

||| **SHOWYOURSELF**

# SHOW YOUR SHELF

500 faith-affirming questions that we find difficult to answer, or find secular answers unconvincing, so we put them on the “shelf”. Show your shelf by adding your questions to the list.

**Version 6.9**

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## Introduction

A testimony comes through the quiet influence of the Holy Ghost, but [evidence can nurture and strengthen](#) that testimony.

From Elder Jeffrey R. Holland:

*In making our case for the restored gospel of Jesus Christ, **I believe God intends us to find and use the evidence He has given**—reasons, if you will—which affirm the truthfulness of His work.*

***Our testimonies aren't dependent on evidence**—we still need that spiritual confirmation in the heart... —but not to seek for and not to acknowledge intellectual, documentable support for our belief when it is available is to needlessly limit an otherwise incomparably strong theological position and deny us a unique, persuasive vocabulary in the latter-day arena of religious investigation and sectarian debate. **Thus armed with so much evidence... we ought to be more assertive than we sometimes are in defending our testimony of truth** (emphasis added).*

*- [Elder Jeffrey R. Holland - The Greatness of the Evidence](#)*

The following questions, mostly emerging from the study of scholarly work, are not attributed to any individual or group, but aim to represent the collective mind of faithful Latter-day Saints.

While endless faith-affirming questions may be uninteresting or unconvincing to many, they can effectively illustrate how many others find endless *faith-challenging* questions equally uninteresting or unconvincing.

Similarly, many may believe there are perfectly adequate answers to endless faith-affirming questions, in the same way many others believe there are perfectly adequate answers to endless faith-challenging questions.

## Questions

What is a good alternative explanation for the Book of Mormon that accounts for all the evidence?

Unless he was inspired, how did 23-year old Joseph Smith manage to dictate all 269,510 words of the Book of Mormon without any notes?

Unless he was inspired, how did Joseph Smith achieve such incredible and complex internal consistency while dictating the Book of Mormon?

How did Joseph Smith sustain a blistering pace of dictating the whole Book of Mormon in around 60 working days?

How could Joseph Smith imitate so many different writing styles in the Book of Mormon, and how do we explain the 1 in 15 trillion chance of Nephi and Alma having the same author?

If Joseph Smith didn't dictate the Book of Mormon, then why are most errors in the original manuscript based on mishearing?

If Joseph Smith creatively dictated the Book of Mormon, why didn't it need an editor to check for consistency etc?

If Joseph Smith was reciting the Book of Mormon from memory, why did he not know how to pronounce many of the names?

If Joseph Smith was reciting the Book of Mormon from memory, why would he be surprised by the content?

If Joseph Smith was reciting the Book of Mormon from memory, why was its design and structure also a surprise to him?

If Joseph Smith was reciting the Book of Mormon from memory, why didn't he recite passages frequently and effortlessly in his discourses?

How did Joseph Smith manage to avoid correcting himself when dictating the Book of Mormon?

When translating the Book of Mormon, how did Joseph Smith immediately pick up where he left off?

If Joseph Smith was creating the Book of Mormon on the fly, wouldn't he sometimes struggle to know what to say?

If Joseph Smith had previously written the Book of Mormon in his own time, where are all the drafts?

How would Joseph Smith have afforded all the paper to write drafts when it was so expensive and scarce at the time?

If Joseph Smith had previously written the Book of Mormon before dictation, where did he find the time?

If Joseph Smith had previously written the Book of Mormon in his own time, why did no-one notice?

If Joseph Smith had previously written the Book of Mormon before dictation, why would he go through all the effort of pretending to translate for hours day after day?

What is our evidence that Joseph Smith had amassed a vast frontier library of alleged sources of the Book of Mormon?

How would Joseph Smith have afforded the money to borrow books from a library?

Where are all the "try works" of Joseph Smith?

How could Joseph Smith write the Book of Mormon if he was "ignorant" and a man of "limited education"?

How could Joseph Smith create a book of a reading level around the eleventh grade?

How is Joseph Smith's ungrammatical 1832 account of the first vision consistent with being the sole author of the Book of Mormon three years earlier?

How likely is it that a young man of Joseph Smith's limited education could produce such a lengthy book as a first-time author?

Why did early critics of Joseph Smith consider him a "blockhead" but later critics consider him a "myth maker of prodigious talents"? If the Book of Mormon is a fraud, then which extreme view of Joseph is true?

Why would a religious man like Joseph Smith dare to write a fraudulent book which mentions Christ once every 1.7 verses?

If the Book of Mormon was written by someone else with expertise in Hebraisms, Mesoamerica etc., then who was it and what is our evidence?

Why would someone with expertise in Hebraisms, Mesoamerica etc. anonymously fabricate a long and complex story, then exclusively share it with a farm boy who isn't interested in books?

If someone else wrote the Book of Mormon, why would they go to the effort of also supplying gold plates or require Joseph Smith to source them separately?

If Joseph Smith created the gold plates himself, is it likely he spent potentially 480 hours in a blacksmith shop hammering them out?

Would Joseph Smith have also spent around 450 hours engraving the characters on the plates?

Why would the gold plates be bound by the most efficient ring shape?

Why has no one ever come forward as the Book of Mormon's author?

Why has no descendant of the Book of Mormon's author ever come forward? Isn't there money to be made?

If Joseph Smith knew the Book of Mormon was a hoax, why would he suffer so much persecution and trials then die a martyr?

Wouldn't Lucy and Emma be the most likely people to know whether or not Joseph could have written the Book of Mormon?

If Joseph Smith created the Book of Mormon through "automatic writing", where did all the words come from?

If the Book of Mormon was a hoax, wouldn't Joseph Smith have been able to still translate when Martin Harris swapped out the seer stone?

Why couldn't Joseph Smith translate the Book of Mormon after a quarrel?

Why would Joseph Smith be comfortable with the gold plates often laying on the table without any attempt at concealment?

Why did Sally Conrad say that Joseph and Oliver were "exceedingly white and strange" during the translation?

Why did Joseph try to get others to translate the plates if he had engraved them himself?

Why would Martin Harris come away convinced after showing Charles Anthon characters from the gold plates?

Where did W. W. Phelps find out about "ancient shorthand Egyptian"?

How would Joseph Smith manage to convince 3 witnesses that they had seen an angel?

How could Joseph Smith convince 8 witnesses that the gold plates, which they held, were genuine?

[How do we also account for the other witnesses of the Book of Mormon?](#)

[Why did none of the Book of Mormon witnesses ever recant their testimony?](#)

[Didn't the six witnesses who left the church and had a personal animus against Joseph Smith have the perfect opportunity to expose him?](#)

[Didn't the witnesses have the perfect excuse to expose Joseph Smith when their lives were threatened?](#)

[Why has no-one completed Hugh Nibley's Book of Mormon challenge yet?](#)

[Why would Joseph Smith make dictation difficult for himself by including so many editorial promises in the Book of Mormon?](#)

[Would we expect Joseph Smith's first ever book to include editorial previews and summaries?](#)

[If the Book of Mormon was a product of Joseph Smith, would we expect it to be distinguished from other 19th century religious works by using 100 different names for Christ?](#)

[How would Joseph Smith ensure that the Book of Mormon's use of "remember" and "forget" is "extensive, internally consistent, and strikingly similar – in both frequency and range of meaning – to their use in the Bible"?](#)

[How come the writers of the small plates followed meticulously the instructions of Nephi?](#)

[How could Joseph Smith have quoted each of the farewell speeches from the small plates in Moroni's "verbal curtain call"?](#)

[Would we expect approximately 1,500 shifts in author or source throughout the Book of Mormon?](#)

[How would Joseph Smith not get confused while dictating the Book of Mormon when the storyline started to include flashbacks within flashbacks?](#)

[How could Joseph Smith maintain consistency while dictating the Book of Mormon when using multiple calendar systems?](#)

[Would we expect Joseph Smith to maintain a mathematically consistent chronology throughout the Book of Mormon?](#)

[If Joseph Smith wrote the Book of Mormon himself, why make it so long? Excluding Bible quotes it has 258,000 words \(compared to 184,000 words in the New Testament\). Why wouldn't Joseph just write a much shorter book and take less chances of being exposed?](#)

[If Joseph Smith wrote the Book of Mormon himself, why would he make it so structurally complex?](#)

[How could Joseph Smith \(while dictating\) manage to list a lengthy genealogy in Ether 1 and then discuss each person in reverse order throughout the rest of the book?](#)

[How would Joseph Smith not make the mistake of saying the priests fasted on the day that Alma was struck dumb?](#)

[Where would Joseph Smith find time to maintain a chronological order of events in different parts of the book, such as Mormon's letter to Moroni?](#)

[How could Joseph Smith compose the sacrament prayers using the wording Christ used 80 pages previously?](#)

[Why would Joseph Smith go to the effort of Nephi covering Lehi's story to compensate for the lost 116 pages?](#)

[How could Joseph Smith manage to create three accounts of Alma's conversion which are consistent with their having been written by a single individual, but in different settings and at different stages of his life?](#)

[How could Joseph Smith include 68 sermons in the Book of Mormon if he had never given a sermon in his life?](#)

[How would Joseph Smith have been able to write Nephi's Psalm?](#)

[What experience would Joseph Smith have had with "prophetic lawsuits"?](#)

[Why would Joseph not include the "without a cause" part of Matthew 5:22?](#)

[Why would the Book of Mormon associate being prideful with being "high" in the air?](#)

[Would Joseph Smith have noticed the significance of the phrase "this day" from reading the Bible?](#)

[How should we account for what Hugh Nibley thinks is the most convincing evidence yet brought forth for the authenticity of the Book of Mormon \(the Year-Rite\)?](#)

[Where would Joseph Smith have learned all about the nature and importance of Jewish oaths?](#)

[Why would Joseph Smith say that Laman and Lemuel beat Nephi and Sam with a rod rather than using their fists?](#)

[How could Joseph Smith make Nephi's description of Laban authentic and realistic?](#)

[Why would the Book of Mormon imply that a new bow would be understood as a political statement?](#)

[Where would Joseph Smith have gotten the idea of slippery treasures?](#)

[Why do traditions of "Messiah ben Joseph" show remarkable parallels to Joseph Smith's own life?](#)

[Why is the Book of Mormon's claim that Moses was translated backed up by non-biblical Jewish and Samaritan traditions?](#)

[Where would Joseph Smith have read all about the traditions of ancient covenant renewals?](#)

[Wouldn't Joseph Smith have probably thought coronations of kings would take place at a palace rather than the temple?](#)

[Where would Joseph Smith have gotten the idea of shining stones?](#)

[Would we expect Lehi's poetic couplet to match several features of desert poetry used by the ancient Bedouin of Arabia?](#)

[Wouldn't Joseph Smith have said the mountains were strong rather than the valley?](#)

[If Joseph Smith was copying from the Bible, wouldn't he have said "the city of Jerusalem" rather than the "land of Jerusalem"?](#)

[Is it by chance that there are meaningful similarities between the stone box containing the Nephite relics, and the Israelite Ark of the Covenant?](#)

[Why does the Book of Mormon mention veiled references of seers who "saw and heard"?](#)

[Why would Joseph Smith have said Lehi was of the tribe of Joseph if they were scattered by the Assyrians?](#)

[Why would the Book of Mormon describe baptism as a covenant if New Testament scholarship has only recently brought this to light?](#)

[Why do other ancient documents support the Book of Mormon's idea that the ancient Joseph prophesied of Moses and Aaron?](#)

[Why would Joseph Smith risk mentioning the building of temples outside of Jerusalem before the discovery of the Jewish community at Elephantine?](#)

[Why would Joseph Smith take a chance on saying John the apostle didn't die?](#)

[Why would the name Sidon appear in the Book of Mormon, but not Tyre?](#)

[What are the odds that the symbol of the tree of life is supported by many other evidences](#)

[from other ancient Near Eastern cultures, including Mesopotamia and Egypt?](#)

[Was Laban's "fifty" just a random number?](#)

[Why think it is just a coincidence that Moroni delivered the plates to Joseph Smith during the Feast of Trumpets?](#)

[Is it a coincidence that the Nephite interpreters are so similar to the Urim and Thummim?](#)

[If Joseph Smith wrote the Book of Mormon, wouldn't we expect his use of the brazen serpent symbol to be stagnant?](#)

[If Joseph Smith wrote the Book of Mormon, wouldn't we expect prayers before eating, rather than after?](#)

[How could Joseph Smith get the types of ancient Israelite sacrifice and offerings correct?](#)

[Wouldn't Joseph Smith have probably avoided likening Christ to a serpent?](#)

[What would Joseph Smith have known about the likely difference between men's and women's rights in the Book of Mormon?](#)

[If Joseph Smith wrote the Book of Mormon himself would we expect to see in 1 Nephi two authentically preexilic religious symbols \(Asherah and Wisdom\)?](#)

[Why does the Book of Mormon describe the ferocious Gaddianton robbers as wearing lamb-skin? Would we expect this rich symbolism if Joseph Smith wrote the book himself?](#)

[Why is the Near Eastern custom of chopping down the tree after a hanging in the Book of Mormon?](#)

[Why think it is a coincidence that ancient Near Eastern traditions \(not found in the Bible\) agree with the Book of Mormon that a remnant of Joseph's coat survived?](#)

[How could Joseph Smith subtly use white/light so consistently and in line with ancient tradition?](#)

[Wouldn't Joseph Smith have avoided saying Nephi was a Jew?](#)

[Why is the Book of Mormon using ancient calendrical patterns?](#)

[Why does King Benjamin's speech in the Book of Mormon contain nearly all the elements of ancient farewell addresses?](#)

[How do we explain Joseph Smith's use of primordial monsters in Jacob's personification of death and hell?](#)

[Where would Joseph Smith have learned about the names, relative amounts and functions of ancient weights and measurements?](#)

[Why does the Book of Mormon seem to know about Christopher Columbus's self-described motivation for voyaging to the Americas?](#)

[How would Joseph Smith know there were many prophets in Jerusalem when Lehi was preaching?](#)

[Why is there a curious symbolic pattern of time used in 4 Nephi when nothing is reported to have happened?](#)

[Why do ancient texts agree with the Book of Mormon that angels ministered to Adam and Eve?](#)

[What are the odds that Nephi described his family traveling through the only survivable route through Arabia?](#)

[If Joseph Smith was a clever multilingual researcher, then wouldn't his descriptions of Arabia have been wrong because contemporary expertise of his day was wrong?](#)

[Why would Joseph Smith mention an oasis in the Arabian peninsula that was believed to be nothing but desert?](#)

[Why would Joseph Smith think Lehi would name places which likely already had a name?](#)

[Was NHM \(Nahom\) just a lucky guess?](#)

[What were the odds that there was an Ishmael, buried near the Nihm tribal region, around the 6th century BC?](#)

[What are the odds that Nahom is the only place you can actually turn eastward on the incense trail?](#)

[Is it a coincidence that Nephi reminded his brothers of the “flying fiery serpents” sent by the Lord to chastise the children of Israel for their murmuring in regions believed to be infested by flying serpents?](#)

[Why would Joseph Smith take the risk in mentioning a river that continually flows into the Red Sea?](#)

[How could Joseph Smith know so much about ancient Arabia if there were no library books available to him on the subject?](#)

[What experience would Joseph Smith have had of desert travelers eating meat raw?](#)

[Wouldn't Joseph Smith have thought that all “rivers” have water?](#)

[Why does the Book of Mormon seem to know that the image of the olive tree was well known and significant in ancient Israel?](#)

[How would Joseph Smith know so much about olive horticulture?](#)

[What experience would Joseph Smith have had with steel bows and wooden arrows?](#)

[Why would Joseph Smith say a bow of "fine steel" would break?](#)

[Why would Joseph Smith choose to include a steel sword in Jerusalem if it was thought to be anachronistic in the 1820s?](#)

[Why would Joseph Smith take a chance on saying an ancient book was written on metal plates?](#)

[How could Joseph Smith introduce roughly 200 new names not found in the Bible?](#)

[Why do none of the 188 names that are unique to the Book of Mormon include consonants that do not exist in Hebrew?](#)

[How would Joseph Smith manage to violate all the rules for choosing fictional names?](#)

[If Joseph Smith wrote the Book of Mormon, wouldn't we expect some characters to have surnames?](#)

[Where would Joseph Smith have learned about compound names?](#)

[Why does the Book of Mormon not contain any names compounded with the theophoric Baal element?](#)

[If Joseph Smith was copying from the Bible, why would he use patristic names in the Book of Mormon?](#)

[Why would Joseph Smith include Greek names in the Book of Mormon \(such as Timothy\) if he was trying to convince others the book was true?](#)

[How would Joseph Smith manage to choose appropriate names for Lehi's sons?](#)

[How would Joseph Smith manage to pick a pair of pendant names for Laman and Lemuel?](#)

[Would Joseph Smith have realized that the most common name heard in the Egypt of Lehi's day was the most common name heard among the Nephites?](#)

[Unless Joseph Smith was a “religious genius”, how could he include attested Egyptian names in the Book of Mormon?](#)

[Why are there Hittite names in the Book of Mormon \(in just the right proportion\)?](#)

[Why would Joseph Smith use “Alma” as a male name in the Book of Mormon when it is](#)



traditionally female?

Why would Joseph Smith use “Sariah” as a female name?

What were the chances that "Aha" was in use long before Lehi's day?

How do we account for all the other attested names in the Book of Mormon (which are not found in the Bible)?

Why does the Book of Mormon seem aware of the huge cultural impact of Egypt on Israel in 600 BC?

What are the odds that the name "Liahona" would be a good fit for the Book of Mormon?

How could Joseph Smith “have hardly picked a better name” for “Shazer”?

Why would Joseph Smith take the risk in saying that Irreantum means “many waters”?

What were the odds that an ancient Egyptian term very similar to “deseret” was associated with the honeybee?

How would Joseph Smith be able to create a wordplay on “Abish”?

Is the wordplay on the name “Alma” just a coincidence?

Why is there a wordplay on the name “Aminadab”?

Is the wordplay on the name “Antion” a coincidence?

Why would King Benjamin talk about themes related to the meaning of his own name?

Why is there a wordplay on the name “Cain” in the Book of Mormon?

How would Joseph Smith have been able to create a "masterpiece" in the book of Enos which includes multiple wordplays?

Where would Joseph Smith have learned how to create a wordplay on the name “Ephraim”?

Why would Joseph Smith use the expression “a garb of secrecy”?

Would Joseph Smith have taken the time to create a wordplay on the name “Heshlon”?

Where would Joseph Smith have learned the meaning of the name “Ishmael”?

Why would Jacob be the only person in the Book of Mormon to use the word “protector” (the meaning of his name)?

Why is there a wordplay on the name “Jared”?

Wouldn't Joseph Smith have needed an understanding of Hebrew to include wordplays such as “Jershon”?

Is the wordplay on the name “Joseph” just a coincidence?

Where would Joseph Smith learn how to create a wordplay on the words “joy” and “boasting”?

Why is there a wordplay on “Judah/Jews” in the Book of Mormon?

Why does the Book of Mormon associate the name “Laman” with invitations to be "faithful"?

How could Joseph Smith manage to create a wordplay on the word “law”?

Why is there a wordplay on the name “Nephi”?

How would Joseph Smith be able to dictate a wordplay on the name “Noah”?

Why is there a wordplay on the name “Onidah”?

Where would Joseph Smith learn how to create a wordplay on the name “Shilom”?

Why is there a wordplay on the name “Zarahemla” in the Book of Mormon?

Why does the Book of Mormon continually refer to the Zoramites being “lifted up”?

Why are there so many other possible Hebrew (and other) wordplays in the Book of Mormon?

