

THE WORDS OF MORMON

Chapter 1 ["Chapter 1" was part of \mathcal{P} and the 1830 edition but was removed in 1920]

[**Note:** The Words of Mormon is an **editorial comment** about the set of Small Plates of Nephi that Mormon found during his abridgment process. The first part of The Words of Mormon concerns that process while the last part has historical relevance which can be illustrated as part of the story of Nephite history. The Words of Mormon became especially relevant when Martin Harris, a scribe for Joseph Smith in the translation process, lost the first "116" pages of the translation of Mormon's abridgment of Nephite history. The content on the Small Plates of Nephi was then substituted and Mormon's **editorial comment** (The Words of Mormon) became important as a means of relating the content of the Small Plates to Mormon's abridgment of the Large Plates.]

Mormon Chooses the Prophecies on the Small Plates To Finish His Record upon Them

- 1 **And now** I **Mormon** being **about** to deliver up the record [*about A.D. 385*] aa
which I **[Mormon]** have been making
into the hands of my son Moroni
- behold** I **[Mormon]** have **witnessed**
almost ALL the destruction of **my people** bb
the Nephites
- 2 **And** **it is MANY hundred years after the coming of _____ Christ**
that I **[Mormon]** _____ deliver these records
into the hands of my son [Moroni]
- and** **it supposeth me** {AG}
that **he will witness** the entire destruction of **my people**
- But** may **God** grant 01
that **he may** survive _____ them **[my people]**
that **he may write** somewhat concerning them **[my people]** EP
- [Editorial Promise]

[Par. aa – Like beginnings]

[Par. bb – Like endings]

[Heb. 01 – A wish or a prayer]

and [that he may write] somewhat concerning Christ [see note]
that perhaps some day it may profit them [my people]

3 And **now** I [Mormon] _____ **speak** somewhat concerning that which
I [Mormon] have **written**

[see Note at the end of WofM]

for **after that** I [Mormon] had made an abridgment from the **plates** of Nephi [A] [deleted in 1837]
down to the reign _____ of this king Benjamin [B]
of whom Amaleki spake

I [Mormon] searched among the **records** [C]
which [**records**] had been delivered
into my hands

and I [Mormon] found these **plates** [C]
which [**plates**] contained this **small** account of the **prophets**
from Jacob down to the reign _____ of this king Benjamin [B]
and also **MANY** of the **words** of Nephi [A]

4 And the things
which are upon these **plates** _____ **pleasing** me
because of the prophecies
of the coming of **Christ**

and **my fathers** **KNOWING**
that **MANY** of them have been fulfilled

yea and I [Mormon] also **KNOW**
that as **MANY** things
as have been propheesied concerning **us**
down to this day have been fulfilled

and [I Mormon **KNOW**
that] as **MANY** [prophecies]
as go beyond this day MUST surely come to pass

5 **Wherefore** I [Mormon] **chose** these things
[which are upon these **plates** which **pleased** me]
to finish **my record**
upon them

which remainder of my record
 I [Mormon]
 shall take _____ from the plates of Nephi [large plates]
 and I [Mormon] CANNOT write the hundredth part 02
 of the things of my people 03

[Note: I would like to propose that Mormon “chose” these “things” to “finish” his writings upon them (WofM 1:5) because these “things” were related to the Lord’s covenants with His people, and the knowledge that Jesus is the Christ. Moreover, these “things” were presented in a refined manner of parallelistic line forms and word forms. Thus when the first 116 translated pages of Mormon’s abridgment of the large plates of Nephi were lost, and replaced by the “things” that “pleased” Mormon on the small plates, it actually made the record more unified. Also note that I have purposely colored the name “Nephi” purple here in “plates of Nephi.” This is to demonstrate that the large plates were kept by the royal line of Nephite kings.]

6 But behold I [Mormon]
 shall take these plates [these small plates]
 which contain these prophesyings
 and revelations

and [I Mormon
 shall] put them [the plates]
 with the remainder of my record [Mormon’s abridgment of the large plates]

for they [the plates] _____ are choice unto me

and I [Mormon] know
 [that] they [the plates] _____ will be choice unto my brethren

7 And I [Mormon] do this for a wise purpose
 for thus it whispereth me {AG}
 according to the workings of The Spirit of the Lord
 which is in me

[Note: According to Jeffrey Holland,
 the key to such a suggestion [regarding a ‘wise purpose’ (WofM 1:7)] is in verse 45 of D&C Section 10. . . .
 the Lord says, “Behold, there are many things engraven upon the [small] plates of Nephi which do throw
 greater views upon my gospel’ (D&C 10:45) . . . We do not know exactly what we missed in the 116 pages,
 but we do know that what we received on the small plates was the personal declarations of three great
 witnesses, [Nephi, Jacob, and Isaiah], . . . testifying that Jesus is the Christ. . . Their writing constitutes a
 full 135 pages of what is only a 145 page record.” {Jeffrey R. Holland, *CES Symposium*, BYU, 1994, 8-9.)]

