometimes a central letter-set in a letter pattern is enclosed by brackets. For example, from Alma 48:22 through 62:39, there are three letter-sets: a single B year-term or (B) letter-set, followed by 39 consecutive A year-terms or an (A) letter-set, and then followed by another single B year-term or (B) letter-set. A letter pattern such as the BAB pattern in this part of the Book of Alma or such as the ABABAB pattern in the small plates of Nephi sometimes is referred to in this study as a “letter-group”. Each letter-group is composed of two or more letter-sets and for clarity is enclosed within parentheses also. Hence, (BAB) and (ABABAB) both may be called letter-groups. The (BAB) letter-group represents an example of two letter-sets, each composed of a single B year-term, occurring before and after a single letter-set composed of 39 consecutive A year-terms. The (ABABAB) letter-group represents all of the letter-sets in the small plates of Nephi. The first of these (A) letter-sets is composed of two A year-terms, while each of the second and third (A) letter-sets consists of a single A year-term. The first (B) letter-set in the small plates is composed of 11 B year-terms; the second (B) letter-set is a single B year-term; and the final (B) letter-set is composed of 13 B year-terms.

In the plates of Moroni, a (BABAB) letter-group appears for the 32 year-terms in the Book of Ether and two more B year-terms occur in the Book of Moroni. If, for analytical purposes and consistent with the constant motion of time, the major divisions in the plates of Moroni also are disregarded, then the year-term letter pattern also may be represented as a (BABAB) letter-group. The B year-term that concludes the Book of Ether merges into a single (B) letter-set with the B year-terms in the Book of Moroni.

As depicted in Tables 2.A and 2.B, there are many more B year-terms than A year-terms in both the small plates of Nephi and the plates of Moroni. The (BABAB) letter-group for the plates of Moroni may seem to depict the majority of B year-terms in those plates, but the majority of B year-terms in the small plates of Nephi is not depicted in the (ABABAB) letter-group for those plates. This result occurs because a letter-set represents a single linguistic type of consecutive year-terms, not the actual number of year-terms of a linguistic type that appear in consecutive order. Thus, a (BAB) letter-group like the one in the Book of Alma mentioned above can represent 39 consecutive A year-terms and only two B year-terms.

2.5.3 Combinations of letter-sets and letter-groups

Each year-term labeled with a capital letter A represents a writer’s decision to use the express singular *year* in a year-related expression. Each (A) letter-set represents one or more decisions by a writer or several writers to use that type of year-term in consecutive order. Similar statements may be made about B year-terms, (B) letter-sets and the express plural *years*, and about C year-terms, (C) letter-sets and the implied singular *year*. When labels and letter-sets are combined in a proposed letter-group, the letter pattern may suggest that the writer or writers

made structured or systematized decisions about the type and placement of their various year-terms.

The (A) and (B) letter-sets in the small plates of Nephi (ABABAB) and the plates of Moroni (BABAB) might seem to alternate from time to time merely depending on the writers' word choices in the associated narratives. No paramount organizational structure is immediately apparent from the letter pattern for either set of plates. Nevertheless, in the (ABABAB) letter-group of the small plates of Nephi, the first (A) letter-set includes two references to the same year and the other two (A) letter-sets each refer to separate years. In the associated time-terms and narrative language, the first year is identified as one in which the reign of a king of Judah apparently began and the other two years are ones in which the reigns of two other kings of Judah ended. The three (B) letter-sets all are related to expressions and narratives involving plural years associated with prophets and prophecy. This contrast in the use of A and B year-terms related to the lives of kings and prophets does not appear to have occurred merely by chance. The letter patterns of the small plates of Nephi are carefully examined in Division 2 of this source book.

The distinction between (A) letter-sets or kings' reigns and (B) letter-sets or prophets and prophecy does not occur in the plates of Moroni. In the (BABAB) letter-group of these plates, both A and B year-terms appear to be used interchangeably in narratives about kings and prophets. Nonetheless, four-year periods recorded with A and B year-related expressions occur throughout the Book of Ether and this may suggest that astronomical, mathematical or numerical associations provide some sort of systematic structure to the letter pattern. This possibility is analyzed in depth in Division 4 of this source book.