[Why does the Book of Mormon contain so many subordinate clauses which wouldn't be expected in English?](#)

[Why do we see a repetition of the definite article throughout the Book of Mormon \(like we would expect in Hebrew\)?](#)

[Why would Joseph Smith repeat possessive pronouns?](#)

[Why would the Book of Mormon contain the emphatic pronoun?](#)

[Where would Joseph Smith have learned about Gezera Shawa?](#)

[Why does the Book of Mormon include examples of anapodoton?](#)

[Why are there so many prepositional phrases rather than adverbs in the Book of Mormon?](#)

[Why does the Book of Mormon contain examples of nouns missing after numbers?](#)

[Why does the Book of Mormon contain so many cognates that wouldn't be expected in English?](#)

[Why are there hundreds of examples of the construct state in the Book of Mormon?](#)

[How would Joseph Smith remember to include so many compound prepositions when dictating?](#)

[Why do lists in the Book of Mormon repeat conjunctions?](#)

[Would we expect Joseph Smith to have conjunctions rather than the word "but"?](#)

[Why does the Book of Mormon contain examples of using conjunctions for parentheses?](#)

[Why does the Book of Mormon use the Hebraism "and also"?](#)

[Why are there Hebraic conditionals \(if/and\) in the Book of Mormon?](#)

[If Joseph Smith wrote the Book of Mormon himself, would we expect to see the archaic rhetorical device of enallage?](#)

[Was Joseph Smith aware of all the repetitive resumption \(Epanalepsis\) in the Book of Mormon?](#)

[Why do we see evidence of antenantiosis in the Book of Mormon?](#)

[Why does the Book of Mormon contain the classical rhetorical device of merismus?](#)

[Why is there gradation in the Book of Mormon just like the Old and New Testaments?](#)

[Why does the Book of Mormon contain examples of janus parallelism?](#)

[Would we expect "prophetic perfect" in the Book of Mormon if Joseph Smith wrote it himself?](#)

[Why would Joseph Smith say that Moroni waved the "rent" of his garment?](#)

[Where would Joseph Smith have learned to include polysemy in the Book of Mormon?](#)

[How would Joseph Smith know about the idiom of "calling" names?](#)

[Where would Joseph Smith have learned the Book of Mormon should include simile curses like in the ancient Near East?](#)

[If the Book of Mormon were really engraved on metal plates, why is it so wordy?](#)

[Why would 1 Nephi 1:6 say the pillar of fire "dwelt" on the rock, rather than sat or rested?](#)

[Why would Alma 49:22 curiously say that arrows were "thrown"?](#)

[Why does the Book of Mormon contain examples of plural amplification?](#)

[How could Joseph Smith consistently dictate the Book of Mormon without using any punctuation?](#)

[How would Joseph Smith remember to use the expression "and now" to mark a new chapter in the Book of Mormon?](#)

[What are extrapositional nouns and pronouns doing in the Book of Mormon?](#)

[Would Joseph Smith have known the Bible so well to use the same verbs \(and additional like terminology\) to describe the purges of priests?](#)

[Why would Joseph Smith use the expression "we might have enjoyed" in the Book of Mormon?](#)

[Why would Joseph Smith correct mistakes by simply restating the point?](#)

[Why do the authors in the Book of Mormon have different improvisation pattern signatures?](#)

[Why does the Book of Mormon use so many English words to describe what could have simply been translated as "the law"?](#)

[Why would there be deflected agreement \(the grammatical phenomenon found in Semitic languages\) in the Book of Mormon?](#)

[How could Joseph Smith appropriately make use of the phrase "and behold" in the Book of Mormon?](#)

[Would we expect to see hal-clauses in the Book of Mormon if Joseph Smith created it himself?](#)

[How could Joseph Smith consistently describe going "up" while moving toward Jerusalem, and going "down" while moving away from Jerusalem \(exactly as the Hebrews and Egyptians did\)?](#)

[Would we expect paired tricola in the Book of Mormon if Joseph Smith wrote it himself?](#)

[What knowledge would Joseph Smith have had of colophons \(used extensively in Egyptian documents\)?](#)

[What would have made Joseph Smith think of putting the Book of Mormon's title page at the back, rather than the front?](#)

[If Joseph Smith wrote the Book of Mormon himself, would we expect to see examples of subscriptio in the text?](#)

[Why would Joseph Smith dictate "Ramath" instead of the usual "Ramah" the Book of Mormon version of Isaiah 10:29?](#)

[Why doesn't the Book of Mormon include "Ariel" when quoting Isaiah 29:7?](#)

[Is it a coincidence that 1 Nephi 7:11 confuses the words "how" and "what" just like in 1 Samuel 12:24?](#)

[Why does the Book of Mormon seem to understand the word "Rameumptom" has Hebrew roots meaning a high/holy stand?](#)

[Why would Joseph Smith be so confident to give the interpretation of the word Rabbanah?](#)

[If Joseph Smith wrote the Book of Mormon wouldn't he have probably used the phrase "sorrows of death" rather than "bands of death"?](#)

[Why does the Book of Mormon seem to know that "let his face shine" is a Hebrew idiom for "smile"?](#)

[Why would Joseph Smith have spoken of "flying" fiery serpents?](#)

[Why would the Book of Mormon demonstrate the nuances of meaning contained within the Hebrew word "netzach"?](#)

[Why does the Book of Mormon contain unusual word meanings and phrasing that are completely unattested in either Joseph Smith's time or in the eighteenth century, yet can be commonly found in the centuries before that time?](#)

[Why does the Book of Mormon contain such sophisticated and principled command syntax?](#)

[Why do we see examples of the dative impersonal in the Book of Mormon?](#)

[Why would Joseph Smith frequently use the "periphrastic did" in the Book of Mormon?](#)

[Why would Joseph Smith have dictated the phrase “the more part of”?](#)

[If Joseph Smith wrote the Book of Mormon himself, then why are there deep syntactic patterns that match the sixteenth century and are a poor fit for either the English of King James Bible or for eighteenth- and nineteenth-century imitations of biblical style?](#)

[If Joseph Smith wrote the Book of Mormon himself, why would he use the "plural was"?](#)

[Why does the Book of Mormon contain complex finite cause syntax which is utterly different from what we encounter in the King James Bible and pseudo-archaic texts?](#)

[Wouldn't it have been too difficult for Joseph Smith to consciously manipulate relative pronoun usage in a sustained manner?](#)

[Would Joseph Smith have noticed a couple of rare usages of the word “require” in the Bible?](#)

[Why would the Book of Mormon use the biblical and archaic meaning of “prolong”?](#)

[How would Joseph Smith know about the phrase “for the multitude”?](#)

[Where would Joseph Smith have learned the archaic expression “understood of” if it only appears once in the Bible?](#)

[How could Joseph Smith manage to avoid creating a name phonoprint, yet J.R.R. Tolkien couldn't?](#)

[How come Joseph Smith knew so much about Exodus 21:13 and Biblical law to make the story of Nephi killing Laban legally justifiable?](#)

[How was Joseph Smith so educated on Israelite law and justice in the case of Seantum's confession?](#)

[How would Joseph Smith have been educated on ancient warfare, including military exemptions?](#)

[How would Joseph Smith be so well versed in guerrilla warfare?](#)

[Why would Joseph Smith have taken a chance on including total warfare in the Book of Mormon?](#)

[Where would Joseph Smith have learned about Mesoamerican watchtowers, fortifications and strongholds?](#)

[Why would Joseph Smith include cimeters in the Book of Mormon if they were thought to be anachronistic?](#)

[Where would Joseph Smith have learned the difference between arrows and darts?](#)

[What would make Joseph Smith think of describing armies in 10,000s?](#)

[Wouldn't it have been easy for Joseph Smith to mistakenly include descriptions of armor consistent with the Bible or Rome \(such as helmets\)?](#)

[How could Joseph Smith guess that ancient Mesoamerican warriors wore heavy clothing as armor?](#)

[How come the accounts of war in the Book of Mormon occur at the exact seasonal times we would expect?](#)

[Why are there so many named geographical references in the Book of Mormon \(170\)?](#)

[How could Joseph Smith keep track of at least 151 unique geographical relationships in the Book of Mormon? Wouldn't we expect around 28 mistakes if Joseph tried to go into that much detail?](#)

[Why are the works of Shakespeare, Tolkien, and Rowling used to explain away the Book of Mormon, when none of those authors claimed to dictate their work, use their first draft or that their book was true scripture?](#)

[How was Joseph Smith so meticulous in the usage of sacred numbers such as Lehi's seven](#)

tribes?

How do we explain the Book of Mormon's usage of the number 24 in relation to judgment?

How could Joseph Smith manage to seamlessly use the symbolic number 10 while dictating?

Why are there no complex numeric forms in the Book of Mormon, like biblical Hebrew?

If Joseph Smith wrote the Book of Mormon himself, wouldn't he have been caught out by Benford's law?

Why would Joseph Smith have thought to repeatedly mention "stretching forth one's hand" before an important speech?

Why would no speech ever be mentioned when stretching forth one's hand to exert supernatural power?

How would Joseph Smith manage to only speak of the Lord's "arm(s)" of mercy?

Why do some non-biblical sources agree with the Book of Mormon that Moses "smote" the Red Sea?

How could Joseph Smith manage to use biblical content with such sophistication such as Isaiah and Micah in 3 Nephi?

How could Joseph Smith write church administration instructions similar to an early Christian document (Didache)?

What were the odds that the only bow-wood obtainable in all Arabia only grows in the very region where Nephi's broken bow incident would have occurred?

Why would Joseph Smith, a patriotic American, frame the American revolution in the Book of Mormon as a story of deliverance rather than of resistance?

Why is the system of government and judges in the Book of Mormon so un-American and so far removed from Joseph Smith's own experience?

If Joseph Smith wrote the Book of Mormon, wouldn't we expect it to be less favorable to kingship like the political climate in early 19th century America?

Why are Nephite and Jaredite courtships in the Book of Mormon so far removed from 19th century American notions of romantic love?

Why are we finding Ancient Near Eastern books resembling the Book of Mormon (Narrative of Zosimus)?

How would Joseph Smith manage to include verbal irony in the Book of Mormon?

How would Joseph Smith know that writing in Hebrew would take up more space than writing in Egyptian?

What are the odds that there would be numerous examples of modified (or reformed) Egyptian characters being used to write non-Egyptian languages?

Why do we keep finding evidence that makes the Book of Mormon even more plausible and realistic?

Why would Joseph Smith take a chance on mentioning barley in the Book of Mormon?

Why would Joseph Smith mention bees in the Book of Mormon if it would only make readers skeptical?

Wouldn't mentioning elephants in the Book of Mormon be an unnecessary risk for Joseph Smith?

Why is the list of purported anachronisms in the Book of Mormon continually getting smaller? If it was written by Joseph Smith, wouldn't it look clumsier over time rather than being proved stronger?

How come the Book of Mormon doesn't commit a blunder when referring to thieves and robbers?

[Where would Joseph Smith have learned to dictate chiasmus?](#)

[How would Joseph Smith manage to use conceptual parallels rather than repeated words in chiasmus?](#)

[Why are there examples of parallelism of numbers \(a fortiori\) in the Book of Mormon?](#)

[How could Joseph Smith manage to dictate contrasting ideas parallelisms in the Book of Mormon?](#)

[How did the literary parallelism known as “progression” find its way into the Book of Mormon?](#)

[How could Joseph Smith dictate regular repetition throughout the Book of Mormon?](#)

[Why would Joseph Smith use beginning and ending repetitions while dictating the Book of Mormon?](#)

[Would we expect Joseph Smith to naturally include synonymous parallelisms while dictating the Book of Mormon?](#)

[Wouldn't Joseph Smith struggle to use synonymous words throughout the Book of Mormon?](#)

[Wouldn't it have been difficult for Joseph Smith to use antithetical parallelisms while dictating the Book of Mormon?](#)

[How would Joseph Smith know about alternate parallelisms?](#)

[How could Joseph Smith manage to dictate chiasmus as part of a historical summary?](#)

[If Joseph Smith took the time to deliberately include potentially over 430 instances of chiasmus in the Book of Mormon \(30 of which are at least 6 levels deep\), why wouldn't he ensure that someone noticed them?](#)

[Why would Joseph Smith take a chance on saying that Shiz could walk around beheaded?](#)

[What were the odds that Joseph Smith would pick the right time length for the Jaredites to cross the ocean?](#)

[Why would Joseph Smith go to such effort to make realistic ancient items such as the Sword of Laban and the Liahona?](#)

[How would Joseph Smith have been so consistent in using the word “nation” for the Jaredites but not for the Lamanites or Nephites?](#)

[How could Joseph Smith manage to hit the bullseye with the city of "Lamanai"?](#)

[How would Joseph Smith have guessed about native leaders being incorporated in power structure after subjugation?](#)

[Where would Joseph Smith have gotten the idea about hereditary priests \(which were the opposite of frontier priests\)?](#)

[How likely is it that Joseph Smith would know the importance of belonging to a leading patrilineage, purely from reading the Bible?](#)

[How would Joseph Smith have guessed the importance of tracing one's genealogy to a prominent ancestor \(in democratic frontier America in the early 1800s\)?](#)

[Would we expect the Book of Mormon to use the word “seating” to mean accession to political power?](#)

[Why would Joseph Smith say that subservient peoples “possess” the land while ruled by a dominant power?](#)

[Do we know of any contemporary practice or model in Joseph's Smith's world that put such emphasis on priests keeping a careful, written, long-term record of one's ancestors, a record handed down over centuries?](#)

[How would Joseph Smith have guessed that the ancient Mesoamericans had strong elements](#)

[of Christianity in their religious practices?](#)

[How could Joseph Smith guess that covenants between God and man existed among ancient Mesoamerican Indians when in the conventional Christianity of Joseph's day, the importance of covenants was very much downplayed if not absent altogether?](#)

[Why would Joseph Smith say that the ancient inhabitants of Mesoamerica had fine fabrics, textiles and elaborate clothing when the Indians of Joseph Smith's time and place wore clothing made primarily of animal skins?](#)

[Why does the Book of Mormon pay attention to small details such as descriptions of highways being "cast up"?](#)

[Why would Joseph Smith think to say Nephi had a tower in his garden?](#)

[Where would Joseph Smith have gotten the idea of writing histories on large stones?](#)

[Why are there myths of gods visiting ancient America?](#)

[How would Joseph Smith know even the basic facts about the exotic modes of social and economic organization that prevailed in Mesoamerican civilization?](#)

[How come the Book of Mormon speaks of a written "language of the fathers" which was not the common language?](#)

[Why would Joseph Smith think that Mesoamerican Indians had writing at all, when none of the Indian tribes known to Joseph Smith had it?](#)

[Why would Joseph Smith think Mesoamerican Indians had entire repositories of books?](#)

[Wouldn't Joseph Smith mistakenly mention diamonds, rubies, and pearls when referring to "precious stones"?](#)

[Why would Joseph Smith say that the ancient inhabitants of America had chief marketplaces when the Indians of his day didn't have marketplaces at all?](#)

[Where would Joseph Smith have learned about infant baptism in Mesoamerica?](#)

[Why are there Mesoamerican traditions of darkness and seismic events when Christ died?](#)

[Why would Joseph Smith risk saying there were millions of people living in Mesoamerica?](#)

[Is it a coincidence that the imagery of planting a tree in your heart has deep Mesoamerican roots?](#)

[Where would Joseph Smith have found out about execution practices of North and Central American cultures going back to pre-Columbian times?](#)

[Why would Joseph Smith take a chance on mentioning the "great spirit" if it was believed to be anachronistic?](#)

[If Joseph Smith wrote the Book of Mormon, would we expect the four Mayan functions of "and it came to pass" to all appear in the text?](#)

[If Joseph Smith wrote the Book of Mormon himself, then would we expect even mundane details such as volcanic eruptions to be so detailed and accurate?](#)

[How would Joseph Smith have guessed those in the Book of Mormon would have such detailed astronomical knowledge?](#)

[How was Joseph Smith able to be specific and detailed as to the ornamentation and costly excess for the thrones, palaces, etc., without going overboard?](#)

[Why do many of Friar Diego de Landa's observations of the Yucatan resemble the Book of Mormon?](#)

[Why is there evidence of a great destruction in the land northward at the time of Christ's death?](#)

[Why would Joseph Smith say there were swine in ancient America?](#)

[Why would Joseph Smith take a chance on mentioning wine in the Book of Mormon?](#)

[Is it coincidence that population size and fluctuations in the Book of Mormon resemble patterns of known historical populations?](#)

[How would Joseph Smith have found out about sheum?](#)

[Why would Joseph Smith include the use of cement in ancient America? If he was trying to win over a 19th century audience, wouldn't he have maintained the status quo?](#)

[Why would Joseph Smith go even further to say they were “exceedingly expert” in working cement?](#)

[Why would Joseph Smith include silk in the Book of Mormon?](#)

[Do descriptions of the gold plates just coincidentally match materials used in ancient America?](#)

[If it was a fraud, would we expect the work of Joseph Smith to be one of the most translated and published books ever written?](#)

[How could Joseph Smith manage to write the fourth most influential book in America?](#)

[If Joseph Smith wrote the Book of Mormon himself, would we expect it to be so spiritually impactful for millions of people?](#)

[What are we to make of all the people who sincerely claim a witness from the Holy Ghost that the Book of Mormon is true?](#)

[How do we explain the fulfilled prophecies written in the Old Testament? Were they all just lucky despite the outrageous odds?](#)

[Weren't the New Testament accounts recorded much sooner than many other ancient historical events \(which are assumed to be accurate\)?](#)

[Why hasn't Dr Habermas found any good responses to the minimal facts argument after 35 years?](#)

[Isn't the New Testament too embarrassing \(for the disciples\) to be false?](#)

[Why would the disciples write embarrassing things about Jesus?](#)

[What reason do we have to disbelieve the 30+ miracles that Jesus performed?](#)

[Isn't it true that “One of the most certain facts of history is that Jesus was crucified on orders of the Roman prefect of Judea, Pontius Pilate”?](#)

[Why would Joseph Smith claim to have been visited by so many angels?](#)

[Why would Joseph Smith claim to have heard so many voices of angels?](#)

[How about Joseph Smith's visions experienced with other people?](#)

[How do we account for the visions experienced by others, such as Heber C. Kimball and Orson Hyde's vision of the infernal world?](#)

[Why did witnesses remark that Sidney Rigdon was exhausted after seeing the vision of D&C 76 whereas Joseph Smith wasn't? Was it just to make the experience sound more believable?](#)

[How do we explain visions seen by hundreds of people?](#)

[Why think that none of the experiences of the three Nephites are genuine?](#)

[How did Joseph Smith cast out devils?](#)

[Why did the early Saints believe Joseph Smith was a seer?](#)

[How did Joseph Smith manage to heal the sick?](#)

[How do we account for the miracles experienced or performed by the early Saints?](#)

[Was it luck that Dr. Smith \(who saved Joseph Smith's leg and potentially his life\) was likely the only physician in the United States in 1813 who had the expertise to successfully deal with Joseph's bone disease?](#)



Why would someone try to assassinate Joseph Smith shortly before the first vision?

If Joseph Smith knew the Book of Mormon was a fraud, why did he and Hyrum in their greatest (and last) hour of need find solace in a book which would brand them as imposters and charlatans until the end of time?

What were the odds that Joseph Smith's name would be had for good and evil among all nations, kindreds, and tongues, and that it should be both good and evil spoken of among all people?

What were the odds that the church would fill the earth?

How was Joseph Smith so specific in predicting the American Civil War nearly 30 years before it happened?

Why believe it was a lucky guess when Joseph Smith said the Saints would be driven to the Rocky Mountains and become a mighty people?

How do we account for the Stephen A. Douglas prophecy?

How did Joseph Smith correctly prophecy the saints would escape their enemies in 5 years?

How would Joseph Smith know about the destruction in Jackson county?

How did Joseph Smith correctly predict the 1833 Meteor Storm?

What are we to make of Joseph Smith's other fulfilled prophecies?

Would we expect the man responsible for the biggest fraud in history to preach a sermon on forgiveness after being tarred and feathered?

How do we account for the testimony of the twelve apostles relating to the Doctrine and Covenants?

How would 26 year old Joseph Smith know to use the word "unjust" rather than "damnation" in D&C 76:17?

Where would Joseph Smith have learned the meaning of "Lord of Sabaoth"?

Why could no-one else write a revelation for the Doctrine and Covenants like Joseph Smith?

Why did Joseph Smith's family believe his story? Wouldn't they be the first to see through the lies?

How come we also find chiasmus in the Book of Moses?

Why would Joseph Smith include synonymous parallelism in the Book of Moses?

Why would Joseph Smith take the time to include synthetic parallelism in the Book of Moses?

If Joseph Smith wrote the Book of Moses himself would we expect to see relative clauses like in Hebrew?

Why does the Book of Moses contain a repetition of possessive pronouns?

Like the Book of Mormon, would we expect to see resumptive repetition in the Book of Moses?

Why would Joseph Smith include figures of speech in the Book of Moses, such as antenantiosis?

Would we expect to see litotes in the Book of Moses?

Why would Joseph Smith go to the effort of including polysyndeton in the Book of Moses?

Why are there compound prepositions in the Book of Moses?

Wouldn't Joseph Smith have bolstered his case for the authenticity of the Book of Moses by including the relevant verses about Enoch from Jude (which quote from 1 Enoch)?

Where would Joseph Smith have gotten the idea that Enoch made "rivers turn from their course"?