[Heb. 02 – Amplification]

[Heb. 03 – Separated prepositions]

[Words of Mormon 1]

And **now** I [Mormon]
do NOT **know** ALL **things**
but [He] **the Lord** **knoweth** ALL **things** which are **to come**

wherefore He [the Lord] **worketh** _____ in **me**
to **do**
according to **His will**

8 And **my prayer** to **God** [Prayer] P
is concerning **my brethren**
that they [my brethren] **may once again**
come to the knowledge of **God**
yea [that they [my brethren] **may once again**
come to]the redemption of **Christ**
that they [my brethren] **may once again**
be _____ a **delightful** _____ **people**

*The Nephite Records (Scriptures) Have Been Kept
By Royal Lineage Even to the Time of Mormon*

9 And **now** I [Mormon] **proceed to finish out** **my record**
which [record]
I [Mormon] take _____ from the [large] **plates of Nephi**

and I [Mormon] make _____ it [my record]
according to the **knowledge**
and [according to] the **understanding** which **God** has **given me**

10 **Wherefore**
it came to pass
that after **Amaleki** had **delivered** up
these **plates** [the small **plates** of **Nephi**]
into the **hands** of **king Benjamin**

he [king Benjamin]
took them [the small **plates**]
and **put** them [the small **plates**]
with the other **plates** [brass plates, large plates, etc.]

which [plates]
contained **records**

which had been **handed down** by the **kings**
from generation to generation
until the days of **king Benjamin**

11

And they [the **plates**]
were **handed down** from **king Benjamin**
from generation to generation [Genealogy] G
until they [the **plates**]
have fallen into **my hands**

And I **Mormon**
pray _____ to **God** that they [the **plates**] **may be preserved** 04
from this time henceforth

[Note: If the records were “**handed down by the kings**” (**WofM 1:10-11**) until they fell into Mormon’s hands, then one doesn’t have to stretch credibility too far to assume that Mormon was of the Nephite kingship lineage. (See 3 Nephi 5:10- 20, especially v. 20. See also Mormon 1:3-5, especially v. 5.)]

And I **Mormon** **KNOW** that they [the **plates**] **will be preserved**

for there are GREAT **things** **written** upon them [the **plates**]
out of which [plates] **my people**
and their **brethren**
shall be **judged**
at the GREAT
and [the] last day