For the extant books in the plates of Mormon, the year-term letter patterns are much more complex because of the great number of A and B year-terms and the placement of C year-terms within four of the books. These letter patterns are represented by the following letter-groups for the extant Book of Mosiah (ABABABAB) and for the complete books of Alma (ABABABAB ABABABACABABABABABABA), Helaman (ACABABABABABABA), Third Nephi (ABABABABABACBABABABAB), Fourth Nephi (ACACBCBABABABABABA) and Mormon (BABABABABABABAB). As noted above for the small plates of Nephi and the plates of Moroni, the letter patterns may be simplified somewhat if the major divisions are disregarded. That is, the text in a set of plates might be assumed to be divided only by year-terms and not by major divisions. When that assumption is followed in the plates of Mormon, the pattern of letters may be viewed as a very long letter-group in which the A year-terms at the end of Alma and the beginning of Helaman, and at the end of Helaman and the beginning of Third Nephi, are merged into single letter-sets. The pattern of this very long letter-group then becomes (ABABABAB ABABABABABABABACABABABABABABACABABABABABABABABABABABABABACBA BABABABACACBCBABABABABABABABABABABAB). This letter-group begins with a single A year-term in the extant text of Mosiah and ends in Mormon with a single B year-term engraved by Mormon₂, which is followed by another B year-term engraved by Moroni₂ many years after his father's death. The ten C year-terms initially might appear to be scattered randomly through the many iterations of the (A) and (B) letter-sets, but they are not. Indeed, the C year-term placements and those of their related A and B year-terms seem to have distinctive letter patterns. The proposed patterns of year-terms in the plates of Mormon will be examined in detail in Division 3. However, for the purpose of introducing the proposed year-term letter patterns in the plates of Mormon, the following brief discussion suggests paramount or systematized patterns governing the use of the three types of year-terms.

The patterns of year-terms in these plates appear to begin with four iterations of the basic (AB) letter-group in the extant text of Mosiah. These year-terms begin at Mosiah 6:4, when king Mosiah₂ was enthroned and became the official Nephite record keeper. They end at Mosiah 29:46, when the inauguration of the reign of the judges occurred, king Mosiah₂ passed away and the first chief judge, Alma₂, became the official record keeper. Because of the lost texts of the books of Lehi and Mosiah, these four repeated (AB) letter-groups, by themselves, provide almost no information about the distribution of year-terms that may have once existed in the beginning part of the plates of Mormon. Presumably, the lost texts included both A and B year-terms like the ones in the extant Book of Mosiah. Whether C year-terms were part of the lost texts cannot be determined from the extant text.

The following letter pattern begins at Alma 1:1, at a time when the new record keeper, Alma₂, apparently recorded the first year of the reign of the Nephite judges. The pattern appears to continue through many record keepers in the books of Alma and Helaman, but it does not end until 3 Nephi 1:1, a verse that identifies the time when 91 years of the judges' reign had ended and 600 years also had ended since Lehi₁ left Jerusalem. In the related narratives, Nephi₃ was about to become the official record keeper, the sign of the Messiah's coming was about to occur and time measured from his coming was about to begin. This letter pattern consists of five parts. In the following depiction, the central [A] letter-set (containing year-terms in Alma 46:40 and 48:2) is bracketed for emphasis: (ABABABABABABABA)(C)(ABABAB[A]BABABA)(C)(ABABABABABABABA). This letter pattern may be described as "balanced", which means that on either side of the central [A] letter-set the numbers of letter-sets are the same. In addition, this pattern may be termed "reversible", i.e., whether viewed forward or backward, the pattern is identical. This balanced and reversible letter pattern consists of 15 alternating (A) and (B) letter-sets, one (C) letter-set, 13 alternating (A) and (B) letter-sets, another (C) letter-set, and 15 alternating (A) and (B) letter-sets. The entire pattern reverses and balances at the [A] letter-set in the middle of the thirteen alternating (A) and (B) letter-sets.