- [Was it a lucky guess that the Book of Moses claims Enoch was a “lad” at 65?](#)
- [Why does the Book of Enoch support the Book of Moses claim that Enoch was given the right to God’s throne?](#)
- [Why do we find other sources agreeing with the Book of Moses that Satan conspired with Cain?](#)
- [Why are the six characteristic features of the Old Testament narrative call pattern shown in the commissioning of Joseph Smith’s Enoch?](#)
- [Why do ancient texts \(unavailable to Joseph Smith\) agree with the Book of Moses claim that Enoch was clothed with glory?](#)
- [Why do other ancient texts agree with the Book of Moses in its use of the “son of man”?](#)
- [Why do ancient texts translated long after the Book of Moses agree that Enoch wept for the wickedness of mankind?](#)
- [Where would Joseph Smith have read that not only Enoch but his whole city were translated?](#)
- [Why would Joseph Smith have specifically differentiated the “giants” from Enoch’s other adversaries?](#)
- [How could Joseph Smith correctly guess Mahijuah/Mahujah?](#)
- [How could Joseph Smith guess that Mahijah was sent to Enoch?](#)
- [Is it luck that the Book of Moses describes Enoch’s home as a land of righteousness?](#)
- [What would make Joseph Smith think that Enoch’s vision occurred by the sea?](#)
- [Where would Joseph Smith get the idea that Enoch kept a book of remembrance?](#)
- [Where would Joseph Smith have found out that the book Enoch kept put fear into the people?](#)
- [Why do the Book of Moses and Book of Giants both mention that the wicked people of Enoch’s day conceived their children in sin?](#)
- [What would make Joseph Smith think that Enoch defeated his enemies?](#)
- [Why would the Book of Moses and Book of Giants both specifically mention roaring beasts following the battle of Enoch?](#)
- [Why do other sources agree that Enoch was shown all generations?](#)
- [Why would Joseph Smith say that the Lord’s House shall be called Jerusalem?](#)
- [Where would Joseph Smith have gotten the idea that Enoch was in possession of Adam’s Book?](#)
- [Is it a coincidence that the Book of Enoch also claims \(like the Book of Moses\) that Enoch’s book was to be restored?](#)
- [Where would Joseph Smith have gotten the idea that Enoch saw the saints arise?](#)
- [Why do other books also claim that Enoch saw the return of Zion from Heaven?](#)
- [Was it a lucky guess by Joseph Smith that Enoch saw the chains of Satan?](#)
- [Is it luck that Joseph's Smith account of Enoch ends on a note of hope?](#)
- [Why is there a “blatant pun” on the name Moses in the Joseph Smith translation of the Bible, before the Egyptian meaning of Moses's name was known to scholars?](#)
- [Isn't it unexpected that the Book of Moses would contain the expression “Behold I”?](#)
- [Would we expect Joseph Smith to include performative indicators in the Book of Moses?](#)
- [Why is there chiasmus in the Book of Abraham?](#)
- [How do we account for the Egyptianisms in the Book of Abraham?](#)

[Why does the Book of Abraham contain Egyptian wordplays?](#)

[How did Joseph Smith manage to understand facsimiles?](#)

[If Joseph Smith had gotten names in the Book of Abraham from his environment, then why would he choose the name Shulem rather than Shillem?](#)

[Why would Joseph Smith take a chance on disagreeing with creatio ex nihilo?](#)

[Why would Joseph Smith go against typical Jewish and Christian beliefs in his day by saying that the creation was the work of a divine council?](#)

[What would have made Joseph Smith think that Abraham wrote a book of scripture if ancient texts supporting this were only discovered later and it is not mentioned anywhere in the Bible?](#)

[Why do ancient texts unavailable to Joseph Smith also claim \(like the Book of Abraham does\) that Abraham was to be sacrificed?](#)

[Where would Joseph Smith have learned the tradition that Abraham was saved by God before being sacrificed?](#)

[Why are there other traditions that agree with the Book of Abraham that Terah sought to kill his son Abraham?](#)

[Where would Joseph Smith have learned that Terah repents after trying to kill Abraham?](#)

[Why do ancient texts agree about the pervasive nature of idolatry in Abraham's day?](#)

[Is it luck that ancient texts claim \(like the Book of Abraham\) that children were being sacrificed to idols in Abraham's area?](#)

[Why do the Genesis Apocryphon and the Book of Noah support the Book of Abraham's claim that Abraham had access to sacred records from the patriarchs?](#)

[Why do ancient texts not available to Joseph Smith agree with the Book of Abraham's claim that Abraham received the priesthood and was a High Priest?](#)

[Why do ancient texts agree with the Book of Abraham's claim that Abraham preached against his fathers' idolatry?](#)

[Wouldn't it have been odd for Joseph Smith to think Abraham taught astronomy?](#)

[Why do ninth-century Hebrew documents agree with the Book of Abraham that it was God who taught Abraham astronomy?](#)

[Why do other books support the Book of Abraham's claim that Abraham was desirous to be one who possesses great knowledge?](#)

[Why does the Genesis Apocryphon from the Dead Sea Scrolls \(like the Book of Abraham\) claim that God is the one who warns Abraham that the Egyptians will want to kill him to get his wife?](#)

[Why do other books also claim that God showed Abraham the heavens and those in the premortal existence?](#)

[Why do ancient texts support the Book of Abraham's claim that Abraham was honored by kings – or on a throne?](#)

[How would Joseph Smith know that Abraham experienced two famines during his life and not just one?](#)

[How could Joseph Smith have guessed the god Elkenah?](#)

[Where would Joseph Smith have learned about Libnah?](#)

[How would Joseph Smith know about Mahmackrah?](#)

[Where would Joseph Smith have learned about the god Korash?](#)

[How would Joseph Smith guess an association between a pharaoh contemporary to Abraham](#)

[and a crocodile god?](#)

[How would Joseph Smith know that Abraham possessed the Urim and Thummim?](#)

[Why would Joseph Smith take a chance on mentioning chariots in the Book of Abraham?](#)

[Why wouldn't Joseph Smith just agree with the Bible that Abraham was 75 when he went into the land of Canaan?](#)

[How could Joseph Smith correctly give the meaning of "Shinehah" in Abraham 3:13 \(a word that applied during a narrow span of about 6 centuries comprising the likely time of Abraham's life\)?](#)

[Why are we finding Abraham's name in Egyptian texts, including lion couch scenes?](#)

[Aren't the chances that Joseph Smith made up a fictional, outlandish place \(Olishem\) that turned out to be accurate in name, time, and location too astronomical even to be considered?](#)

[Why would the Book of Abraham resemble the inscription of Idrimi translated long afterwards in 1949?](#)

[Why are we finding evidence that makes the Book of Abraham even more plausible and realistic?](#)

[Joseph Smith's claim that he was a prophet was either truthful, deceitful or delusional. Are there any other options?](#)

[How did Joseph Smith manage to restore ordinances from the early Church \(such as baptisms for the dead\), when no major religions in Joseph's day believed in this doctrine?](#)

[Where would Joseph Smith have learned about prayer circles?](#)

[How did Joseph Smith manage to restore teachings from the early Church such as premortal life and deification?](#)

[Why are many aspects of contemporary Christian theology significantly converging in Joseph Smith's direction?](#)

[Why would Joseph Smith publish revelations chastising him? Doesn't this meet the criterion of embarrassment?](#)

[Why are there over 100 accounts of Brigham Young's transfiguration of looking and sounding like Joseph Smith at conference in 1844?](#)

[How do we explain the visions of the Latter-day prophets who have seen and spoken with the Savior? Are they lying or deceived?](#)

[How do we account for fulfilled prophecies made by Latter-day prophets?](#)

[What are we to make of the special witnesses of Christ when they testify of Jesus and his divinity?](#)

[Isn't it an enormous burden to carry, in claiming that every single "perception of God" is untrue?](#)

[If there isn't already something out there "bigger" than us, then isn't humanity likely to go extinct?](#)

[If we trust in our own superhuman potential, then shouldn't we also trust that we have a compassionate creator?](#)

[Aren't the chances that the universe was fine-tuned for life astronomically high?](#)

[If nothingness doesn't scientifically exist, then doesn't that mean there was something before the Big Bang?](#)

[Is every single "miracle" just a lucky coincidence or is at least one partly due to something beyond us?](#)

[How do we explain near-death experiences?](#)

[Why are some of the greatest names in science believers in God?](#)

[Isn't theism a good bet?](#)

[Aren't religious people, on balance, happier than non-religious people?](#)

[Why do Latter-day Saints have a "glow"?](#)

[Isn't the church "true" in a pragmatic sense?](#)

[Why does statistical analysis show a correlation between higher education and loyalty to Latter-day Saint beliefs? If the gospel was a fraud, wouldn't the scholars and those who are more educated leave first?](#)

[Can there be any valid criticisms of the church?](#)

[Do we even need any evidence that God exists?](#)

## **What is a good alternative explanation for the Book of Mormon that accounts for all the evidence?**

How did Joseph Smith produce the Book of Mormon if he didn't translate it by the gift and power of God? Alternative theories have been put forward but none account for all the evidence. The simplest explanation is that Joseph Smith created the book on his own, but while this may have been a popular theory at first, it has become more apparent how complex the book is and more apparent that the content is far beyond what we would expect from Joseph. Another explanation is that the book was a combined effort from Joseph and some others around him such as Sidney Rigdon and Oliver Cowdery, but there is simply no evidence of anyone else being involved.

To defend any of these theories we have to ignore the historic evidence. After nearly 200 years there is still no plausible alternative explanation for the Book of Mormon which accounts for all the evidence.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland remarks:

*For 179 years this book has been examined and attacked, denied and deconstructed, targeted and torn apart like perhaps no other book in modern religious history—perhaps like no other book in any religious history. And still it stands. Failed theories about its origins have been born and parroted and have died—from Ethan Smith to Solomon Spaulding to deranged paranoid to cunning genius. None of these frankly pathetic answers for this book has ever withstood examination because there is no other answer than the one Joseph gave as its young unlearned translator.*

*- [Elder Jeffrey R. Holland - Safety for the Soul](#)*

If Joseph Smith did not translate the Book of Mormon by the gift and power of God, how did he do it?

See:

- [Evidence Central - Evidences of the Book of Mormon: Complexity](#)

## **Unless he was inspired, how did 23-year old Joseph Smith manage to dictate all 269,510 words of the Book of Mormon without any notes?**

There are several accounts of Joseph Smith's translation of the Book of Mormon and none of them include any indication of him referring to notes. In fact, some accounts are explicit that there were no notes whatsoever.

For example, the Chicago Times in 1881 recorded after an interview with David Whitmer:

*Mr. [David] Whitmer emphatically asserts as did [Martin] Harris and [Oliver] Cowdery, that while Smith was dictating the translation he had no manuscript notes or other means of knowledge save the seer stone and the characters as shown on the plates, he being present and cognizant how it was done.*

[– Chicago Times, October 17, 1881; cited in John W. Welch, “The Miraculous Timing,” 168.](#)

This becomes an issue for any alternative theories of the Book of Mormon, especially when we consider how complex the book is.

If Joseph was actually using notes, how did he manage to keep them hidden? Where and when did he manage to secretly write the notes? If any of the scribes saw him using notes then why did they remain convinced the book was true?

See:

- [Evidence Central – No notes or references](#)

## **Unless he was inspired, how did Joseph Smith achieve such incredible and complex internal consistency while dictating the Book of Mormon?**

In 2020, Jeff Markham documented [120 internal consistencies](#) in the Book of Mormon. Each may appear insignificant but when taken as a whole it requires a strong explanation as to how Joseph Smith managed it.

Some of the internal consistencies are complex and span large parts of the Book of Mormon, the longest internal consistency references information mentioned 239 chapters earlier. Many are subtle but show a comprehensive understanding of the plot.

Keeping track of hundreds of names, events, timelines, visions, sermons, physical items, geography, etc. is a huge undertaking for any author, let alone one without any notes.

Would we expect this kind of internal consistency from Joseph? Wouldn't he have needed pages and pages of notes just to ensure internal consistency? If Joseph had taken time to ensure all this internal consistency then why didn't he draw attention to it?

See:

- [Jeff Markham - A Detailed Look at Internally Consistent References in the Book of Mormon Text - Part 1: Introduction and examples of internal consistency](#)

- [Jeff Markham - A Detailed Look at Internally Consistent References in the Book of Mormon Text - Part 2: Mosiah 7-10](#)
- [Jeff Markham - A Detailed Look at Internally Consistent References in the Book of Mormon Text - Part 3: Mosiah 11-24](#)
- [Jeff Markham - A Detailed Look at Internally Consistent References in the Book of Mormon Text - Part 4: Mosiah 25-Alma 8](#)
- [Jeff Markham - A Detailed Look at Internally Consistent References in the Book of Mormon Text - Part 5: Alma 9 – Alma 25](#)
- [Jeff Markham - A Detailed Look at Internally Consistent References in the Book of Mormon Text - Part 6: Alma 26-Alma 38](#)
- [Jeff Markham - A Detailed Look at Internally Consistent References in the Book of Mormon Text - Part 7: Alma 43 – Alma 56](#)
- [Jeff Markham - A Detailed Look at Internally Consistent References in the Book of Mormon Text - Part 8: Alma 61 – Helaman 6](#)
- [Jeff Markham - A Detailed Look at Internally Consistent References in the Book of Mormon Text - Part 9: Helaman 8 – Helaman 16](#)
- [Jeff Markham - A Detailed Look at Internally Consistent References in the Book of Mormon Text - Part 10: 3 Nephi 1 – 3 Nephi 18](#)
- [Jeff Markham - A Detailed Look at Internally Consistent References in the Book of Mormon Text - Part 11: 3 Nephi 19 – 4 Nephi](#)
- [Jeff Markham - A Detailed Look at Internally Consistent References in the Book of Mormon Text - Part 12: Ether 1-7](#)
- [Jeff Markham - A Detailed Look at Internally Consistent References in the Book of Mormon Text - Part 13: Ether 11 – 1 Nephi 3](#)
- [Jeff Markham - A Detailed Look at Internally Consistent References in the Book of Mormon Text - Part 14: 1 Nephi 10 – 2 Nephi 31](#)
- [Jeff Markham - A Detailed Look at Internally Consistent References in the Book of Mormon Text - Part 15: Words of Mormon and conclusion](#)

## **How did Joseph Smith sustain a blistering pace of dictating the whole Book of Mormon in around 60 working days?**

The Book of Mormon is by no means a short book at 269,510 words. Using a series of “anchor” dates, the historical record indicates that the translation was completed in a period of around 60 working days. This means if Joseph had spent consecutive days working on the book, he would have produced it in just a couple of months.

Is this what we would expect from 23-year-old Joseph Smith when we consider the complexity of the book?

This rapid translation is a problem for alternative theories for the Book of Mormon’s origin as it would require Joseph having memorized around 10 pages of the book each day before translation. It would be much less impressive if Joseph had dictated the book over a much



longer period of time, in which case he would only need to memorize just a few paragraphs a day.

Why think Joseph could memorize 10 pages each day? Where would he have been memorizing the text from?

See:

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Rapid Translation](#)

## **How could Joseph Smith imitate so many different writing styles in the Book of Mormon, and how do we explain the 1 in 15 trillion chance of Nephi and Alma having the same author?**

The Book of Mormon is a collection of writings from different authors. This means that if it were a true book, the writing style of each author would be different from each other and different from Joseph Smith.

Therefore if Joseph was the sole author of the book, he would have needed to fake many different writing styles, all different from his own, and not be detected.

While historically it may have been easy for an author to remain undetected, modern statistical and computational techniques are able to detect subconscious linguistic patterns and identify the actual author. A famous example was [J.K. Rowling](#) being identified as the author of *The Cuckoo's Calling* despite using a pseudonym.

[Recent wordprint studies](#) have found that the Book of Mormon does indeed contain different writing styles for each author, which are different to Joseph's own writing style. In fact, one peer-reviewed wordprint study by John Hilton and Berkeley colleagues (who are not members of the church) found that there is a [1 in 15 trillion](#) possibility of Nephi and Alma being the same author.

Would we expect Joseph with his limited education to be able to mimic so many different styles of writing? Wouldn't we expect wordprint studies to have exposed Joseph if he was a fraud?

See:

- [Matthew Roper, Paul J. Fields, and G. Bruce Schaalje - Stylometric Analyses of the Book of Mormon: A Short History](#)
- [FAIR Latter-day Saints - Wordprint studies of the Book of Mormon](#)

## **If Joseph Smith didn't dictate the Book of Mormon, then why are most errors in the original manuscript based on mishearing?**

Many of the evidences for the Book of Mormon would be much easier to explain away if Joseph had written the book in his own time rather than dictating it.

In addition to all the witness accounts which confirmed that Joseph dictated the text, there is also evidence from the manuscript itself. Most of the errors in the original manuscript are based on the scribe [mishearing](#) what Joseph was saying. For example 1 Nephi 13:29 says:

*because of these things which are taken away out of the gospel of the Lamb, **an** exceedingly great many do stumble*

In the original manuscript the word “an” was written as “&”.

Is there any doubt remaining that Joseph dictated the book? Why would Joseph choose this difficult method if he was orchestrating a fraud?

See:

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Analysis of the Earliest Manuscripts](#)

## **If Joseph Smith creatively dictated the Book of Mormon, why didn't it need an editor to check for consistency etc?**

The normal process for writing a book would involve an extended period of time writing drafts, rewriting those drafts and enlisting the services of an editor. The role of an editor is to read the manuscript, point out errors, offer suggestions and make edits.

Not only did the Book of Mormon appear to have no drafts at all but it also didn't undergo the process of editing either. We see no evidence of any back and forth between an editor and Joseph, we only see the original manuscript and the printer's manuscript which did not contain editorial changes.

After the dictation, the only editing that was made was to add punctuation.

- No sentences were reordered
- No sections were removed
- No sections were added

Having no editor means that the words dictated by Joseph were [essentially the words that were published](#).

How would Joseph have managed to creatively dictate a book that didn't require an editor? Wouldn't we expect many plot holes and inconsistencies that would need correcting?

See:

- [Brian C. Hales - Why Joseph Smith's Dictation of the Book of Mormon Is Simply Jaw-Dropping](#)
- [FAIR Latter-day Saints - Faking the Book of Mormon](#)

## **If Joseph Smith was reciting the Book of Mormon from memory, why did he not know how to pronounce many of the names?**

The evidence suggests that Joseph Smith was not familiar with the content of the Book of Mormon while dictating.

One example of how he was not familiar with the content of the book, is how Joseph was unsure how to pronounce many of the names.

His wife Emma said:

*When my husband was translating the Book of Mormon, I wrote a part of it, as he dictated each sentence, word for word, and when he came to proper names he could not pronounce, or long words, he spelled them out... Even the word Sarah he could not pronounce at first, but had to spell it, and I would pronounce it for him*

*- [Edmund C. Briggs, "A Visit to Nauvoo in 1856," Journal of History 9 \(October 1916\): 454](#)*

Hiram Page also made a similar observation about the pronunciation of Nephi:

*As to the Book of Mormon, it would be doing injustice to myself and to the work of God of the last days, to say that I could know a thing to be true in 1830, and know the same thing to be false in 1847. To say my mind was so treacherous that I had forgotten what I saw. To say that a man of Joseph's ability, who at that time did not know how to pronounce the word Nephi, could write a book of six hundred pages, as correct as the Book of Mormon, without supernatural power.*

*- [Hiram Page, letter to William E. McLellin, 30 May 1847, Ensign of Liberty 1 \(January 1848\): 63.](#)*

Why would Joseph Smith not know how to pronounce names if he had chosen them? Why would he have to spell the names out in syllables, leaving the scribe to put them together?

See:

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: An Unfamiliar Text](#)

## **If Joseph Smith was reciting the Book of Mormon from memory, why would he be surprised by the content?**

While dictating the Book of Mormon, Joseph asked his wife Emma (who was scribe at the time) if Jerusalem had walls around it. This occurred after he translated 1 Nephi 4:4:

*Now when I had spoken these words, they were yet wroth, and did still continue to murmur; nevertheless they did follow me up until we came without the walls of Jerusalem.*

Emma recalled this incident as follows (as reported by Edmund C. Briggs):

*[O]ne time while he was translating he stopped suddenly, pale as a sheet, and said, "Emma, did Jerusalem have walls around it?" When I answered "Yes," he replied "Oh! I was afraid I had been deceived." He had such limited knowledge of history at that time that he did not even know that Jerusalem was surrounded by walls.*

*[- Edmund C. Briggs, "A Visit to Nauvoo in 1856," Journal of History, Jan. 1916, p. 454.](#)*

Why would Joseph ask this to Emma? Doesn't this demonstrate that Joseph had not memorized the text in advance? If Joseph didn't know Jerusalem had walls, how was he so proficient in other topics required to create the Book of Mormon?

See:

- [Elder Russell M. Nelson – A Treasured Testament](#)

## **If Joseph Smith was reciting the Book of Mormon from memory, why was its design and structure also a surprise to him?**

Not only was Joseph Smith surprised by the content in the Book of Mormon but he also seemed to not know in advance how the book was structured. This would be quite odd if Joseph had planned the book beforehand and was simply reciting it from memory.

Joseph indicated to his scribe that a section had finished by dictating the word “chapter”. This word would be immediately included in the manuscript but the actual chapter numbers would be inserted later. It seems Joseph did not know in advance whether he was starting to dictate a new book or another chapter within the same book.

Some chapter numbers were added but later crossed out and renumbered within the context of a new book. In fact, [Oliver Cowdery changed 2 Nephi 1 twice](#) after realizing the chapter was a new book and then again after realizing there were two books of Nephi.

If Joseph was reciting the Book of Mormon from memory, why didn't he indicate (or accidentally give away) when each new book started? Why would he add an unnecessary complication to the translation process?

See:

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: An Unfamiliar Text](#)

## **If Joseph Smith was reciting the Book of Mormon from memory, why didn't he recite passages frequently and effortlessly in his discourses?**

If Joseph Smith had managed to memorize nearly 10 pages a day during the dictation of the Book of Mormon, we would reasonably expect him to effortlessly quote passages of the book in his discourses.

An [analysis by BYU Professor Casey Paul](#) found that Joseph Smith made references to 451 different biblical passages in his Nauvoo discourses, compared to only 22 references to the Book of Mormon. This is a ratio of 21:1 and not what we would expect from someone who had memorized the book or spent his whole life planning it. Joseph seemed to move on from the Book of Mormon once it was published and made nothing of it.

Why do we not see lasting evidence of memorization after the Book of Mormon was published? Doesn't this mean Joseph would have had to go through the extraordinary task of creating the content on the fly while dictating?