according to the **word** of **God**
which [**word**] is **written**

~~~ *The Lamanites Come Down to War Against King Benjamin*

[Note: From here forward (**WofM 1:12-18**), Mormon comments on Nephite history that would bring the narrative forward from king Benjamin’s early reign to the beginning part of the book of Mosiah, where Benjamin is late in his life. Although the battles referred to here correlate with the serious war mentioned in Omni 1:24, from the Small Plates, Mormon is most probably summarizing information gleaned from the Large Plates of Nephi.]

\_\_\_\_\_  
[Heb. 04 – A wish or a prayer]

12 And **now**

concerning this king Benjamin he [king Benjamin] had **somewhat of** contentions among his own **people** [1920] cc

13 And **it came to pass** also

that the armies \_\_\_\_\_ of the Lamanites  
*came down out of the land of Nephi*  
to battle against his **people** 05

But **behold**

[he] king Benjamin gathered together his armies

and he [king Benjamin] **did stand** **against** them [the Lamanites]  
and he [king Benjamin] **did fight** with the strength of his own arm  
with the sword of Laban

14

And in the strength of **the Lord**  
they **did contend** **against** their enemies [the Lamanites]  
**until** they had slain MANY thousands of the Lamanites

And **it came to pass**

**that** they **did contend** **against** \_\_\_\_\_ the Lamanites  
**until** they had driven them out of *ALL the lands of their inheritance*

*The Word of God Helps King Benjamin Establish Peace*

15 And **it came to pass**

**that** **after** there had been **false christs** dd  
**and** their mouths had been shut  
**and** they punished according to their crimes

16

**And** **after** there had been **false prophets**  
**and** **false preachers**  
**and** [**false**] **teachers** \_\_\_\_\_ among the **people**  
**and** **ALL these**  
  
having been punished according to their crimes

\_\_\_\_\_  
[Par. cc – Like beginings “he king Benjamin”]

[Heb. 05 – Compound preposition]

[Par. dd – Many “and”s]

And **after** there having been **MUCH contention/s** {AG}  
and [after there having been] **MANY dissensions away**  
unto **the Lamanites**

**behold**

**it came to pass**

that [he] **king Benjamin** **with the assistance** [First statement]  
of the **holy[men]**— **prophets**  
**who were** \_\_\_\_\_ **among** **his people**

17 For **behold** [he] **king Benjamin**  
was a **holy man**

and he [**king Benjamin**]  
**did reign** \_\_\_\_\_ over **his people**  
in **righteousness**

and there were **MANY holy men** **in the land**  
and they [these **holy men**]  
**did speak** the **word of God** [**preaching and teaching** – see v. 11 , 16]  
**with power** ee  
and **with authority**

and they [these **holy men**]  
**did** use **MUCH sharpness** [*they got right to the point*]  
because of the **stiffneckedness** of the **people**

18 **Wherefore** \_\_\_\_\_ **with the help** [Resumptive repetition]  
of these [**holy men** \_\_\_\_\_ **preaching and teaching**  
the **word of God**]

[he] **king Benjamin**  
by laboring **with ALL** the might of his \_\_\_\_\_ **body**  
and [by laboring **with ALL**] the faculty of **his whole soul**  
**and also**  
[by laboring **with ALL**] the **prophets**

**Wherefore** [deleted]

[he] **king Benjamin**  
**did once more** **establish** **peace in the land**

[Note: Although king Benjamin was a holy man, I have chosen to color his name purple in order to emphasize his kingship, and also to distinguish him from the prophets and from his son Mosiah, who will succeed him as king.]

\_\_\_\_\_  
[Par. ee – Many “with”s]

[Words of Mormon 1]

[Note: According to John A. Tvedtnes, “in verse two of Words of Mormon [**Wofm 1:2**], Mormon said he hoped that his son Moroni would write ‘concerning Christ.’ That hope was realized about 350 pages later when Moroni told important matters concerning the Savior in Ether 3:17-20 and in 12:7,16-22, and 38-41. At the very end of the whole volume (Mormon 9 and Moroni 2, 6, 7, 10), [Mormon’s] son [Moroni] included his own testimony of Christ.” (John A. Tvedtnes, “Mormon’s Editorial Promises,” in *Rediscovering the Book of Mormon*, eds. John L. Sorenson and Melvin J. Thorne, 1991, p. 29-31.)]

[Note on the phrase “after that” in **Wofm 1:3**: According to Royal Skousen, there were numerous cases of subordinate conjunctions such as “after that,” “because that,” or “before that,” which appeared in the Original Manuscript and Printers Manuscript. Due to modern usage, the word “that” was subsequently removed in most cases so that it does not appear in our modern editions. For example, in 1 Nephi (see my Volume 1) the subordinate conjunction “after that” originally appeared about **53 times**. In 2 Nephi (see my Volume 2), the conjunction “after that” originally appeared **23 times**. Intriguingly however, here in Volume 3, “after that” appears **only once** in Words of Mormon 1:3. In all the twenty-nine chapters of the Book of Mosiah there are **NO cases** of “after that” listed by Skousen for either the Original Manuscript or the Printers Manuscript. (Royal Skousen with the collaboration of Stanford Carmack, *The History of the Text of the Book of Mormon, Part Two: Grammatical Variation*, 2016, p. 1018-1026.)]

[Note: The first part of the transcribed manuscript of Joseph Smith’s translation of the Gold Plates was lost when it was taken home by Martin Harris. According to the preface of the 1830 edition, this part mainly contained pages “from the Book of Lehi, which was an account abridged from the plates of Lehi, by the hand of Mormon.” (HC 1:56). But according to an excellent 64-page article by Clifford Jones, the pages that were lost also contained the first chapter of the original Book of Mosiah. These “lost” pages were customarily numbered so that the last page was numbered “116”—thus, the reference to “the lost 116 pages” came to be. When Joseph Smith gave the manuscript pages to Martin Harris to take home, Joseph “retained” a segment of the transcribed manuscript that contained what is now our Words of Mormon. This is consistent with the Lord’s command to Joseph, after the 116 pages were lost, to NOT start to retranslate the Gold Plates from the beginning, but to start with “that which you have translated, which you have retained” (D&C 10:41). While the word “chapter” does not appear in the Original Manuscript, apparently Martin Harris would write in a numeral at the beginning of what would have been each new chapter. Those original numerals by Martin Harris for the original Book of Mosiah were initially copied by Oliver Cowdery into the Printers Manuscript, but were later modified. Therefore, the section called “The Words of Mormon” in our present Book of Mormon was originally Chapter 2 (“II”) of the original Book of Mosiah, and thus has never been titled as a “Book” (which is the only case of this happening in the Book of Mormon). Rather, the original chapter “II” Preface has been elevated to be used as a title: “The Words of Mormon.” (Clifford P. Jones, “That Which You Have Translated, which You Have Retained,” *Interpreter*, vol. 43 (2021):1-64.)