After the change in the official Nephite record keeper is noted in the narrative of 3 Nephi 1:2-3, an entirely new pattern of year-terms commences in 3 Nephi 1:4. In Table 2.C, the consecutive A year-terms in 3 Nephi 1:1 and 4 are shown as a single (A) letter-set; however, the change in record keepers seems to require these A year-terms to be separated into different letter-sets, the first associated with the end of the foregoing letter pattern and the second associated with the beginning of the next letter pattern, which may be symbolized with five letter-groups as follows: (ABABABAB)(ACB)(ABABABAB)(ACACBCB)(ABABABAB). This letter pattern is neither balanced nor reversible. Three identical letter-groups are each composed of four (A) letter-sets alternating with four (B) letter-sets. These letter-groups are separated from each other by a simple (ACB) letter-group in Third Nephi and a complex (ACACBCB) letter-group in Fourth Nephi. The letter pattern ends with the B year-term in 4 Nephi 1:48, when another change in official record keepers is about to occur and Mormon₂ is about to be chosen for this role.

The plates of Mormon conclude with a single letter-group that begins with the A year-term at the conclusion of 4 Nephi 1:48 and ties directly to the B year-terms that begin Mormon₂'s personal book. The narratives are connected in an (AB) letter-group. When the record keeper, Ammaron, brought his report of the 320th year from the coming of Christ to a close, the practice of Nephite record keepers delivering the accumulated records and treasures to their successors also came to an end. After more than 900 years of direct personal transfer from one record keeper to his replacement, Ammaron hid the sacred materials in the earth. At that time, Mormon₂ was called to be the next official record keeper and he was instructed how and when to

commence his work.³⁵ The final pattern of year-terms in the plates of Mormon consists of eight iterations of (AB) letter-groups that are neither balanced nor reversible.³⁶ Thus, proposed letter patterns of year-terms in the plates of Mormon have been introduced briefly, together with their associated balanced or non-balanced, and reversible or non-reversible, characteristics. These letter patterns are examined further in Division 3, where the plates of Mormon are the focus of inquiry.

2.6 Conclusion

To conclude this introduction of year-terms, two final issues may be noted. The proposed letter patterns in the plates of Mormon not only suggest a paramount organization of year-terms based on the placement of (C) letter-sets and at least some changes in official record keepers, as set forth in certain narratives, but the proposed letter patterns also suggest that writers in the small plates of Nephi and the plates of Moroni may have organized their year-terms as they did based on other kinds of narrative details. A couple of such systems of organization have been suggested above. Of course, any such organization of year-terms would have to have been unrelated to the (C) letter-sets that appear in the plates of Mormon because neither the small plates of Nephi nor the plates of Moroni included C year-terms. Thus, the introduction of year-terms, letter patterns, letter-sets and letter-groups in this Part 2 concludes with an unresolved issue: do the placements of A and B year-terms in the small plates of Nephi and plates of Moroni relate to their associated narratives in any way that suggests a paramount organizational structure? This question is examined fully in Divisions 2 and 4, where the chronological structures—the writers’ decision structures—in the small plates and the plates of Moroni are analyzed in detail.

The second issue related to year-terms is one that also may be raised with the introduction of time- and number-terms and narrative-links in the following Parts: how can one be certain that proposed letter patterns in any of the sets of plates actually were intended by the writers? At this point in the study, this issue also must remain unresolved because basic descriptive terms have not yet been fully introduced. To be sure, simple linguistic systems for analyzing year-terms and narrative-links have been proposed and year-terms have been explained in part, but questions remain because time- and number-terms have yet to be explained in detail. Five linguistic types of narrative-links have been barely mentioned; so, narrative-links and their interactions with year-related expressions also must be explained. These are tasks that must be addressed before the question of writers’ intentions may be addressed with any sort of detailed comprehension.

Still, a response to the question of intention, at this juncture, may focus on attitude. The overarching principle of rational interpretation is the attitude of rational reserve, one of the many facets of humility. Every rational answer to a question is a proposal and nothing more. That is the nature of rational inquiry. “Truth” and “certainty” are separate matters of belief. Scientific inquiry into the meanings of a text requires thorough consideration of all the available facts, one of the many aspects of patience. The principle of thoroughness requires further discussion before the issue of intent is considered because more facts are available than have been introduced and examined thus far. Hence, this study now proceeds to introduce time-terms in Part 3 and number-terms in Part 4. These adjectives are vital components of the many noun phrases in which a year-term is the head.

³⁵ Mormon 1:2-4.

³⁶ 4 Nephi 1:48 through Mormon 8:6 (where Moroni₂ maintained this pattern).