See:

- [Brian C. Hales - Joseph Smith as a Book of Mormon Storyteller](#)
- [Casey Paul Griffiths - 5 Things You Might Not Know About the Coming Forth of the Book of Mormon](#)

## **How did Joseph Smith manage to avoid correcting himself when dictating the Book of Mormon?**

One incredible observation from Joseph Smith's dictation of the Book of Mormon is that he did not appear to go back and revise old content during the translation process. This is supported by the original presentation of the original manuscript as well as the [witness statements](#). Some mistakes were corrected at the time due to mishearing, but Joseph did not revisit previously dictated text to change it.

This would be a remarkable accomplishment for [any author](#) dictating a book the length and complexity of the Book of Mormon, let alone Joseph Smith.

How did Joseph manage to avoid corrections while maintaining so much internal consistency? Revisiting old content and editing previous text is a natural part of story writing which allows the author to correct errors and give more details when needed. Wouldn't we expect the original manuscript to be full of corrections if Joseph was creating the content on the fly?

See:

- [Kyler Rasmussen - Estimating the Evidence - Episode 3: On an Improbable Dictation](#)
- [Book of Mormon Central - The Miraculous Translation of the Book of Mormon](#)

## **When translating the Book of Mormon, how did Joseph Smith immediately pick up where he left off?**

Although Joseph Smith translated the Book of Mormon in a short period of time, the translation period would have been full of interruptions. One unexpected part of translation was Joseph Smith's ability to begin [dictating without needing to be familiarized with where he previously left off](#). We would expect an author creating content on the fly to need to reorient themselves before continuing dictation, especially at the start of a new day.

Emma Smith (who said the Book was of divine authenticity "I have not the slightest doubt of it"). described the process as follows:

*After meals, or after interruptions, [Joseph] would at once begin where he had left off, without either seeing the manuscript or having any portion of it read to him. This was a usual thing for him to do.*

[- Joseph Smith III, "Last Testimony of Sister Emma," The Saints' Herald, 1 October 1879, 290.](#)

Emma mentioned this on at least two separate occasions and is not contradicted by any of the other witness statements.

How did Joseph manage to do this? Why would Emma feel the need to describe this aspect of translation if it wasn't true?

See:

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: No Translation Prompts](#)

## **If Joseph Smith was creating the Book of Mormon on the fly, wouldn't he sometimes struggle to know what to say?**

Creatively dictating a book the length and complexity of the Book of Mormon would be no easy task however there is no evidence that Joseph experienced any kind of writer's block or struggle to know what to say.

Evidence Central notes:

*What is noticeably missing from these accounts is any report of Joseph creating different drafts of the manuscript or making any substantive revisions to its wording or content, as would be typical for the creation of a lengthy, complex document. Nor is there any report that Joseph ever struggled to know what to say. Instead, those closest to the translation consistently described him as simply looking into his divinely prepared translation instrument and reading off the words of the text.*

[- Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: No Substantive Revisions](#)

Why is there no evidence of Joseph giving up for the day when he had writer's block? How did he manage to work his way through the book at a steady and consistent pace?

See:

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: No Substantive Revisions](#)

## **If Joseph Smith had previously written the Book of Mormon in his own time, where are all the drafts?**

One possible way to account for how Joseph Smith was able to dictate the long and complex Book of Mormon is to argue that he had previously written the book in his own time.

The issue with this explanation is that we have no evidence of any drafts or previous versions ever existing before the original manuscript which the scribes wrote. The final version was effectively the first draft. We would expect that a book the length and complexity of the Book of Mormon would require [pages and pages of drafts](#), as Joseph tested his ideas and improved the book until it was complete.

If there were no drafts then Joseph would have needed to create the content on the fly while dictating which is an incredible achievement.

Why do we have no evidence of any drafts ever existing? Why did no-one ever mention previous drafts or any pre-work before dictation?

See:

- [FAIR Latter-day Saints - Faking the Book of Mormon](#)

## **How would Joseph Smith have afforded all the paper to write drafts when it was so expensive and scarce at the time?**

While there is no evidence of any draft versions of the Book of Mormon existing, we also have reasons to believe there wouldn't be any drafts. One such reason is that Joseph probably would not have been able to afford all the paper required to create pages and pages of drafts.

Unlike today, [paper was quite expensive and scarce](#) in Joseph's time. We know that Joseph Smith's family was not wealthy and had experienced hardships, they likely would not have had enough money to purchase large amounts of paper, let alone Joseph being able to buy it on his own.

How would Joseph afford pages and pages of paper to write the drafts?

See:

- [Brian C. Hales - Joseph Smith as a Book of Mormon Storyteller](#)



## **If Joseph Smith had previously written the Book of Mormon before dictation, where did he find the time?**

If Joseph Smith had previously written the Book of Mormon before dictating it to his scribes, then he would have needed to find a lot of spare time outside of his responsibilities to the family.

Scholar Robert A. Rees said:

*What we find in the historical record is that the hardscrabble life of the Smith family in general and of Joseph in particular seems to have left little space or leisure for the kind of thinking and writing necessary to produce a manuscript of the length and complexity of the Book of Mormon. Before Moroni's first visit in 1823 and Joseph's acquisition of the plates in 1827, Joseph was preoccupied with the family's declining fortunes, working the family farm and hiring himself out as a laborer, as, in his own words, "it required the exertions of all that were able to render any assistance for the support of the Family." Thus, the idea that Joseph had time to read broadly, undertake research, construct various drafts, and work out the plot, characters, settings, various points of view, and multiple rhetorical styles that constitute the five-hundred-plus page narrative of the Book of Mormon is simply incredible (in its original Latin sense of "not worthy of belief").*

*- [Robert A. Rees - Joseph Smith, the Book of Mormon, and the American Renaissance: An Update](#)*

It is unlikely that Joseph would have had the luxury of so much leisure time away from his family responsibilities to research and write an entire book the length and complexity of the Book of Mormon.

Even if Joseph did find the necessary time to write the Book of Mormon, why would a religious boy choose to spend his time writing a fraudulent book of scripture?

See:

- [Robert A. Rees - Joseph Smith, the Book of Mormon, and the American Renaissance: An Update](#)

## **If Joseph Smith had previously written the Book of Mormon in his own time, why did no-one notice?**

In addition to there being no evidence of any drafts, and Joseph Smith likely not having enough money to buy large amounts of paper, we can also question how he would have been able to write drafts in secret.

Writing drafts of the Book of Mormon would have taken a lot of time and Joseph shared a room with his brothers which means [he didn't have his own personal space](#) to write pages and pages of drafts without anybody noticing.

If Joseph spent hours writing the Book of Mormon before dictating it then surely someone would have noticed, he would not have been able to keep it secret from his family.

Why are there no accounts of Joseph spending lots of time writing? How would he have managed to keep his work a secret?

See:

- [Kyler Rasmussen - Estimating the Evidence - Episode 3: On an Improbable Dictation](#)
- [Donald L. Enders - A Snug Log House](#)

## **If Joseph Smith had previously written the Book of Mormon before dictation, why would he go through all the effort of pretending to translate for hours day after day?**

It took Joseph Smith around 60 working days to dictate the Book of Mormon but we know the translation was a start-stop effort between 7th April to the 30th June. The whole process would have been quite strenuous working each day having to dictate the text, write the words down, repeating them back and confirming before continuing.

John Welch and his wife attempted to replicate the work on a small scale and noted that:

*Altogether, our results showed empirically that a translation rate of right around 20 words per minute was quite possible. But we couldn't imagine sustaining that rate hour after hour, day after day. Our hands got tired, and the one playing Joseph needed to catch his or her breath and clear his or her voice. We used ballpoint pens. We imagined Oliver dipping and using his quill pen.*

*...Although not strictly scientific, this exercise produced a flood of experiential insights. The stress of trying to achieve a maximum accuracy took a substantial toll on us.*

[- John W. Welch - Timing the Translation of the Book of Mormon "Days \[and Hours\] Never to Be Forgotten"](#)

If Joseph Smith had previously written the Book of Mormon it seems far-fetched that he would have gone through the exhausting translation process just to make it appear as if he was receiving revelation. Isn't Joseph's persistence evidence that (at least he thought) it was a real translation?

See:

- [John W. Welch - Timing the Translation of the Book of Mormon “Days \[and Hours\] Never to Be Forgotten”](#)

## **What is our evidence that Joseph Smith had amassed a vast frontier library of alleged sources of the Book of Mormon?**

We have no evidence that young Joseph Smith had amassed a vast frontier library which would be necessary to write the Book of Mormon. Even if he had all the books available, Jeff Lindsay has created a satirical skit to show the reality of claiming that Joseph Smith was able to consult such a wide array of books:

*The dramatic script below is my attempt to summarize the scholarly and historical investigations of many noteworthy critics of the Book of Mormon, who have identified numerous nineteenth-century sources that Joseph Smith allegedly could have used in crafting the Book of Mormon. Though certain poetic liberties have been taken for purposes of dramatic presentation, every effort has been made to accurately conform to the detailed historical analysis of Book of Mormon critics by showing--for the first time--just how Joseph may have constructed his fabrication with the help of his accomplices.*

*- [Jeff Lindsay - One Day in the Life of Joseph Smith, Amazing "Translator" of the Book of Mormon - Satirical Skit](#)*

Joseph Smith did not appear to have the time, money, education or interest to consult a vast library of books to create the Book of Mormon, how would he have managed to do it despite all these obstacles?

See:

- [Jeff Lindsay - One Day in the Life of Joseph Smith, Amazing "Translator" of the Book of Mormon - Satirical Skit](#)

## **How would Joseph Smith have afforded the money to borrow books from a library?**

Similar to questioning how Joseph Smith would have been able to afford paper for drafts, we can also question how he would have had enough money to also borrow all the library books he would have needed to write the Book of Mormon.

How would Joseph Smith learn so much about Hebraisms and Mesopotamia etc. if [it was not free to take out library books](#)?

We have no evidence of Joseph spending hours and hours in the library so how did he afford all the books he is accused of plagiarizing from?

See:

- [American Library Association - Before 1876](#)

## Where are all the “try works” of Joseph Smith?

When the Book of Mormon was translated, Joseph Smith was not only 23 years old with limited education, but also a first time author.

Is the Book of Mormon what we would expect from a first time author? The fact that the Book of Mormon appears to be Joseph’s first output of any significant length is remarkable.

Scholar Robert A. Rees said:

*Where are the “try works” of the Book of Mormon? There are none that we know of or evidence that there might have been. In other words — and this is important — whereas we see copious journal entries, essays, letters, lectures, and other writings revealing Emerson working out his mature expressions in poetry and prose; whereas we see Hawthorne’s significant volume of early fiction (short and long forms), journals, and other writings leading up to and illuminating the writing of *The Scarlet Letter*; whereas we see Thoreau’s copious journals, notebooks, essays, lectures, field notes, and other writings as preludes to *Walden*; whereas we see Melville’s many novels, stories, and other writings preparing him to write *Moby-Dick*; and whereas as we see Whitman’s journalistic writings, poetry, and numerous drafts of his major poem *Leaves of Grass*, we have practically nothing of Joseph Smith’s mind or writing to suggest that he was capable of authoring a book like the Book of Mormon, a book that is much more substantial, complex, and varied than his critics have been able to see or willing to admit. We need to remember that the Book of Mormon is considered one of the most influential books in American history and one that has occupied the serious consideration of scholars for over a century*

*- [Robert A. Rees - Joseph Smith, the Book of Mormon, and the American Renaissance: An Update](#)*

Why would Joseph stand out from his peers in this regard? Why would Joseph be able to accomplish such a feat as a first-time author?

See:

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Joseph Smith Compared with Contemporary Authors](#)
- [Robert A. Rees - Joseph Smith, the Book of Mormon, and the American Renaissance: An Update](#)

## How could Joseph Smith write the Book of Mormon if he was “ignorant” and a man of “limited education”?

The full details of Joseph Smith’s education are not completely known, but the best estimates are that he had the possibility to have up to seven years formal schooling. It is unlikely that Joseph had seven years as he stated that his [family duties deprived him and his brothers the benefit of an education](#).

Irrespective of the number of years of schooling he had, we know that he was considered to be uneducated and ignorant by those favorable to him and by critics:

- Martin Harris, who was one of the witnesses to the Book of Mormon said that Joseph was “a poor writer, and could not even draw up a note of hand as his education was so limited.” ([Simon Smith to the editor, April 30, 1884, Saints’ Herald 31 \(May 24, 1884\): 324](#))
- Another witness, David Whitmer said Joseph was “illiterate” ([The Golden Tables,” Chicago Times, August 7, 1875, 1](#)), a “man of limited education,” and “ignorant of the Bible.” ([M. J. Hubble, interview, November 13, 1886](#))
- His wife Emma said Joseph “could neither write nor dictate a coherent and well-worded letter; let alone dictating a book like the Book of Mormon. And, though I was an active participant in the scenes that transpired, it is marvelous to me, ‘a marvel and a wonder,’ as much so as to any one else.” ([Last Testimony of Sister Emma,” Saints’ Herald, 1 Oct. 1879, p. 290](#))
- He was called “an ignoramus” by The Gem of Rochester in May 1830 ([Francis Kirkham, New Witness for Christ in America, 2:56](#))
- He was referred to as “That spindle shanked ignoramus Jo Smith,” in the Palmyra Reflector in June 1830 ([Francis Kirkham, New Witness for Christ in America, 2:56](#))
- He was called an “ignoramus” who “can neither read nor write” by Obediah Dogberry in July 1830 ([Francis Kirkham, New Witness for Christ in America, 2:53-54](#))
- He was said to have “but little expression of countenance, other than that of dullness; his mental powers appear to be extremely limited, and from the small opportunity he had had in school, he made little or no proficiency. We have never been able to learn that any of the family were ever noted for much else than ignorance and stupidity.” by Obediah Dogberry ([Francis Kirkham, New Witness for Christ in America, 2:64](#))
- He was said to be “as ignorant and as impudent a knave as ever wrote a book,” an “ignorant and impudent liar.” by preacher-son Alexander Campbell ([Francis Kirkham, New Witness for Christ in America, 2:105-106](#))

- Alexander Campbell said that “Joseph Smith is a very ignorant man” ([Francis Kirkham, New Witness for Christ in America, 2:105-106](#))
- Joseph was “a perfect ignoramus” - David I. Burnett, editor of the Evangelical Inquirer, in March 1831 ([Francis Kirkham, New Witness for Christ in America, 2:112](#))
- He was a “blockhead” according to critic Origen Bachelier ([Francis Kirkham, New Witness for Christ in America, 2:160](#))
- Isaac Hale, Joseph Smith’s father-in-law said “I first became acquainted with Joseph Smith Jr. in November, 1825. ... His appearance at this time, was that of a careless young man—not very well educated.” ([Isaac Hale as quoted in E. D. Howe, Mormonism Unveiled: or, A Faithful Account of That Singular Imposition and Delusion, from Its Rise to the Present Time \(Painesville, OH: E. D. Howe, 1834\), 263.](#))
- John H. Gilbert, who typeset the Book of Mormon, when asked if Joseph was educated at the time of the translation, replied, “Oh, not at all then.” ([John H. Gilbert, quoted in “The Hill Cumorah and the Book of Mormon,” The Saints’ Herald, vol. 28, \(1881\): 165–166.](#))
- Michael Morse, Joseph’s brother-in-law, said “that he first knew Joseph when he came to Harmony, Pa., an awkward, unlearned youth of about nineteen years of age.” ([Michael Morse quoted in William W. Blair to Editors, 22 May 1879, Saints’ Herald 26 \(15 June 1879\): 190–191](#))
- Morse also when asked whether Joseph was “sufficiently intelligent and talented to compose and dictate of his own ability the [Book of Mormon] written down by the scribes,” he responded that “he was confident that he [Morse] had more learning than Joseph then had.” ([Michael Morse quoted in William W. Blair to Editors, 22 May 1879, Saints’ Herald 26 \(15 June 1879\): 190–191.](#))
- Orsamus Turner, who knew the Smith family in the 1820s, referred to Joseph was “possessed of less than ordinary intellect” ([Turner, History of the Pioneer Settlement, 213.](#))
- Critic of Joseph Smith, Eber D. Howe, said he believed “it to be a fact” that “the common advantages of education were denied to [Joseph Smith], or that they were much neglected.” ([Howe, Mormonism Unveiled, 12](#))
- The Palmyra Reflector said in 1831 that Joseph’s “mental powers appear to be extremely limited, and from the small opportunity he has had at school, he made little or no proficiency.” ([“Golden Bible, No. 3” Palmyra Reflector, 1 February 1831.](#))

How do we reconcile the creation of the Book of Mormon with these descriptions of Joseph?

See:

- [Dan Peterson - The Protean Joseph Smith](#)
- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Joseph Smith’s Limited Education](#)
- [Brian C. Hales - Naturalistic Explanations of the Origin of the Book of Mormon: A Longitudinal Study](#)

## How could Joseph Smith create a book of a reading level around the eleventh grade?

Our understanding of Joseph Smith's education is estimated to put him at a [third-grade education](#) in modern Western schools, but a third grade education does not match the type of language used in the Book of Mormon.

In 2019, [Brian C. Hales submitted the text](#) of the 1830 Book of Mormon to the most widely used computerized text readability and complexity tests which resulted in scores of reading grades up to eleventh grade, and scored as "Fairly difficult to difficult to read". From this analysis, it is clear that the Book of Mormon is written at a higher grade than Joseph was educated.

Separately, [BYU Professor Roger Terry](#) identified words found in the Book of Mormon which we would not expect from a third-grade education:

*abhorrence, abridgment, affrighted, anxiety, arraigned, breastwork, cimeters, commencement, condescension, consignation, delightful, depravity, derangement, discernible, disposition, distinguished, embassy, encompassed, enumerated, frenzied, hinderment, ignominious, impenetrable, iniquitous, insensibility, interposition, loftiness, management, nothingness, overbearance, petition, priestcraft, probationary, proclamation, provocation, regulation, relinquished, repugnant, scantiness, serviceable, stratagem, typifying, unquenchable, and unwearyingness.*

- [Brian C. Hales - Curiously Unique: Joseph Smith as Author of the Book of Mormon](#)

Why would these words have come to Joseph as he dictated the text? How did he manage to compose a book with such a high reading age if he was "[merely instructed in reading, writing and the ground rules of arithmetic](#)"?

See:

- [Brian C. Hales - Curiously Unique: Joseph Smith as Author of the Book of Mormon](#)

## How is Joseph Smith's ungrammatical 1832 account of the first vision consistent with being the sole author of the Book of Mormon three years earlier?

Joseph did not publish any other works before the Book of Mormon but he also did not write much at all before 1832. Studying Joseph's other writings only emphasizes that he was not educated enough to compose the Book of Mormon.

Robert A. Rees said:

*What do we have from Joseph's pen before the publication of the Book of Mormon in 1830? According to Dean C. Jesse's [The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith](#), very little: a note summarizing Martin Harris's experience with Charles Anthon, possibly written in 1828, and a letter to Oliver Cowdery dated 22 October 1829. His [handwritten account of the First Vision](#) written in 1832 is ungrammatical, is written with little sense of punctuation or compositional structure, and, though sincere and authentic, shows little evidence of stylistic or compositional competence or confidence. Certainly there is evidence of the beginnings of an eloquent voice, but that voice is tentative and immature.*

*- [Robert A. Rees - Joseph Smith, the Book of Mormon, and the American Renaissance: An Update](#)*

How would Joseph have been able to compose the Book of Mormon three years earlier based on what we see in his first vision account? Isn't the evidence from his own writing consistent with descriptions of his general lack of education?

See:

- [Robert A. Rees - Joseph Smith, the Book of Mormon, and the American Renaissance: An Update](#)

## **How likely is it that a young man of Joseph Smith's limited education could produce such a lengthy book as a first-time author?**

Limiting our scope to just the length of the Book of Mormon, shouldn't our starting point be that it is *unlikely* a first-time author like Joseph would have produced such a long book on his own?

In 2021 [Kyler Rasmussen analyzed 116 authors](#) with prominent literary works published between 1800 and 1860 and compared:

- how old they were when they published their first fictional work (of more than 50 pages)
- how long that work was (in pages)
- how many years of formal education they received.

Just looking at page counts, Joseph Smith was a clear outlier. He was younger than average, had substantially less education than average. Taking that into account, he produced a work far larger than anyone would have guessed (around 531 dense pages).



Isn't the length of the Book of Mormon a simple piece of evidence that Joseph Smith likely did not write it himself?

See:

- [Kyler Rasmussen - Estimating the Evidence - Episode 1: On Ages and Pages](#)

## **Why did early critics of Joseph Smith consider him a “blockhead” but later critics consider him a "myth maker of prodigious talents"? If the Book of Mormon is a fraud, then which extreme view of Joseph is true?**

Dan Peterson remarks how Joseph Smith was first seen as a “blockhead” when the Book of Mormon was published:

*At first, Joseph Smith was regarded as wholly responsible for the production of the Book of Mormon. This was the explanation that completely dominated skeptical discourse until roughly four years after the publication of the book. But it arose before the book even appeared. Since Joseph was a superstitious and ignorant peasant, the Book of Mormon would naturally be beneath serious notice. He was “an ignoramus,” said *The Gem of Rochester* for 15 May 1830. “That spindle shanked ignoramus Jo Smith,” echoed the *Palmyra Reflector* for 30 June 1830. An “ignoramus” who “can neither read nor write,” said Obediah Dogberry in the same newspaper, on 7 July 1830. As the *Palmyra Freeman* noted in 1829, “The subject was almost invariably treated as it should have been—with contempt.” “This most clumsy of all impositions,” Dogberry characterized the Book of Mormon in January 1831.*

- [Dan Peterson - The Protean Joseph Smith](#)

Then more recently Joseph Smith was seen as a genius:

*The famous Yale literary critic Harold Bloom, failing to notice that Joseph Smith was nothing more than a typical “blunderhead,” calls him a religious genius and places him in the American pantheon alongside Ralph Waldo Emerson and Walt Whitman.*

- [Dan Peterson - The Protean Joseph Smith](#)

If Joseph Smith was a “blockhead”, why do critics now see him as a genius? If he was a genius, why did his peers think he was “possessed of less than ordinary intellect”?