The following diagram hopefully helps to illustrate what has just been said:

Mormon's Abridgment  
of the Large Plates

Transcribed Manuscript

Scribes

Emma Smith, Reuben Hale

Book of Lehi

**Book of Lehi**

Martin Harris

L

Book of Mosiah

**Book of Mosiah**

O

[Heading]

[ "I" ] [Chapter 1]

[the reign of king Mosiah 1]

[ascension of king Benjamin]

[Amaleki gives the "small plates" to king Benjamin] [p. "116"]

S

T

*"RETAINED" -- D&C 10:41*

Abridged Large Plates

Transcribed Manuscript

Scribes

[Book of Mosiah-continued]

[ "II" ] [Chapter II]

Martin Harris

Preface: "The Words of Mormon"

Mormon's Commentary [WofM 1:1-11]

The reign of king Benjamin [WofM 1:12-18]

[Note\* This section will later be retitled "**The Words of Mormon**" by Oliver]

[~~"III"~~] [Chapter III]

[Note\* The "~~III~~" has been partially crossed out by Oliver Cowdery to become "I"]

[This is where our present Book of Mosiah begins with "Chapter 1."]

Oliver Cowdery

*in Words of Mormon verse 5, Mormon states: "I [Mormon] chose these things [in the small plates] to finish my record upon them." Let's go back to what Steven Olsen has discussed:*

*Mormon found the sacred contents of Nephi's second record [the small plates] so compelling that he used them as a framework to abridge and thereby interpret the remainder of the large plates. In particular, Nephi's prophecies became so crucial to his literary purpose that he consciously structured a major portion of his narrative in order to document their literal and complete fulfillment.*

*And let's go back to the note after verse 5 that I made in the text:*

*I would like to propose that Mormon "chose" these "things" to "finish" his writings upon them (WofM 1:5) because these "things" [Nephi's prophecies] were related to the Lord's covenants with His people, and the knowledge that Jesus is the Christ. Moreover, these "things" were presented in a refined ["structured"] manner of parallelistic line forms and word forms. Thus when the first 116 translated pages of Mormon's abridgment of the large plates of Nephi were lost, and replaced by the things" that "pleased" Mormon on the small plates, it actually made the record more unified.*

[Words of Mormon 1]

If Clifford Jones' theory is correct, and if my way of thinking is correct, upon coming across the mention of the small plates in his chronological abridgment process, Mormon stopped and searched for this record until he found it. He then took the time to read and ponder not only the message of the small plates, but the structural parallelistic style of those plates (which add further proof of the text). Mormon then made a decision (or "chose") to follow that structural style in completing his abridgment. He also "chose" to frame his abridgment around the fulfillment of Nephi's prophecies.

In making the decision to "choose" that framework and that parallelistic style, Mormon would have needed to pre-think not only the parallelistic style of his "Words of Mormon" (which he had yet to engrave on the plates), but what was to follow for the entire remaining Book of Mosiah.

In other words, in spite of having already inscribed on metal plates the original beginning of his Book of Mosiah (Martin Harris's Chapter "I"), Mormon "chose" to begin his new manner of composition and parallelistic structure where it begins—first in his aside (the Words of Mormon—Martin Harris's Chapter "II"), but more importantly at the beginning of his overarching chiastic structure beginning in verse 1 of Mosiah chapter "III" (now Mosiah 1). Thus, he would have simply included a somewhat parallelistic abbreviated history (verses 12-18) after his parallelistic aside that would take him quickly to that starting point (Martin Harris's chapter III (Mosiah 1)).

**If the reader will go to the end of this Volume 3, they will find two lengthy chiastic structures that cover the entirety of our modern-day Book of Mosiah (which would have started with the original chapter 3). Note that these chiastic structures do NOT cover the entirety of the "original" Book of Mosiah (including chapters I and II).**

In my view, this scenario is compatible with Martin Harris still being the scribe and marking a chapter break before the text of Mosiah III (now Mosiah 1) in the "retained" manuscript.

[Note: According to Gregory G. Wright (1976:31) and Donald W. Parry (2007:156), **verses 5-9** in Words of Mormon are an example of **Chiastic Parallelism**. What follows is a basic outline of that parallelism:

5.     **A 1**     Wherefore, I **[Mormon]** chose these things, **to finish my record** upon them  
          **2**     which remainder of my record **I shall take from the plates of Nephi**
  6.     **B**        I know **they will be choice unto my brethren**
  7.     **C**        according to **the workings of the Spirit of the Lord** which is **in me**  
          **D**        And now, **I do not know all things**  
          **D**        but **the Lord knoweth all things** which are to come  
          **C**        wherefore, he **[the Spirit of the Lord]** **worketh in me**
  8.     **B**        my prayer to God **is concerning my brethren**
  9.     **A 1**     And now **I, Mormon**, proceed **to finish out my record**  
          **2**     which [remainder of my record] **I take from the plates of Nephi**
-