See:

- [Dan Peterson - The Protean Joseph Smith](#)

## **Why would a religious man like Joseph Smith dare to write a fraudulent book which mentions Christ once every 1.7 verses?**

Joseph Smith was a religious man who believed in Jesus Christ and worshipped God. Would we expect someone so dedicated to his faith to willingly write a fraudulent book that [mentions Christ every 1.7 verses?](#)

George Cannon remarked:

*No wicked man could write such a book as this; and no good man would write it, unless it were true and he were commanded of God to do so.*

*- George Cannon, quoted in "The Twelve Apostles," in Andrew Jenson, ed., [The Historical Record, 6:175.](#)*

What motivation would Joseph Smith have to risk his salvation like this?

See:

- [Susan Ward Easton - Names of Christ in the Book of Mormon](#)

## **If the Book of Mormon was written by someone else with expertise in Hebraisms, Mesoamerica etc., then who was it and what is our evidence?**

While the Book of Mormon was initially deemed [a production beneath contempt, and utterly unworthy the reception of a schoolboy](#), over time it has become apparent that if Joseph was the sole author he would have needed a deep understanding of:

- The Bible
- Hebrew
- Egyptian
- The Near East
- Jewish customs
- Mesoamerica
- Olive tree horticulture
- Ancient sermons
- Ancient warfare

- Ancient laws
- Etc.

However it is highly unlikely that Joseph would have had expertise in any of these areas, let alone all of them. So if Joseph did not have the expertise to write the Book of Mormon then who did? Who had the expertise to do what Joseph was not able to? Some early theories were that Sidney Rigdon or Oliver Cowdery were responsible but how do we know they had all the expertise and why is there no evidence at all of their involvement?

See:

- [Mark J. Stoddard - Joseph Could Neither Have Written nor Directly Translated the Book of Mormon](#)

## **Why would someone with expertise in Hebraisms, Mesoamerica etc. anonymously fabricate a long and complex story, then exclusively share it with a farm boy who isn't interested in books?**

Seeing that it would take expertise in many different areas to write the Book of Mormon, and seeing that there is no evidence of Joseph's acquaintances having all the expertise (or being involved), we are left postulating someone else entirely as the author.

But if such a person did exist, what would be their motive for choosing Joseph? Isn't he an unlikely candidate?

Lucy Mack Smith said that Joseph:

*had never read the Bible through in his life: he seemed much less inclined to the perusal of books than any of the rest of our children, but far more given to meditation and deep study.*

*- [Lucy's Book, 344](#)*

Joseph was a self-professed "[obscure boy whose circumstances in life would make a boy of no consequence in the world](#)". Why would someone spend so much time researching and writing a book only to give it to a boy who probably wouldn't be interested?

See:

- [Lucy Mack Smith - A Mother's Testimony](#)

## **If someone else wrote the Book of Mormon, why would they go to the effort of also supplying gold plates or require Joseph Smith to source them separately?**

Any alternative theory of the Book of Mormon's origin must not only account for how Joseph Smith produced all the words, but also account for the existence of gold plates.

Joseph's claims about the Book of Mormon would be very different if he said he received the words as a revelation from God, but we know there were golden-looking plates [which at least two dozen saw or even handled](#). These included Joseph Smith, Jr, the Three and Eight Witnesses, Emma Smith, Lucy Mack Smith, William Smith, Katherine Smith, Mary Whitmer, Josiah Stowell, Joseph Knight, Sr., Alva Beaman, and Martin Harris's wife and daughter.

[Some of the descriptions of the plates](#) are as follows:

- “[T]hey were fastened with rings thus [a sketch shows a ring in the shape of a capital D with six lines drawn through the straight side of the letter to represent the leaves of the record].” —David Whitmer ([David Whitmer interview, Edward Stevenson diary, 22–23 December 1877](#))
- “They seemed to be pliable like thick paper, and would rustle with a metallic [sic] sound when the edges were moved by the thumb, as one does sometimes thumb the edges of a book.” —Emma Smith ([Emma Smith interview, The Saints' Herald, 1 October 1879](#))

If Joseph didn't have the education or expertise to write the Book of Mormon on his own and it was given to him by someone who did have the time and expertise, then how do we account for the gold plates?

It's unlikely that someone would go to the effort to anonymously write a book and solely give it to Joseph Smith, and it seems even more unlikely that they would also supply (what appeared to be) gold plates with writing engraved on.

What would be their motive?

See:

- [Kirk B. Henrichsen - How witnesses described the plates](#)

## **If Joseph Smith created the gold plates himself, is it likely he spent potentially 480 hours in a blacksmith shop hammering them out?**

In 2021 [Kyler Rasmussen estimated](#) the total time of 480 hours needed to hammer out the gold plates. This is the total time required, so the work would likely span a much longer period of time.

The times are also based on a low estimate of 80 plates rather than the [high end of up to 1,000](#). The above figures at the Blacksmith's are only for hammering out the plates so we would also need to add in the figures required to:

- Learn the skills involved
- Gain access to the facilities and tools required
- Cut the plates
- Punch holes in each plate
- Insert the D-rings through each plate
- Create the seal for the sealed portion
- Give the plates the appearance of gold

If Joseph Smith created the plates on his own, where did he learn the skills? How did he afford the materials? How did he keep his work a secret? Where did he go to do the work? How did he find the time to do it?

See:

- [Kyler Rasmussen - Estimating the Evidence - Episode 5: On Witnesses](#)

## **Would Joseph Smith have also spent around 450 hours engraving the characters on the plates?**

In addition to the estimated 480 hours needed to hammer out the plates, Joseph would also have needed to engrave the characters. [Eyewitnesses and others described the engravings](#):

- *“[The plates] were filled with . . . Egyptian characters. . . . The characters on the unsealed part were small, and beautifully engraved. The whole book exhibited many marks of antiquity in its construction and much skill in the art of engraving.”*  
— Orson Pratt ([Journal of Discourses, 7:31, 2 January 1859.](#))
- *“There were fine engravings on both sides.”* —John Whitmer ([John Whitmer to Theodore Turley, “in the presence of his anti-Mormon friends.” As reported in Richard L. Anderson, Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses \(Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1981\), 131.](#))

- “We also saw the engravings thereon, all of which has the appearance of ancient work, and of curious workmanship.”—*Eight Witnesses* ([“Testimony of the Eight Witnesses.”](#))
- “[T]he characters . . . were cut into the plates with some sharp instrument.”—William Smith ([William Smith interview, The Saints’ Herald, 4 October 1884, 644](#))
- “Upon each side of the leaves of these plates there were fine engravings, which were stained with a black, hard stain, so as to make the letters more legible and easier to be read.”—Orson Pratt ([Journal of Discourses, 7:31, 2 January 1859](#))
- It [Joseph’s transcription of characters from the plates] consisted of all kinds of singular characters disposed in columns, . . . Greek and Hebrew letters, crosses and flourishes; Roman letters inverted or placed sideways were arranged and placed in perpendicular columns, and the whole ended in a rude delineation of a circle, divided into various compartments, arched with various strange marks, and evidently copied after the Mexican calendar.”—Charles Anthon ([Letter from Charles Anthon to E. D. Howe, 17 February 1834, as printed in B. H. Roberts, ed., A Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints \(Provo, Utah: BYU Press, 1965\), 1:100–101.](#))
- “The characters were arranged in columns, like the Chinese mode of writing, . . . Greek, Hebrew and all sorts of letters, more or less distorted, . . . were intermingled with sundry delineations of half moons, stars, and other natural objects, and the whole ended in a rude representation of the Mexican zodiac.”—Charles Anthon ([Charles Anthon to Rev. T. W. Coit, 3 April 1841, as printed in B. H. Roberts, A Comprehensive History of the Church, 1:101.](#))
- “[Martin Harris] was in the habit of exhibiting to his hearers what he claimed to be a facsimile [sic] copy of the title page of the forthcoming book [Book of Mormon].” One who saw this copy said, “On it were drawn rudely and bunglingly, concentric circles, between, above and below, which were characters, with little resemblance to letters.”—Charles W. Brown ([“Manchester in the Early Days,” Shortsville Enterprize \[sic\] 35 \(ca. 1883\), based on Orsamus Turner, History of the Pioneer Settlement of Phelps and Gorham’s Purchase, and Morris’ Reserve \(Rochester, N.Y.: Alling, 1851\), 215.](#))

[Kyler Rasmussen estimated](#) that it would have taken around 450 hours engraving the characters. This takes the total time needed to nearly 1,000 hours for Joseph to create the plates. No doubt he could not have spent a four-week period working full-time on them, so the entire process would have taken a very long time to complete.

How likely is this to have happened? What motivation would Joseph have for taking so much time and physical effort in creating such a fraud?

See:

- [Kirk B. Henrichsen - How witnesses described the plates](#)
- [Kyler Rasmussen - Estimating the Evidence - Episode 5: On Witnesses](#)

## Why would the gold plates be bound by the most efficient ring shape?

Multiple witnesses said that the gold plates were held together by [three D-shaped rings](#). If Joseph Smith had made the plates himself wouldn't he have likely used circular rings? Why would he go to the extra effort to make them D-shaped?

Jeff Lindsay explains:

*a ring with a straight side is more efficient for holding stacked plated or sheets than a purely circular ring. In retrospect, it makes sense that experienced users of metal plates would use an efficient binder system. Warren Aston reports that the D-shaped ring “offers a full 50 percent more storage capacity than a circular ring” and “20 to 25% percent more storage capacity than a slanted semicircular shape,” though details of the calculations are not given (but it sounds reasonable).*

*- [Jeff Lindsay - A “D” for Plausibility of the Gold Plates: The Book of Mormon in an Interesting Bind](#)*

Lindsay continues:

*Joseph Smith displayed plates that were securely bound by three rings (not two or four) constructed in what we now know is the most efficient shape. He could not have known either of these facts in 1829 from the materials in his environment or from people who may have had greater familiarity with libraries or materials storage. Nor could he have been informed by the finds of other ancient records, as none were then known to be bound by rings. Perhaps it is not coincidence that the only other ancient record bound by rings so far known also has D-shaped rings and dates to about 600 B.C.*

*- [Jeff Lindsay - A “D” for Plausibility of the Gold Plates: The Book of Mormon in an Interesting Bind](#)*

How did Joseph Smith know about D-shape rings when [patents for this design were only made after his time](#)?

See:

- [Warren Aston - The Rings That Bound the Gold Plates](#)
- [Jeff Lindsay - A “D” for Plausibility of the Gold Plates: The Book of Mormon in an Interesting Bind](#)
- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: D-Shaped Rings](#)

## Why has no one ever come forward as the Book of Mormon's author?

Once the Book of Mormon was published there was every opportunity for someone to step forward and expose it as a fraud but no-one has ever come forward even as an accomplice. There are no uncovered journal entries, no uncovered confessions. Not even a claim with minimal evidence. Nothing.

This only strengthens the claim that the words came from Joseph.

It would be very different if a credible person came forward to say that they helped Joseph write the Book of Mormon, or any evidence uncovered which shows that somebody else claimed they wrote it, but we don't see any of this.

If someone else was involved then why did they never come forward? Isn't the simplest explanation that Joseph, with no notes, and only limited education, was fully responsible?

See:

- [FAIR Latter-day Saints - Book of Mormon authorship theories](#)

## Why has no descendant of the Book of Mormon's author ever come forward? Isn't there money to be made?

The Book of Mormon is now [one of the most translated and distributed books ever](#) and it is certain that there would be a lot of money to be made by someone proving their ancestor was the actual author or co-author. The fact that no descendant of the author has ever come forward is more evidence that no one was involved apart from Joseph.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland notes:

*If Joseph Smith did not translate the Book of Mormon as a work of ancient origin, then I would move heaven and earth to meet the 'real' nineteenth-century author. After one hundred and fifty years, . . . surely there must be someone willing to step forward—if no one else, at least the descendants of the 'real' author—claiming credit for such a remarkable document and all that has transpired in its wake. After all, a writer that can move millions can make millions. Shouldn't someone have come forth then or now to cashier the whole phenomenon*

*- [Jeffrey R. Holland, Christ and the New Covenant, 347, 349.](#)*

Where are all the claims of authorship? Wouldn't a descendant of the author be able to make [plenty of money](#) from the publicity?



See:

- [Carrie A. Moore - Book of Mormon sells for \\$180,000](#)
- [The VCG - The world's 18 most widely read books](#)

## **If Joseph Smith knew the Book of Mormon was a hoax, why would he suffer so much persecution and trials then die a martyr?**

Why would Joseph Smith continue a hoax under such persecution? Why wouldn't he abandon what he knew was simply untrue? Wouldn't we expect him to have given up early on?

Joseph had [injuries for the rest of his life](#) from the persecutions he experienced and was eventually killed by a mob. Joseph also experienced: [persecution after the first vision](#), [a mob coming to his house](#), [being scratched with nails like "a mad cat"](#), [being tarred and feathered](#), [an attempted poisoning](#), [being beaten with guns in a wagon](#), [46 lawsuits](#), [his children dying from exposure to the cold when mobs entered his house](#), and [unjust imprisonment](#).

Many people suffer persecution for what they *think* to be true, but Joseph would have known the true origin of the Book of Mormon. So if he knew it was a fraud it seems odd he would have continued to live the way he did under such persecution.

Doesn't the evidence of his life suggest that Joseph thought the Book of Mormon was true? Wouldn't he be the best person to know if it was true or not?

See:

- [Danel W. Bachman - Joseph Smith, a True Martyr](#)

## **Wouldn't Lucy and Emma be the most likely people to know whether or not Joseph could have written the Book of Mormon?**

Statements from those closest to Joseph Smith confirm they did not believe he could have written the Book of Mormon himself. Interestingly, his mother and wife both believed he could not, and did not, write the Book of Mormon.

His mother said (when challenged):

*Let me tell you boldly, that that book contains the everlasting Gospel, and it was written for the salvation of your soul, by the gift and power of the Holy Ghost*

- [\*Jones, Emma and Lucy, 83.\*](#)

And his wife Emma said:

*“Joseph Smith ... could neither write nor dictate a coherent and well-worded letter; let alone dictating a book like the Book of Mormon. And, though I was an active participant in the scenes that transpired, it is marvelous to me, ‘a marvel and a wonder,’ as much so as to any one else.”*

- [\*Last Testimony of Sister Emma,” Saints’ Herald, 1 Oct. 1879, p. 290\*](#)

Why would we know better than Joseph’s mother and wife as to whether he could, and did, write the Book of Mormon?

See:

- [Daniel Peterson - The collective witness of Joseph Smith’s family](#)
- [Book of Mormon Central - Did Joseph Smith’s Mother Believe He Could Have Written the Book of Mormon?](#)
- [Elder Russell M. Nelson - A Treasured Testament](#)

## **If Joseph Smith created the Book of Mormon through "automatic writing", where did all the words come from?**

Seeing how difficult it would have been for Joseph Smith to have created the Book of Mormon on his own, some have argued that Joseph dictated the book through [automatic writing](#).

Automatic writing is the process of creating content in some kind of trance. The writer is not conscious of what they are writing. There are examples of people being able to write beyond their abilities, but in these cases the author claimed to have been receiving the words from someone else, most often the dead.

This explanation of the Book of Mormon is odd as it invokes a supernatural explanation which has much less evidence than the supernatural explanation that Joseph claimed. If Joseph was involved in automatic writing then who was he receiving the words from? Could he not have been receiving the words from God? Or Moroni?

What evidence do we have that Joseph was engaging in automatic writing? If we appeal to a supernatural explanation then why appeal to the one which has less evidence?

See:

- [Robert A. Rees - The Book of Mormon and Automatic Writing](#)
- [Brian C. Hales - Automatic writing and the Book of Mormon: An update](#)
- [Jeff Roundy - Book of Mormon Author Theories Debunked](#)

## **If the Book of Mormon was a hoax, wouldn't Joseph Smith have been able to still translate when Martin Harris swapped out the seer stone?**

Edward Stevenson provided an account of an instance in which Martin Harris tested Joseph's ability to translate the gold plates:

*When [Joseph Smith and Martin Harris] became weary, as it was confining work to translate from the plates of gold, they would go down to the river and throw stones into the water for exercise. Martin on one occasion picked up a stone resembling the one with which they were translating, and on resuming their work Martin placed the false stone in the hat. He said that the Prophet looked quietly for a long time, when he raised his head and said: "Martin, what on earth is the matter, all is dark as Egypt." Martin smiled and the seer discovered that the wrong stone was placed in the hat. When he asked Martin why he had done so he replied, to stop the mouths of fools who had declared that the Prophet knew by heart all that he told him to write, and did not see by the seer stone; when the true stone was placed in the hat, the translation was resumed, as usual.*

- [The Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon," Millennial Star 48 \(June 21, 1886\): 389-90](#)

Stevenson told this story on three occasions. Why didn't Joseph make a big deal of this story? Wouldn't it have given credibility to his prophetic claims?

See:

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Divine Power Required to Translate](#)

## **Why couldn't Joseph Smith translate the Book of Mormon after a quarrel?**

Similar to the story regarding the swapped seer stone, we also have an account of Joseph Smith not being able to translate unless he was worthy.

David Whitmer said:

*He [Joseph Smith] had to trust in God. He could not translate unless he was humble and possessed the right feelings towards every one. To illustrate, so you can see. One morning when he was getting ready to continue the translation, something went wrong about the house and he was put out about it. Something that Emma, his wife, had done. Oliver and I went up stairs, and Joseph came up soon after to continue the translation, but he could not do anything. He could not translate a single syllable. He went down stairs, out into the orchard and made supplication to the Lord; was gone about an hour—came back to the house, asked Emma's forgiveness and then came up stairs where we were and the translation went on all right. He could do nothing save he was humble and faithful.*

*- [Interview conducted on January 15, 1882, in Richmond, Missouri; published in the Saints' Herald 29 \(March 1, 1882\): 68;](#)*

Isn't this what we would expect if the Book of Mormon were true? Wouldn't we expect humility and righteousness to be a requirement for translating scripture by the gift and power of God?

See:

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Divine Power Required to Translate](#)

## **Why would Joseph Smith be comfortable with the gold plates often laying on the table without any attempt at concealment?**

If Joseph Smith was trying to hide the plates for fear of being exposed, he certainly did not try to hide them from his wife.

Emma Smith said:

*[The plates] lay in a box under our bed for months but I never felt at liberty to look at them*

*- [Nels Madsen and Parley P. Pratt, interview of Emma Smith Bidamon, 1877, Secure Stacks manuscript, MS 852, Church History Library, Salt Lake City.](#)*

*the plates often lay on the table without any attempt at concealment," wrapped in this cloth.*

*- [Last Testimony of Sister Emma," Saints' Herald, October 1, 1879, 290.](#)*

*I once felt of the plates, as they thus lay on the table, tracing their outline and shape. They seemed to be pliable like thick paper, and would rustle with a metallic sound*

*when the edges were moved by the thumb, as one does sometimes thumb the edges of a book.*

- [Last Testimony of Sister Emma, 290.](#)

Joseph and Emma's son Joseph III recalled:

*My mother told me that she . . . would lift and move [the plates] when she swept and dusted the room and furniture.*

- [Joseph Smith III to Mrs. E. Horton, March 7, 1900, Community of Christ Library–Archives, as cited in Vogel, Early Mormon Documents, 1:546–47.](#)

Why would Joseph risk his wife Emma finding out about his fraud if he needed her onside throughout the rest of his life?

See:

- [Anthony Sweat - Hefted and Handled: Tangible Interactions with Book of Mormon Objects](#)

## **Why did Sally Conrad say that Joseph and Oliver were "exceedingly white and strange" during the translation?**

Sally Conrad was hired by Mary Whitmer in June of 1829 to help around the house while Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery were translating the Book of Mormon. Although Sally didn't see the plates she did see Joseph and Oliver around the house.

She said she saw the men:

*come down from the translating room several times when they looked so exceedingly white and strange*

- [Sarah \(Sally\) Heller Conrad, as recorded by Oliver B. Huntington \(1897\)](#)

Sally eventually joined the church which suggests she didn't notice anything fraudulent from Joseph and Oliver. Wouldn't we expect those who were around Joseph during translation to have a good grasp of whether it was fraudulent or spiritual? How do we explain Sally's experience of Joseph and Oliver?

See:

- [Book of Mormon Central - How Can Sally Conrad's Witness of the Book of Mormon Strengthen Our Faith?](#)

## Why did Joseph try to get others to translate the plates if he had engraved them himself?

Evidence suggests that Joseph Smith first tried to get the Book of Mormon translated using secular means. Michael Hubbard McKay mentions three separate accounts:

*Joseph Knight Sr. had a personal conversation with Joseph, just after Joseph had secured the plates in Lucy and Joseph Sr.'s house. Joseph Knight recalled Joseph Smith excitedly describing the plates to him, saying, "Now they are written in Characters [sic] and I want them translated." According to Joseph Knight's memory, Joseph Smith recognized that he could not read the characters on the plates, and, in frustration, knowing that the angel had told him that he would translate the plates, he quickly expressed his desire to get them translated. When Knight wrote about this experience, Joseph Smith had published the Book of Mormon at least six years earlier, and he thoroughly believed that Joseph Smith was the person who had translated the plates. Though Knight wrote his history years later and there are potential problems with his ability to remember the details of the event, he was in a unique situation that may have enabled him to recall Joseph Smith's original plan. When Joseph Knight was writing he knew the outcome of the story, which included the fact that Joseph Smith eventually translated the plates himself. Because of that knowledge, Joseph Knight may have been differentiating between what Joseph Smith's original intentions were and what eventually happened. Knight explained that once Joseph Smith had moved to Harmony, he took an additional step to have the plates translated by copying "off[f] the Caricters exactley [sic] like the ancient" so that he could send them to scholars for translation.*

*Knight's record also seems to coincide with Lucy Mack Smith's account, which focused on Joseph Smith's role in the translation and publication of the Book of Mormon. Lucy Smith asserted that as Joseph Smith took "some measures to accomplish the translation . . . he was instructed to take off a fac simile of the . . . characters" and by sending it to "learned men" he could acquire a "translation of the same." Though Lucy Smith focused on the secular translation of just a sample of the characters, both she and Joseph Knight Sr. remembered that Joseph Smith was trying to find someone who could translate the characters. This is striking because both of them knew that Joseph Smith would declare that he had translated the plates by the power of God, as stated in the preface of the Book of Mormon.*

*Making Lucy Mack Smith and Joseph Knight Sr.'s accounts even more probable is the fact that they appear to coincide with the earliest surviving account of the translation. This account is all the more powerful because it comes from a non-apologetic source: local Palmyra printer Jonathan Hadley of the Palmyra Freeman. Hadley apparently spoke with Joseph Smith in the summer of 1829, at which time Joseph briefly explained to Hadley what had occurred in the winter of 1828. In the account, Hadley derided Joseph's claims, declaring that Joseph had a friend take some of the characters he had copied from the plates "in search of*

*someone, besides the interpreter [Joseph Smith], who was learned enough to English them.” Like Lucy Mack Smith’s and Joseph Knight’s accounts, Hadley knew that Joseph Smith eventually translated the plates, but he also knew about Joseph’s initial attempt to find a translator other than himself.*

*- [Michael Hubbard MacKay - “Git Them Translated”: Translating the Characters on the Gold Plates](#)*

Why would Joseph do this if he knew he had created the plates himself?

See:

- [Book of Mormon Central - Why Did Martin Harris Consult with Scholars like Charles Anthon?](#)
- [Michael Hubbard MacKay - “Git Them Translated”: Translating the Characters on the Gold Plates](#)

## **Why would Martin Harris come away convinced after showing Charles Anthon characters from the gold plates?**

Martin Harris had a series of experiences which led him to fund the Book of Mormon. One experience was meeting Charles Anthon and showing him the characters from the gold plates. While there are conflicting accounts as to what happened, we know that Martin Harris came away convinced:

*According to Martin Harris, Joseph Smith copied some of the Book of Mormon characters and Martin took them to New York. There he met with Charles Anthon, who certified to him that they were correct. Completely reassured, Harris returned to Harmony, told his friends about it, and later mortgaged his property to finance the publication of the Book of Mormon. This is very early concrete evidence that Martin Harris's version of his meeting with Anthon is accurate and that Anthon's later retraction was an attempt to save face, if not an act of downright dishonesty.*

*- [Robert F. Smith, Gordon C. Thomasson, and John W. Welch, "What Did Charles Anthon Really Say?," in Reexploring the Book of Mormon, edited by John W. Welch \(Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1992\), Chapter 19](#)*

Why would Martin Harris agree to fund the Book of Mormon after his experience with Charles Anthon? What happened to make him more convinced the book was true?

See:

- [Robert F. Smith, Gordon C. Thomasson, and John W. Welch, "What Did Charles Anthon Really Say?"](#)

- [The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints - Martin Harris's Consultations with Scholars](#)
- [Matthew McBride - The Contributions of Martin Harris](#)

## Where did W. W. Phelps find out about "ancient shorthand Egyptian"?

What really happened in the meeting between Charles Anthon and Martin Harris? Robert F. Smith, Gordon C. Thomasson, and John W. Welch explain one vital clue:

*According to Martin Harris, Joseph Smith copied some of the Book of Mormon characters and Martin took them to New York. There he met with Charles Anthon, who certified to him that they were correct. Completely reassured, Harris returned to Harmony, told his friends about it, and later mortgaged his property to finance the publication of the Book of Mormon. This is very early concrete evidence that Martin Harris's version of his meeting with Anthon is accurate and that Anthon's later retraction was an attempt to save face, if not an act of downright dishonesty.*

*Shortly afterwards, in 1831 W. W. Phelps wrote a letter in which he reported that Anthon had translated the Book of Mormon characters and declared them to be "the ancient shorthand Egyptian." This is a most telling clue, for where else, except from Anthon, would Harris and hence Phelps have gotten this precise phrase, the phrase shorthand Egyptian? It was not part of Harris's environment or education.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the phrase is so singular that it appears only this one time in LDS history.*

*On the other hand, this precise term was known to scholars, Anthon included. In 1824, Champollion had used an equivalent term, "tachygraphie," in his landmark *Précis du système hieroglyphique des anciens Égyptiens* (a copy of which Anthon owned), to describe hieratic Egyptian script. In June 1827, this book was reviewed in the *American Quarterly Review*, calling hieratic Egyptian script "short-hand" Egyptian. Anthon knew this review: He owned a copy and he cited it in his *Classical Dictionary*. Anthon would have read this review only months before Harris's visit.*

*Thus it becomes highly probable that Phelps indeed heard this peculiar phrase from Harris, who in turn got it from Anthon, the only person involved who was likely to have known it. Anthon probably mentioned shorthand Egyptian because he was struck by certain obvious similarities in the transcript to hieratic or demotic Egyptian. From this, what else can one conclude, except that Harris told the truth about what Anthon said on this point?...*

*[- Robert F. Smith, Gordon C. Thomasson, and John W. Welch, "What Did Charles Anthon Really Say?," in \*Reexploring the Book of Mormon\*, edited by John W. Welch \(Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1992\), Chapter 19](#)*



What are the odds that Charles Anthon would say the characters were shorthand Egyptian when the Book of Mormon says it was written in reformed Egyptian?

See:

- [Robert F. Smith, Gordon C. Thomasson, and John W. Welch, "What Did Charles Anthon Really Say?."](#)
- [FAIR Latter-day Saints - The Anthon Transcript](#)

## **How would Joseph Smith manage to convince 3 witnesses that they had seen an angel?**

Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer and Martin Harris all claim that in June 1829 they saw an angel testify that the Book of Mormon is true.

The Testimony of Three Witnesses says:

*Be it known unto all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people, unto whom this work shall come: That we, through the grace of God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, have seen the plates which contain this record, which is a record of the people of Nephi, and also of the Lamanites, their brethren, and also of the people of Jared, who came from the tower of which hath been spoken. And we also know that they have been translated by the gift and power of God, for his voice hath declared it unto us; wherefore we know of a surety that the work is true. And we also testify that we have seen the engravings which are upon the plates; and they have been shown unto us by the power of God, and not of man. And we declare with words of soberness, that an angel of God came down from heaven, and he brought and laid before our eyes, that we beheld and saw the plates, and the engravings thereon; and we know that it is by the grace of God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, that we beheld and bear record that these things are true. And it is marvelous in our eyes. Nevertheless, the voice of the Lord commanded us that we should bear record of it; wherefore, to be obedient unto the commandments of God, we bear testimony of these things. And we know that if we are faithful in Christ, we shall rid our garments of the blood of all men, and be found spotless before the judgment-seat of Christ, and shall dwell with him eternally in the heavens. And the honor be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, which is one God. Amen.*

- *Oliver Cowdery*
- *David Whitmer*
- *Martin Harris*

Further statements from the witnesses confirm that they all thought they saw an angel. How did Joseph Smith manage to do that? How did he leave them all with the same impression?

See:

- [Witnesses of the Book of Mormon - Three Witnesses](#)

## **How could Joseph Smith convince 8 witnesses that the gold plates, which they held, were genuine?**

Eight witnesses claim that in July 1829 Joseph Smith showed them the gold plates and they handled them.

The Testimony of Eight Witnesses, printed at the front of each Book of Mormon, says:

*Be it known unto all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people, unto whom this work shall come: That Joseph Smith, Jun., the translator of this work, has shown unto us the plates of which hath been spoken, which have the appearance of gold; and as many of the leaves as the said Smith has translated we did handle with our hands; and we also saw the engravings thereon, all of which has the appearance of ancient work, and of curious workmanship. And this we bear record with words of soberness, that the said Smith has shown unto us, for we have seen and hefted, and know of a surety that the said Smith has got the plates of which we have spoken. And we give our names unto the world, to witness unto the world that which we have seen. And we lie not, God bearing witness of it.*

- [The Testimony of Eight Witnesses](#)

The testimony of the eight witnesses, who handled the plates, is compelling evidence to the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon.

If Joseph had created the plates himself we would not have expected the witnesses to be convinced they were genuine having handled them. Why think that Joseph was not only a creative mind who could write the Book of Mormon but also a master craftsman?

See:

- [The Testimony of Eight Witnesses](#)
- [Anthony Sweat - Hefted and Handled: Tangible Interactions with Book of Mormon Objects](#)
- [Book of Mormon Central - Did the Book of Mormon Witnesses Really See What They Claimed?](#)

## How do we also account for the other witnesses of the Book of Mormon?

As well as the three witnesses and the eight witnesses, there were others who saw or handled the plates in some way:

- [Katherine Smith Salisbury](#) - lifted and held the plates
- [William B. Smith](#) - handled the plates
- [Josiah Stowell](#) - testified under oath that he saw the plates
- [Mary Musselman Whitmer](#) - was shown the plates by an angel while she was out in the family barn.
- [Lucy Mack Smith](#) - was allowed to touch the plates and related objects through thin cloths. She also heard the metallic sound that the plates made when they scraped together.
- [Emma Hale Smith](#) - would occasionally move the plates around
- [Michael Bartlett Morse](#) (never a member of the church) - was a witness to the translation of multiple occasions
- [Lucy Harris and her daughter](#)- initially having a dream in which an angel showed the plates to her. Later she and her daughter were permitted to hold the wooden box in which the plates were kept, and both were impressed by how heavy they were.

What were these witnesses experiencing if there were no gold plates?

See:

- [Anthony Sweat - Hefted and Handled: Tangible Interactions with Book of Mormon Objects](#)
- [Jeff Lindsay - "A Strange Piece of Work" Poorly Explained by a Non-LDS Witness of the Book of Mormon Translation](#)
- [Marianne Holman Prescott - Four Women Were Witnesses to Book of Mormon Translation Process](#)

## Why did none of the Book of Mormon witnesses ever recant their testimony?

None of the witnesses ever denied their testimony of the Book of Mormon. This is a remarkable fact seeing that many of them left the church and were even hostile to Joseph Smith.

As an example, Oliver Cowdery said before being re-baptized:

*I wrote, with my own pen, the entire Book of Mormon (save a few pages) as it fell from the lips of the Prophet Joseph, as he translated it by the gift and power of God,*

*by the means of the Urim and Thummim, or as it is called by the book, Holy Interpreters. I beheld with my eyes, and handled with my hands, the gold plates from which it was transcribed. I also saw with my eyes and handled with my hands the Holy Interpreters. That book is true. ...It contains the everlasting gospel, and came forth to the children of men in fulfillment of the revelations of John, where he says he saw an angel come with the everlasting gospel to preach to every nation, kindred, tongue and people. It contains principles of salvation; and if you, my hearers, will walk by its light and obey its precepts, you will be saved with an everlasting salvation in the kingdom of God on high*

[- Andrew Jenson, LDS Biographical Encyclopedia \(Salt Lake City: Andrew Jenson History Company, 1901\), 1:246](#)

If the Book of Mormon was a fraud then surely one of the witnesses would have let slip the truth or confessed it at some point? Don't the life-long testimonies of all these people strongly contradict all alternative theories of the Book of Mormon?

See:

- [Witnesses of the Book of Mormon - Did any of the Book of Mormon witnesses ever recant their testimony?](#)
- [FAIR Latter-day Saints - None of the Book of Mormon witnesses ever recanted their testimony](#)

## **Didn't the six witnesses who left the church and had a personal animus against Joseph Smith have the perfect opportunity to expose him?**

All of the Three Witnesses, plus three of the Eight Witnesses left the church and were hostile towards the church or Joseph Smith for a period of time:

- Oliver Cowdery
- David Whitmer
- Martin Harris
- Hiram Page
- Jacob Whitmer
- John Whitmer

We would expect this to be the perfect opportunity for one of the witnesses to expose Joseph if they wanted to, so why did none of them do it? Why did none of them ever confess to lying?

Kyler Rasmussen asks:

*What should we do with this apostasy? How likely would someone be to maintain the story even after parting ways with the church? As a psychologist, this is the issue that gets to me. It's extremely difficult for me to imagine someone of sound mind acting so contrary to their own emotions and motivations. In my view, it's essentially impossible.*

*- [Kyler Rasmussen - Estimating the Evidence - Episode 5: On Witnesses](#)*

Why is it not compelling evidence? Why would some never return to the church but still never deny their testimony?

See:

- [Kyler Rasmussen - Estimating the Evidence - Episode 5: On Witnesses](#)

## **Didn't the witnesses have the perfect excuse to expose Joseph Smith when their lives were threatened?**

Why would the witnesses maintain their story even in the face of violent persecution? It is one thing to cover for a friend when nothing is at stake, but quite another to cover for them when you are the victim of violence or your life is threatened.

One of the original members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles William E. McLellin said:

*One circumstance I'll relate of one of these eight witnesses. While the mob was raging in Jackson Co. Mo. in 1833 some young men ran down Hiram Page [in the woods] one of the eight [witnesses,] and commenced beating and pounding him with whips and clubs. He begged, but there was no mercy. They said he was [a] damned Mormon, and they meant to beat him to death! But finally one then said to him, if you will deny that damned book, we will let you go. Said he, how can I deny what I know to be true? Then they pounded him again. When they thought he was about to breathe his last, they said to him, Now what do you think of your God, when he dont save you? Well said he, I believe in God—Well, said one of the most intelligent among them, I believe the damned fool will stick to it though we kill him. Let us let him go. But his life was nearly run out. He was confined to his bed for a length of time. So much for a man who knows for himself. Knowledge is beyond faith or doubt. It is positive certainty.*

*- [Mitchell K. Schaefer, ed., William E. McLellin's Lost Manuscript \(Salt Lake City: Eborn Books, 2012\), 166–67](#)*

What made the witnesses say true to their testimony even in the face of such persecution? If they were just covering for Joseph wouldn't they have crumbled at some point?

See:

- [Scott Woodward - Testimony of Hiram Page](#)

## **Why has no-one completed Hugh Nibley's Book of Mormon challenge yet?**

Professor Hugh Nibley at BYU was known to give his Book of Mormon students a challenge in class. The challenge was to try and create a piece of work comparable to the Book of Mormon.

It has now become quite well known and one version is as follows:

*Since Joseph Smith was younger than most of you and not nearly so experienced or well-educated as any of you at the time he copyrighted the Book of Mormon, it should not be too much to ask you to hand in by the end of the semester (which will give you more time than he had) a paper of, say, five to six hundred pages in length. Call it a sacred book if you will, and give it the form of a history. Tell of a community of wandering Jews in ancient times; have all sorts of characters in your story, and involve them in all sorts of public and private vicissitudes; give them names--hundreds of them--pretending that they are real Hebrew and Egyptian names of circa 600 b.c.; be lavish with cultural and technical details--manners and customs, arts and industries, political and religious institutions, rites, and traditions, include long and complicated military and economic histories; have your narrative cover a thousand years without any large gaps; keep a number of interrelated local histories going at once; feel free to introduce religious controversy and philosophical discussion, but always in a plausible setting; observe the appropriate literary conventions and explain the derivation and transmission of your varied historical materials.*

*"Above all, do not ever contradict yourself! For now we come to the really hard part of this little assignment. You and I know that you are making this all up--we have our little joke--but just the same you are going to be required to have your paper published when you finish it, not as fiction or romance, but as a true history! After you have handed it in you may make no changes in it (in this class we always use the first edition of the Book of Mormon); what is more, you are to invite any and all scholars to read and criticize your work freely, explaining to them that it is a sacred book on a par with the Bible. If they seem over-skeptical, you might tell them that you translated the book from original records by the aid of the Urim and Thummim--they will love that! Further to allay their misgivings, you might tell them that the original manuscript was on golden plates, and that you got the plates from an angel. Now go to work and good luck!*

- [Hugh Nibley's Book of Mormon Challenge](#)

While the challenge is quite well known, less has been said about attempts to complete it. So far no one has been able to complete the challenge.

How could Joseph Smith meet the challenge but better educated students could not?

See:

- [Jeff Lindsay - Take the Book of Mormon Challenge!](#)

## Why would Joseph Smith make dictation difficult for himself by including so many editorial promises in the Book of Mormon?

If Joseph Smith dictated the Book of Mormon on the fly, why would he make it so difficult for himself? One unnecessary complexity when dictating is to include editorial promises, or previews of what will be coming later in the book. We see an example of this in Mosiah 28:9

*And they took their journey into the wilderness to go up to preach the word among the Lamanites; and I shall give an account of their proceedings hereafter.*

Here Mormon sets an editorial promise to give an account of the mission to the Lamanites but it is not until 18 chapters later that this promise is fulfilled. Why would Joseph do this if he was creating the content on the fly? Wouldn't he be taking an unnecessary risk? Why would there be [over 20 editorial promises in 1 Nephi](#) alone?

See:

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Editorial Promises](#)

## Would we expect Joseph Smith's first ever book to include editorial previews and summaries?

The Book of Mormon contains many examples of editorial previews which would be difficult to include if Joseph Smith had dictated it. One example is found Alma 21:17:

*And it came to pass that the Lord began to bless them, insomuch that **they brought many to the knowledge of the truth; yea, they did convince many of their sins, and of the traditions of their fathers, which were not correct.***  
(emphasis added)

This wording is then used five chapters later in Alma 26:24

*For they said unto us: Do ye suppose that ye can **bring the Lamanites to the knowledge of the truth?** Do ye suppose that ye can **convince the Lamanites of the incorrectness of the traditions of their fathers**, as stiffnecked a people as they are; whose hearts delight in the shedding of blood; whose days have been spent in the grossest iniquity; whose ways have been the ways of a transgressor from the beginning? Now my brethren, ye remember that this was their language. (emphasis added)*

In this example and many others, Joseph Smith seems to recite content that has not even been written yet.

How did Joseph Smith remember the wording he used several chapters earlier? How did he manage to give a preview of future content then fulfill it later in the book?

See:

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Previews and Summaries of Embedded Documents](#)

## **If the Book of Mormon was a product of Joseph Smith, would we expect it to be distinguished from other 19th century religious works by using 100 different names for Christ?**

Susan Ward Easton has identified 100 names of deity in the Book of Mormon:

*Almighty, Almighty God, Alpha and Omega, Being, Beloved, Beloved Son, Christ, Christ Jesus, Christ the Son, Counselor, Creator, Eternal Father, Eternal God, Eternal Head, Eternal Judge, Everlasting Father, Everlasting God, Father, Father of heaven, Father of heaven and of earth, Founder of Peace, God, God of Abraham God of Abraham and Isaac, and Jacob, God of Abraham and of Isaac and the God of Jacob, God of Isaac, God of Israel, God of Jacob, God of miracles, God of nature, God of the whole earth, Good shepherd, Great Creator, Great Spirit, Head, Holy Child, Holy God, Holy Messiah, Holy One, Holy One of Israel, Holy One of Jacob, Husband, Immanuel, Jehovah, Jesus, Jesus Christ, Keeper of the gate, King, King of heaven, Lamb, Lamb of God, Lord, Lord God, Lord God Almighty, Lord God Omnipotent, Lord God of Hosts, Lord Jehovah, Lord Jesus, Lord Jesus Christ, Lord of Hosts, Lord of the Vineyard, Lord Omnipotent, Maker, Man, Master, Mediator, Messiah, Mighty God, Mighty One of Israel, Mighty One of Jacob, Most High, Most High God, Only Begotten of the Father, Only Begotten Son, Prince of Peace, Prophet, Redeemer, Redeemer of Israel, Redeemer of the world, Rock, Savior, Savior Jesus Christ, Savior of the world, Shepherd, Son, Son of God, Son of Righteousness, Son of the Eternal Father, Son of the Everlasting God, Son of the Living God, Son of the*



*Most High God, Stone, Supreme Being, Supreme Creator, True and Living God, True Messiah, True Shepherd, True Vine, Well Beloved, and Wonderful.*

- [Susan Ward Easton - Names of Christ in the Book of Mormon](#)

What other 19th century book is comparable to the Book of Mormon? How would Joseph Smith with his limited education manage to use so many names like this?

See:

- [Susan Ward Easton - Names of Christ in the Book of Mormon](#)

**How would Joseph Smith ensure that the Book of Mormon's use of "remember" and "forget" is "extensive, internally consistent, and strikingly similar – in both frequency and range of meaning – to their use in the Bible"?**

Biblical scholar Louis Midgley remarks how the Book of Mormon surprisingly contains over 200 words relating to "remembering" and "forgetting". This is certainly much higher than expected if the meaning was only related to things coming in and out of memory.

However Midgley explains the biblical meaning of these words:

*To remember often means to be attentive, to consider, to keep divine commandments, or to act. The word in Hebrew thus carries a wider range of meaning than is common with the verb remember in English. Indeed, to remember involves turning to God, or repenting, or acting in accordance with divine injunctions.*

*Conversely, the antonym of the verb to remember in Hebrew—to forget—does not merely describe the passing of a thought from the mind, but involves a failure to act, or a failure to do or keep something. Hence, failing to remember God and his commandments is the equivalent of apostasy.*

- [Louis Midgley - "O Man, Remember, and Perish Not" \(Mosiah 4:30\)](#)

Midgley notes how the Book of Mormon uses these words in the biblical way which "captures one of the most distinctive aspects of Israelite mentality" and "shows a clear link between the ways of remembrance or forgetfulness and the blessings or cursings associated with the covenant people of God".

What are the odds that Joseph Smith's dictation of the Book of Mormon would be so consistent with the Bible in this regard?

See:

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: To Remember and to Forget](#)

## How come the writers of the small plates followed meticulously the instructions of Nephi?

It is interesting how some of the writers of the small plates have little to contribute to the Book of Mormon, for example Chemish only writes one verse in Omni 1:9:

*Now I, Chemish, write what few things I write, in the same book with my brother; for behold, I saw the last which he wrote, that he wrote it with his own hand; and he wrote it in the day that he delivered them unto me. And after this manner we keep the records, for it is according to the commandments of our fathers. And I make an end.*

Why would multiple authors only contribute a few verses or very little in quick succession? John W. Welch notes how this follows instructions given by Nephi in Jacob 1:1-4

*1 For behold, it came to pass that fifty and five years had passed away from the time that Lehi left Jerusalem; wherefore, Nephi gave me, Jacob, a commandment concerning the small plates, upon which these things are engraven.*

*2 And he gave me, Jacob, a commandment that I should write upon these plates a few of the things which I considered to be most precious; that I should not touch, save it were lightly, concerning the history of this people which are called the people of Nephi.*

*3 For he said that the history of his people should be engraven upon his other plates, and that **I should preserve these plates and hand them down unto my seed, from generation to generation.***

*4 And if there were preaching which was sacred, or revelation which was great, or prophesying, that I should engraven the heads of them upon these plates, and touch upon them as much as it were possible, for Christ's sake, and for the sake of our people. (emphasis added)*

This explains why Abinadom would say in Omni 1:11

*And behold, the record of this people is engraven upon plates which is had by the kings, according to the generations; and **I know of no revelation save that which has been written, neither prophecy;** wherefore, that which is sufficient is written. And I make an end. (emphasis added)*

How would Joseph Smith manage to be consistent like this if he was dictating the Book of Mormon on the fly?

See:

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: A Pattern in the Small Plates](#)

## **How could Joseph Smith have quoted each of the farewell speeches from the small plates in Moroni's "verbal curtain call"?**

Moroni's final chapter of the Book of Mormon incredibly includes quotes from each of the farewell speeches in the small plates, his own father, & Christ's quotation of Isaiah 54.

The final 8 verses of Moroni 10 include:

- *2 Nephi 33*
- *Moroni 7*
- *2 Nephi 1*
- *3 Nephi 22*
- *Omni 1*
- *Enos 1*
- *Jacob 6*

Hank R. Smith notes:

*Since most of these references (any in 1 Nephi-Omni) were translated after Moroni, this is an incredible testament to the truthfulness of the BoM. Joseph Smith would have to remember to use each quotation later in each farewell speech found in the small plates. And after going through all that work making the BoM seem more authentic, Joseph never mentions it?*

- [Hank R. Smith - Book of Mormon Discovery](#)

Why wouldn't Joseph Smith ever mention this if he took the time to compose it?

See:

- [Hank R. Smith - Book of Mormon Discovery](#)

## **Would we expect approximately 1,500 shifts in author or source throughout the Book of Mormon?**

As part of their stylometrics analysis of the Book of Mormon, Wayne A. Larsen and Alvin C. Rencher found that there are approximately 1,500 shifts in author or source throughout the book.

This includes over 100 authors or originators, 22 of which contribute over 1,000 words.

How did Joseph Smith manage to dictate a coherent storyline with so many shifts in author or source? Why didn't the scribes mention him stumbling while dictating such complexity?

See:

- [Wayne A. Larsen and Alvin C. Rencher - Who Wrote the Book of Mormon?](#)

## **How would Joseph Smith not get confused while dictating the Book of Mormon when the storyline started to include flashbacks within flashbacks?**

In Alma 17 we read of Alma's reunion with the sons of Mosiah. The next 10 chapters of the Book of Mormon are a flashback to what happened to each of them (Alma 17:5 to 27:15).

What is particularly impressive is that Alma 20:30 to Alma 21:14 is actually a [flashback within the flashback](#). Alma 20:28-30 tells the story of Ammon rescuing Aaron and others from the land of Middoni. Then Aaron's record of his own preaching, imprisonment, and rescue is laid out in Alma 21:1-17.

How did Joseph Smith manage to dictate this part without getting confused? Why would a first-time author like Joseph make the content so unnecessarily complex?

See:

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Flashback Sequences \(Alma 17-27\)](#)

## **How could Joseph Smith maintain consistency while dictating the Book of Mormon when using multiple calendar systems?**

The Book of Mormon contains three main calendar systems:

- From when Lehi left Jerusalem (over 10 references to specific dates)

- From the reign of the judges (around 170 references to specific dates)
- From when Jesus was born (around 90 references to specific dates)

It also contains other smaller systems:

- From Zeniff's reign (4 references to specific dates)
- From when Ether hid in the cavity of a rock (4 references to specific dates)

Wouldn't it have been much easier for Joseph Smith to have used just one system while dictating? Why make it so unnecessarily complex for himself? Wouldn't we expect him to occasionally slip up and use the wrong calendar system at some point?

See:

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Multiple Calendar Systems](#)

## Would we expect Joseph Smith to maintain a mathematically consistent chronology throughout the Book of Mormon?

As well as using multiple calendar systems, the Book of Mormon is further complicated by the fact that the calendar dates match up with other lengths of time mentioned in the storyline.

[Evidence Central](#) details 11 times that Joseph Smith would have needed to maintain mathematical consistency when working with dates.

1. *Mosiah's age, how long he has reigned, and the time since Lehi left Jerusalem ([Mosiah 6:4](#) and [Mosiah 29:46](#))*
2. *When Ammonihah was destroyed, the reign of the judges, and the time it took to rebuild the city ([Alma 16:1](#) and [Alma 48:8-9](#))*
3. *The length of the sons of Mosiah's mission, and the reign of the judges ([Alma 17:4](#) and [Alma 16:21](#))*
4. *When the sons of Mosiah left on their mission, and the reign of the judges ([Alma 17:6](#) and [Mosiah 29:44](#))*
5. *The reign of the judges, and the time since Lehi left Jerusalem ([3 Nephi 1:1](#), [Mosiah 29:46](#) and [Mosiah 29:44](#))*
6. *The time since Lehi left Jerusalem, the reign of the judges, and the time since Jesus' birth ([3 Nephi 1:1](#), [3 Nephi 1:15](#) and [3 Nephi 2:5-7](#))*
7. *The duration of the conflict against the Gaddianton robbers, and the time since Jesus' birth ([3 Nephi 4:4](#) and [3 Nephi 6:1-2](#))*
8. *The age of Jesus' disciples, and the turn since Jesus' birth ([3 Nephi 10:18](#), [3 Nephi 28:2](#) and [4 Nephi 1:14](#))*
9. *How long Amos kept the records for, and the time since Jesus' birth ([4 Nephi 1:18](#), [20](#) and [21](#))*

10. *Mormon's age, and the time since Jesus' birth* ([4 Nephi 1:48](#) and [Mormon 1:2](#))
11. *The duration of peace, and the time since Jesus' birth* ([Mormon 2:28](#), [Mormon 3:1](#) and [Mormon 3:4](#))

How did Joseph Smith manage to do this while dictating without any notes?

See:

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Mathematically Consistent Chronology](#)

**If Joseph Smith wrote the Book of Mormon himself, why make it so long? Excluding Bible quotes it has 258,000 words (compared to 184,000 words in the New Testament). Why wouldn't Joseph just write a much shorter book and take less chances of being exposed?**

The Book of Mormon is 531 pages, and about one and a half times the size of the New Testament. It is unusually long for a first time author. Why would Joseph as a first time author feel the need to produce such a long book if it was a fraud?

Why would he include so many details about the Near East and Mesoamerica if each one is just one more reason to be exposed? The longer the Book of Mormon, the more chances of being exposed.

In addition to all the details which would need to be factually correct, Joseph would also need to maintain internal consistency. The longer the Book of Mormon, the more chances of being exposed.

If the Book of Mormon was a fraud, Joseph could have made it a lot easier for himself by shortening the book or avoiding so many factual details which could be proved wrong. What reason would Joseph have for needing to produce over a quarter of a million words?

See:

- [Dan Peterson - Book of Mormon's consistency, complexity still amaze](#)

## **If Joseph Smith wrote the Book of Mormon himself, why would he make it so structurally complex?**

In addition to asking why the Book of Mormon is so long we can also question why it is so structurally complex. The Book of Mormon is an abridgment of multiple plates with interwoven commentary from its compiler Mormon. It is not simply a collection of books one after another in chronological order.

In total there are:

- [10 different records which feed into 7 records which feed into 2 records](#)
- 15 books from 36 authors (included or quoted throughout the records)
- 26 named people who passed down and possessed the records which were abridged by Mormon

Compared with the New Testament, the Book of Mormon is much more complex. Why would Joseph take this risk? Why make it more difficult for himself to keep track of all the plates and records mentioned through the book?

It seems odd that if Joseph Smith was creating a fraud and dictating it to a scribe that he would make it so structurally complex. Doesn't this structure sound more like a genuine historical account rather than the work of Joseph Smith? Isn't the structure even more confusing knowing that Joseph likely translated Mosiah first (after the lost 116 pages) and then went back to translate Nephi at the end?

See:

- [The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints - Which Plates Did the Book of Mormon Come From?](#)
- [John Welch - The Structure of the Book of Mormon](#)
- [J. Max Wilson - An Outline of the Textual Structure of The Book of Mormon](#)

## **How could Joseph Smith (while dictating) manage to list a lengthy genealogy in Ether 1 and then discuss each person in reverse order throughout the rest of the book?**

In the first chapter of the Book of Ether in verses 6-32, we read a list of 30 names. This list is the genealogy of Ether to Jared:

*Ether, Coriantor, Moron, Ethem, Ahah, Seth, Shiblom, Com, Coriantum, Amniqaddah, Aaron, Heth, Hearthom, Lib, Kish, Corom, Levi, Kim, Morianton, Riplakish, Shez, Heth, Com, Coriantum, Emer, Omer, Shule, Kib, Orihah, Jared*

What is incredible is that the rest of the Book of Ether gives an account of these same 30 people but in the reverse order. Beginning in chapter 6 verse 14 all the way through to chapter 11 verse 23.

If Joseph Smith dictated the Book of Mormon without referring back to previous content or looking at any notes, how did he manage to do this? Simply reciting a list of 30 names backwards is impressive on its own, but including them into a coherent storyline is quite another.

How could Joseph Smith hold so much information in his memory?

See:

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Ether's Genealogy](#)

## **How would Joseph Smith not make the mistake of saying the priests fasted on the day that Alma was struck dumb?**

In Mosiah 27:22-23 we read about the priests who fasted for Alma after seeing an angel:

*And he caused that the priests should assemble themselves together; and they began to fast, and to pray to the Lord their God that he would open the mouth of Alma, that he might speak, and also that his limbs might receive their strength—that the eyes of the people might be opened to see and know of the goodness and glory of God.*

*And it came to pass after they had fasted and prayed for the space of two days and two nights, the limbs of Alma received their strength, and he stood up and began to speak unto them, bidding them to be of good comfort:*

This scripture explains that the priests fasted for two days and two nights but when Alma the Younger is recounting his conversion story he says in Alma 36:16:

*And now, for three days and for three nights was I racked, even with the pains of a damned soul.*

Why would Joseph say the priests fasted for two days and two nights if Alma was racked with the pains of a damned soul for three?

The answer is given in Helaman 9:10

*And it came to pass that on the morrow the people did assemble themselves together to mourn and to fast, at the burial of the great chief judge who had been slain.*



The fasting did not begin until the day after the chief judge had died, implying the Nephite tradition was to begin the fast the day after.

Wouldn't it have been easy for Joseph Smith to simply say that the priests fasted for three days? How did he remember this added complication?

See:

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Consistency in Alma's Conversion Accounts](#)

### **Where would Joseph Smith find time to maintain a chronological order of events in different parts of the book, such as Mormon's letter to Moroni?**

In addition to the 120 internal consistencies already noted, Moroni 9 includes multiple references of events that took place in Mormon 4-6.

[Evidence Central](#) lists the internal consistencies:

1. *Losses in battle (Mormon 5:3-7 and Moroni 9:2)*
2. *Hardened hearts (Mormon 4:11 and Moroni 9:5)*
3. *Perseverance (Mormon 5:1 and Moroni 9:6)*
4. *Prisoners and the Suffering of Women and Children (Mormon 4:13 and Moroni 9:7)*
5. *Destruction and Desertion (Mormon 4:18 and Moroni 9:22)*
6. *Securing the Records (Mormon 6:6 and Moroni 9:24)*

How could Joseph Smith manage to do this without referring back to what had already been dictated? How would he manage to do this either side of dictating the Book of Ether which lists out 30 people then includes them into the following storyline in reverse order?

See:

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Historical Context for Moroni 9](#)

### **How could Joseph Smith compose the sacrament prayers using the wording Christ used 80 pages previously?**

In Moroni 4-5 we read the sacramental prayers which are introduced as follows:

*The manner of their elders and priests administering the flesh and blood of Christ unto the church; and they administered it according to the commandments of Christ; wherefore we know the manner to be true; and the elder or priest did minister it*

It is impressive that the sacramental prayers are indeed according to the commandments of Christ which were spoken 80 pages previously.

[Evidence Central](#) compares the phrases in the prayers with the similar passages from 3 Nephi (shown in brackets):

- *O God, the Eternal Father, we ask thee in the name of thy Son Jesus Christ (3 Nephi 18:20)*
- *to bless and sanctify this bread (3 Nephi 18:3)*
- *to bless and sanctify this wine (3 Nephi 18:8)*
- *to the souls (3 Nephi 18:29)*
- *of all those who (3 Nephi 18:15)*
- *partake of it (3 Nephi 18:28)*
- *drink of it (3 Nephi 18:18)*
- *that they may eat (3 Nephi 18:3)*
- *that they may do it (3 Nephi 18:11)*
- *in remembrance of the body of thy Son (3 Nephi 18:7)*
- *in remembrance of the blood of thy Son, which was shed for them (3 Nephi 18:11)*
- *that they may witness unto thee, O God, the Eternal Father (3 Nephi 18:10-11)*
- *that they are willing to (3 Nephi 18:10)*
- *take upon them the name of thy Son (3 Nephi 18:5)*
- *and always remember him (3 Nephi 18:7)*
- *and keep his commandments which he hath given them, (3 Nephi 18:14)*
- *that they may always have his Spirit to be with them, Amen. (3 Nephi 18:7)*

John W. Welch comments:

*The close relationship between the words of Jesus in [3 Nephi 18](#) and the basic terms of the sacrament prayers found in [Moroni 4–5](#) is readily apparent. Virtually every component in the two sacrament prayers has a precise counterpart in the express words of Jesus himself.”*

*- [John Welch, “From Presence to Practice,” 124.](#)*

How did Joseph Smith manage to do this? How did he also manage to make the sacrament prayers so [consistent with King Benjamin’s speech](#)?

See:

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Intertextuality of Sacrament Prayers](#)

## **Why would Joseph Smith go to the effort of Nephi covering Lehi's story to compensate for the lost 116 pages?**

Martin Harris lost 116 pages of the Book of Mormon translation in 1828 however the content was largely not lost because Nephi has already made a record of the same time period as instructed in 1 Nephi 19:1-2:

*And it came to pass that the Lord commanded me, wherefore I did make plates of ore that I might engraven upon them the record of my people. And upon the plates which I made I did engraven the record of my father, and also our journeyings in the wilderness, and the prophecies of my father; and also many of mine own prophecies have I engraven upon them.*

*And I knew not at the time when I made them that I should be commanded of the Lord to make these plates; wherefore, the record of my father, and the genealogy of his fathers, and the more part of all our proceedings in the wilderness are engraven upon those first plates of which I have spoken; wherefore, the things which transpired before I made these plates are, of a truth, more particularly made mention upon the first plates.*

Mormon goes on to explain in Words of Mormon 1:7 that he included Nephi's writings for an unknown reason:

*And I do this for a wise purpose; for thus it whispereth me, according to the workings of the Spirit of the Lord which is in me. And now, I do not know all things; but the Lord knoweth all things which are to come; wherefore, he worketh in me to do according to his will.*

Would Joseph Smith really have gone to this trouble to make the Book of Mormon look convincing?

See:

- [Book of Mormon Central - How Does the "Mosiah-First" Translation Sequence Strengthen Faith?](#)

## **How could Joseph Smith manage to create three accounts of Alma's conversion which are consistent with their having been written by a single individual, but in different settings and at different stages of his life?**

In the Book of Mormon, there are multiple accounts of Alma the Younger's visitation of an angel:

1. Mosiah 27
2. Alma 36
3. Alma 38

If Joseph Smith had dictated the Book of Mormon on the fly we would reasonably expect him to either be inconsistent in the different versions of the event, or to use the same memorized language each time. If this was a true account of Alma the Younger then we would reasonably expect the main details to be the same but with slightly different language each time as the event was described to different people at different times.

We see the latter, for example there is greater emphasis on the sons of Mosiah in the account which Mosiah recounts and we also see slightly different wording used to describe the earth shaking:

- *Mosiah 27: which caused the earth to shake upon which they stood”, “which shook the earth”, “shake the earth and cause it to tremble”*
- *Alma 36: “the whole earth did tremble beneath our feet”*
- *Alma 38: “and it shook the whole earth”*

Doesn't this sound like someone describing an actual event? John Welch summarizes this point:

*Despite the fact that Mosiah 27 is separated from the accounts in Alma 36 and 38 by the many words, events, sermons, conflicts and distractions reported in the intervening one hundred pages of printed text, these three accounts still profoundly bear the unmistakable imprints of a single distinctive person, who throughout his adult lifetime had lived with, thought about, matured through, and insightfully taught by means of his powerful and beautiful conversion story.*

*[- John Welch, “Three Accounts of Alma’s Conversion,” 153.](#)*

How did Joseph Smith manage to not only produce an internally consistent book but also put himself in the position of the characters?

See:

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Consistency in Alma’s Conversion Accounts](#)

## How could Joseph Smith include 68 sermons in the Book of Mormon if he had never given a sermon in his life?

Brian C. Hales notes that there are [68 sermons](#) on dozens of topics in the Book of Mormon. Some of these sermons, including that of King Benjamin, are quite long and full of deep spiritual content. Richard Bushman rightly points out that:

*He [Joseph Smith] is not known to have preached a sermon before the Church is organized in 1830. He had no reputation as a preacher.*

*- [Richard L. Bushman, "A Historian's Perspective of Joseph Smith," on Joseph Smith's Relationship with God \(Salt Lake City: Covenant Communications, 2007\), CD2, track 8.](#)*

How could Joseph Smith dictate 68 sermons on the fly if he had never given a sermon before?

See:

- [Brian C. Hales - Joseph Smith as a Book of Mormon Storyteller](#)

## How would Joseph Smith have been able to write Nephi's Psalm?

In 2 Nephi 4:16-35 we read what has been coined as the Psalm of Nephi. It reads in part:

*Behold, my soul delighteth in the things of the Lord; and my heart pondereth continually upon the things which I have seen and heard.*

*Nevertheless, notwithstanding the great goodness of the Lord, in showing me his great and marvelous works, my heart exclaimeth: O wretched man that I am! Yea, my heart sorroweth because of my flesh; my soul grieveth because of mine iniquities.*

It has been found that Nephi's psalm fits one particular type of Old Testament Psalm called an "individual lament" which consists of five parts:

1. *Invocation: 2 Nephi 4:16-17*
2. *Complaint: 2 Nephi 4:17-19*
3. *Confession of Trust: 2 Nephi 4:20-30*
4. *Petition: 2 Nephi 4:31-33*
5. *Vow of Praise: 2 Nephi 4:34-35*

How would Joseph Smith know the Psalms well enough to mimic this type of writing? How did he know to also include the [typical covenant-making language](#)?

See:

- [Book of Mormon Central - Is "Nephi's Psalm" Really a Psalm?](#)

## What experience would Joseph Smith have had with "prophetic lawsuits"?

John W. Welch explains prophetic lawsuits as follows:

*In the study of the Old Testament, form-critical scholars have defined and identified instances of several forms or genres of prophetic speech involving oracles, threats, reproaches, accusations, messenger formulas, and salvation speeches; judgment speeches to Israel, individuals, or other nations; the cry of woe, the legal procedure, the disputation, the parable, the lament, or the prophetic torah. One of these speech forms is generally known to scholars as the "prophetic lawsuit," sometimes referred to as the "judgment speech," the "covenant lawsuit," or the "trial speech."*

*- [John W. Welch - Benjamin's Speech as a Prophetic Lawsuit](#)*

Prophetic lawsuits found in the Bible typically contain four elements:

1. *the calling of witnesses*
2. *the lodging of an accusation*
3. *the consideration of a defense*
4. *the issuance of a judgment*

John W. Welch notes how [the Book of Mormon also contains examples of prophetic lawsuits](#) from King Benjamin and [Samuel the Lamanite](#) including words and phrases such as:

- *Witness*
- *Accuse*
- *Judge*
- *Testimony*
- *Guilt*

How would Joseph Smith know about prophetic lawsuits or know how to create them?

See:

- [John W. Welch - Benjamin's Speech as a Prophetic Lawsuit](#)
- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Benjamin's Prophetic Lawsuit](#)

- [Book of Mormon Central - Why Did Samuel Say the Wealth of Some Nephites Would Become “Slippery”?](#)

## Why would Joseph not include the “without a cause” part of Matthew 5:22?

In the Book of Mormon, Jesus says in Nephi 12:22:

*But I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger of his judgment*

This is slightly different to Matthew 5:22 which says

*But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother **without a cause** shall be in danger of the judgment (emphasis added)*

Why would Joseph Smith not include the “without a cause” part?

Michael R. Ash explains:

*When we examine the earliest Greek copies of the New Testament –documents that were discovered after Joseph Smith had died –we find that the phrase “without a cause” is also generally absent. As Professor John Welch notes, the verse in 3 Nephi discourages all anger whereas the verse in Matthew permits justifiable anger. Some non-LDS scholars believe that “without a cause” was added to Matthew 5:22 during the translation process, while the Book of Mormon more accurately reflects the likely original intention of the passage. The fact that Joseph Smith got it right, when no scholars in his world would have been aware of the later Greek insertion shouldn’t be amazing –but it is*

- [Michael R. Ash - Faith and Reason 20: “Without a Cause”](#)

How would Joseph Smith have found out about the earliest Greek copies of the New Testament?

See:

- [Michael R. Ash - Faith and Reason 20: “Without a Cause”](#)

## Why would the Book of Mormon associate being prideful with being "high" in the air?

In 1 Nephi 8, Lehi describes his vision:

*And I also cast my eyes round about, and behold, on the other side of the river of water, a great and spacious building; and it stood **as it were in the air, high above the earth**. And it was filled with people, both old and young, both male and female, and their manner of dress was exceedingly fine; and they were in the attitude of mocking and pointing their fingers towards those who had come at and were partaking of the fruit. And after they had tasted of the fruit they were ashamed, because of those that were scoffing at them; and they fell away into forbidden paths and were lost (emphasis added)*

Why would Joseph Smith say that the building was high in the air?

Book of Mormon Central explains:

*The pride of Jerusalem was a major concern of Lehi's contemporary prophet, Jeremiah. The Lord said that he would ruin the pride of Judah and Jerusalem because they refused to hearken to his words but chose to "walk in the imaginations of their heart" ([Jeremiah 9–10](#)). Jeremiah pleaded with his people to repent, "before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness" ([Jeremiah 13:15–16](#)). When they refused to hearken to his words, Jeremiah could only weep at the inevitable fall ([Jeremiah 13:17](#)). We are reminded of those who were ashamed by the mockery of those in the strange building and fell away from the tree into forbidden paths and are lost ([1 Nephi 8:28](#)).*

*The word Jeremiah used for pride (ga'ah) is of interest. "All meanings of the root g'h and its various derivatives are grouped around the basic meaning 'to be/become high.'" Sometimes it is used in a positive sense in reference to God, but it is more often used negatively to denote "human pride, arrogance, and presumption." In Lehi's vision, the building "stood as it were in the air, high above the earth"*

*- [Book of Mormon Central - What is the Significance of the Great and Spacious Building?](#)*

How would Joseph Smith know the Hebrew connection between pride and being "high"?  
Where would he have learned that?

See:

- [Book of Mormon Central - What is the Significance of the Great and Spacious Building?](#)



## Would Joseph Smith have noticed the significance of the phrase “this day” from reading the Bible?

John W. Welch, Donald W. Parry, and Stephen D. Ricks have noted how the Book of Mormon uses the phrase “this day” 18 times, most of which are in a formal setting where people are gathered together.

King Benjamin uses the phrase 5 times in his address, such as in Mosiah 2:15

*Yet, my brethren, I have not done these things that I might boast, neither do I tell these things that thereby I might accuse you; but I tell you these things that ye may know that I can answer a clear conscience before God this day.*

This usage of the phrase is consistent with its use in the Bible, especially in its connection to the temple or making covenants.

How would Joseph Smith have noticed this in the Bible if most readers don't notice it after a lifetime of study?

See:

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: “This Day”](#)

## How should we account for what Hugh Nibley thinks is the most convincing evidence yet brought forth for the authenticity of the Book of Mormon (the Year-Rite)?

John W. Welch describes the year rite as follows:

*The ancient Near Eastern year rite festival was an annual event at which the king called his people together, gave an accounting of his actions, placed the people again under obligation to abide by the law, prophesied, acclaimed all men equals, proclaimed them the children of God, and recorded their names in the registry of life. Such elements of the typical ancient year rite are readily discernible in several Book of Mormon assemblies, particularly that of King Benjamin in chapters 2 through 6 of the book of Mosiah.*

*- John W. Welch - [Hugh Nibley and the Book of Mormon](#)*

Of all the Book of Mormon evidences, Hugh Nibley singled out the year rite in Mosiah as the strongest.

*In the writer's opinion,...the most convincing evidence yet brought forth for the authenticity of the Book of Mormon [is the matter of the year-rite]. Very likely the reader will be far from sharing this view, since the force of the evidence is cumulative and is based on extensive comparative studies which cannot be fully presented here. Still the evidence is so good, and can be so thoroughly tested, that we present it here for the benefit of the reader who wishes to pursue the subject further. Since Gressmann, Jeremias, Mowinckel, and many others began their studies at the start of the century, a vast literature on the subject of the Great Assembly at the New Year and the peculiar and complex rites performed on that occasion has been brought forth. Yet nowhere can one find a fuller description of that institution and its rites than in the Book of Mormon. Since "patternism" (as the awareness of a single universal pattern for all ancient year-rites is now being called) is a discovery of the past thirty years, the fact that the now familiar pattern of ritual turns up in a book first published in 1830 is an extremely stimulating one. For it is plain that Mosiah's account of the Great Year Rite among the Nephites is accurate in every detail, as can be checked by other year-rites throughout the world....*

*[- Hugh W. Nibley, An Approach to the Book of Mormon, 3rd edition](#)*

How would Joseph Smith know anything about the year rite or be able to describe it so accurately in every detail?

See:

- [FAIR Latter-day Saints - Year-rite](#)

## **Where would Joseph Smith have learned all about the nature and importance of Jewish oaths?**

In 1 Nephi 4 we see the immediate impact of the oath made with Zoram. Hugh Nibley explains why this is significant:

*What astonishes the western reader is the miraculous effect of Nephi's oath on Zoram, who upon hearing a few conventional words promptly becomes tractable, while as for the brothers, as soon as Zoram "made an oath unto us that he would tarry with us from that time forth . . . our fears did cease concerning him" (1 Nephi 4:35,37).*

*The reactions of both parties make sense when one realizes that the oath is the one thing that is most sacred and inviolable among the desert people and their descendants: "Hardly will an Arab break this oath, even if his life be in jeopardy,"<sup>9</sup> for "there is nothing stronger, and nothing more sacred than the oath among the nomads,"<sup>10</sup> and even the city Arabs, if it be exacted under special conditions. "The*

*taking of an oath is a holy thing with the Bedouins," says one authority. "Wo to him who swears falsely; his social standing will be damaged and his reputation ruined. No one will receive his testimony, even if it is true, and he must also pay a money fine."*

*But not every oath will do. To be most binding and solemn an oath should be by the life of something, even if it be but a blade of grass. The only oath more awful than that "by my life" or (less commonly) "by the life of my head" is the wa hayat Allah, "by the life of God" or "as the Lord liveth," the exact Arabic equivalent of the ancient Hebrew hai Elohim. Today it is glibly employed by the city riffraff, but anciently it was an awful thing, as it still is among the desert people. "I confirmed my answer in the Bedouin wise," says Doughty. "By his life . . . he said, . . . 'Well, swear By the life of Ullah' (God)! . . . I answered . . . and thus even the nomads use, in a greater occasion, but they say, By the life of thee, in a little matter." Among both Arabs and Jews, says Rosenblatt, "an oath without God's name is no oath," while "in both Jewish and Mohammedan sources oaths by 'the life of God' are frequent."*

*So we see that the only way that Nephi could possibly have pacified the struggling Zoram in an instant was to utter the one oath that no man would dream of breaking, the most solemn of all oaths to the Semite: "As the Lord liveth, and as I live" (1 Nephi 4:32).*

*[- Hugh W. Nibley, An Approach to the Book of Mormon, 3rd edition](#)*

How would Joseph Smith know about the importance of this specific type of oath?

See:

- [FAIR Latter-day Saints - Zoram and Oaths](#)

## **Why would Joseph Smith say that Laman and Lemuel beat Nephi and Sam with a rod rather than using their fists?**

In 1 Nephi 3:28 we read:

*And it came to pass that Laman was angry with me, and also with my father; and also was Lemuel, for he hearkened unto the words of Laman. Wherefore Laman and Lemuel did speak many hard words unto us, their younger brothers, and they did smite us even with a rod.*

Why would Laman and Lemuel need a rod to beat their younger brothers?

Latter-day Hope explains:

*When Laman and Lemuel become frustrated with Nephi after their failed attempt to retrieve the brass plates, they yell at Nephi and Sam, and beat them – not with their fists, but with a rod. In ancient near-eastern culture every free man carried a stick as a badge of independence and authority, and they use the stick to assert their authority and superiority over the workman or day-laborers by beating them. This was so common that their underlings are even called ‘stick servants.’ (Nibley, *An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, 1988) Clearly Laman and Lemuel were trying to put Nephi in his place for his disastrous plan which cost them their precious property. But how would Joseph Smith know this cultural tradition, and why would he make such an odd choice when he grew up in the era where fistfights were the main way used to settle disputes?*

*- [Latter-day Hope - Some more archaeological evidences of the Book of Mormon](#)*

Why would Joseph Smith think to add a rod to this part of the storyline? How would he know that Laman and Lemuel would likely carry sticks?

See:

- [Latter-day Hope - Some more archaeological evidences of the Book of Mormon](#)

## **How could Joseph Smith make Nephi’s description of Laban authentic and realistic?**

The Book of Mormon’s description of Laban seems to accurately portray what could be expected of public officials in Jerusalem in Lehi’s time.

Hugh Nibley explains:

*Laban is described very fully, though casually, by Nephi, and is seen to be the very type and model of a well-known class of public official in the Ancient East. Everything about him is authentic....*

*Laban of Jerusalem epitomizes the seamy side of the world of 600 B.C. as well as Lehi or Jeremiah or Solon do the other side. With a few deft and telling touches Nephi resurrects the pompous Laban with photographic perfection—as only one who actually knew the man could have done. We learn in passing that Laban commanded a garrison of fifty, that he met in full ceremonial armor with "the elders of the Jews" for secret consultations by night, that he had control of the treasury, that he was of the old aristocracy, being a distant relative of Lehi himself, that his house was a depository of very old family records, that he was a large man, short-tempered, crafty, and dangerous, and to the bargain cruel, greedy, unscrupulous, weak, vainglorious, and given to drink. All of which makes him a Rabu to the life, the very model of an Oriental Pasha. He is cut from the same cloth*

*as Jaush, his contemporary and probably his successor as "military governor of this whole region, in control of the defenses along the western frontier in Judah, and an intermediary with the authorities of Jerusalem," or as Hoshiah, "apparently the leader of the military company located at some outpost on or near the main road from Jerusalem to the coast," who shows his character in the Lachish Letters to be one of "fawning servility."...*

*Laban's office of headman is a typical Oriental institution: originally it was held by the local representative or delegate of a king, who sent out his trusted friends and relatives to act for him in distant parts of the realm. The responsibilities of such agents were as vague as their powers, and both were as unlimited as the individual chose to make them. The system of ancient empires was continued under the Caliphate, who copied the Persian system in which "the governor, or Sahib, as he was then called, had not only charge of the fiscal administration but also had jurisdiction in civil and penal matters . . . the sovereign power never gave up in full its supreme rights over every part of the body politic; and this right devolved upon his representative," so that in theory the rabi could do anything he wanted to. In the appointment of such a trusted official, character counts for everything—in the end his own honor and integrity are the only checks upon him; but in spite of all precautions in their selection, and as might be expected, "the uprightness of the Cadis depended only too often upon the state of society in which they lived." And the moral fiber of Laban's society was none too good....*

*On the other hand, it must be admitted in all fairness that Laban was a successful man by the standards of his decadent society. He was not an unqualified villain by any means—and that as much as anything makes Nephi's account of him supremely plausible. Laban had risen to the top in a highly competitive system in which the scion of many an old aristocratic family like his own must have aimed at the office which he held and many an intriguing upstart strained every effort to push him from the ladder that all were trying to climb. He was active and patriotic, attending committee meetings at all hours of the night; he was shrewd and quick, promptly recognizing his right and seizing his opportunity to confiscate the property with which Nephi and his brethren attempted to bribe him—a public official. The young men wanted some family records from him; they wanted them very badly but would not tell what they wanted them for. They were willing to pay almost anything to get them. There was obviously something shady about the deal from Laban's point of view. Very well, he could keep his mouth shut, but would it be sound business practice to let the plates go for nothing? With his other qualifications Laban was a big impressive figure of a man—not a man to be intimidated, outsmarted, worn down, or trifled with—he was every inch an executive. Yet he plainly knew how to unbend and get drunk with the boys at night*

*[- Hugh W. Nibley, An Approach to the Book of Mormon, 3rd edition](#)*

How would Joseph Smith with his limited education be able to describe an Ancient East official so realistically like this?

See:

- [Hugh W. Nibley, \*An Approach to the Book of Mormon\*, 3rd edition](#)

## **Why would the Book of Mormon imply that a new bow would be understood as a political statement?**

The story of Nephi breaking his bow is realistic in different ways including the effect it would have on Laman and Lemuel.

William J. Hamblin explains:

*Most readers of the Book of Mormon remember vividly the story in 1 Nephi 16 of the slack and broken bows. The account is interesting and well told. Imbedded in this memorable narrative are several long-overlooked points that only now drive home the fact that Nephi's account is right on target.*

*The symbolic message of the broken bow, first detected by Alan Goff, was highlighted in the March 1984 issue of the F.A.R.M.S. newsletter: "Bows were symbols of political power. One thinks of Odysseus bending the bow to prove himself. An overlord would break the bow of a disobedient vassal to symbolically put the rebel in his place" (see also Jeremiah 49:35; 51:56). That detail is significant in 1 Nephi 16. Nephi's bow broke, and the bows of Laman and Lemuel lost their springs, but when Nephi fashioned a new bow, making him the only one in camp with a bow, his brothers soon accused Nephi of having political ambitions (see 1 Nephi 16:37-38)*

*- [William J. Hamblin, "Nephi's Bows and Arrows," in \*Reexploring the Book of Mormon\*, edited by John W. Welch \(Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1992\), Chapter 11](#)*

Would we expect Joseph Smith to understand the political significance of making a new bow? Where would Joseph have been getting this kind of information from?

See:

- [William J. Hamblin, "Nephi's Bows and Arrows,"](#)

## Where would Joseph Smith have gotten the idea of slippery treasures?

In Helaman 13, Samuel the Lamanite says multiple times that the Nephite treasures would become “slippery”, such as in verse 31:

*And behold, the time cometh that he curseth your riches, that they become slippery, that ye cannot hold them; and in the days of your poverty ye cannot retain them.*

While it may seem odd to a modern audience to describe treasures as being “slippery”, this concept is at home in the ancient world including texts likely known by Israelites.

Kevin Barney comments:

*it seems more than coincidental—yet not surprising—that the concept of slippery, disappearing treasures is found both in an Egyptian text known to the ancient Israelites and in the Book of Mormon, a record with cultural, linguistic, and literary roots in the ancient Near East.*

*- [Kevin L. Barney, “Slippery Treasures’ in the Book of Mormon: A Concept from the Ancient World,” Insights, June 2000, 2.](#)*

How would Joseph Smith know about treasure becoming slippery due to the land being cursed?

See:

- [Book of Mormon Central - Why Did Samuel Say the Wealth of Some Nephites Would Become “Slippery”?](#)

## Why do traditions of "Messiah ben Joseph" show remarkable parallels to Joseph Smith's own life?

Messiah Ben Joseph is an ancient Jewish tradition that there will be a forerunner (from the house of Joseph) to Christ's coming.

The tradition is included in the Talmud, Targumim, Kabbalistic writings and Apocryphal writings. It is remarkable how closely Joseph Smith's life resembles this ancient tradition. Some of the similarities include:

- He would come in the Messianic Age - a time of miracles, works of evil, and great calamities

- He would work to gather the lost tribes - Moses appeared to Joseph Smith and restore the keys of the gathering of Israel
- Elijah would occur during the Messianic Age - Elijah appeared to Joseph Smith at the Kirtland temple
- He would rebuild the temple of Israel and restore its true worship
- He would be a warrior - Joseph was commissioned to the rank of Lieutenant General over the Nauvoo Legion (potentially the second biggest army in America at the time)
- He would be captured and taken prisoner then killed

Related to Messiah Ben Joseph, John Tvedtnes recounted the following story:

*In the late 1970s while teaching with the Brigham Young University Jerusalem program, I was invited to give a series of lectures in Hebrew on the subject of Mormonism at the University of Haifa. In one of the lectures, I displayed a chart outlining Joseph Smith's major accomplishments. I intended to speak about each item on the list and at the end suggest that Joseph Smith fit the qualifications for the Messiah of Joseph expected by the Jews, but that turned out to be unnecessary. By the time I got through the top third of the list, I heard whispering among a group of Orthodox Jewish students in the audience. They were saying 'Messiah Ben Joseph, Messiah, the son of Joseph.'*

- [Latter-day Saints QA - Messiah Ben Joseph – Evidences](#)

Why think these similarities are purely coincidental?

See:

- [Latter-day Saints QA - Messiah Ben Joseph – Evidences](#)
- [Trevan Hatch - Messiah Ben Joseph: Ancient Traditions and Legends of the Prophet Joseph Smith -](#)
- [Joseph Fielding McConkie - Joseph Smith as Found in Ancient Manuscripts](#)

## **Why is the Book of Mormon's claim that Moses was translated backed up by non-biblical Jewish and Samaritan traditions?**

Alma 45:19 claims that Alma was taken up by the Spirit, like Moses:

*Behold, this we know, that he was a righteous man; and the saying went abroad in the church that he was taken up by the Spirit, or buried by the hand of the Lord, even as Moses. But behold, the scriptures saith the Lord took Moses unto himself; and we suppose that he has also received Alma in the spirit, unto himself; therefore, for this cause we know nothing concerning his death and burial.*



Why would Joseph Smith have mentioned that the scriptures said this if it appeared to contradict the Bible?

Some Jewish and Samaritan texts claim that Moses indeed escaped death and was taken up by the Lord. In fact, some biblical scholars argue that [there existed in Judaism two beliefs side by side as to whether Moses died or was taken up by the Lord.](#)

Evidence Central comments:

*This possibility is especially inviting because the tribe of Joseph (divided among Ephraim and Manasseh), shared with the Samaritans a common geographical and cultural heritage in northern Israel, thus providing a channel through which this non-biblical tradition could have been known to both groups.*

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Translation of Moses](#)

Where would Joseph Smith have gotten this idea and why does it fit well with what would likely be on the brass plates?

See:

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Translation of Moses](#)

## **Where would Joseph Smith have read all about the traditions of ancient covenant renewals?**

In Mosiah 1-6 we read of King Benjamin's address. Stephen D. Ricks explains how these chapters contain all the expected elements of the Feast of Tabernacles in which Israelites renewed their covenant with God.

Ricks goes on to say:

*Six elements of covenant renewal can be found in Exodus, Deuteronomy, and Joshua: (1) the king/prophet gives a preamble that introduces God as the one making the covenant or that introduces his prophet as spokesman for God; (2) the king/prophet gives a brief review of God's relations with Israel in the past; (3) the king/prophet notes the terms of the covenant, listing specific commandments and obligations that God expected Israel to keep; (4) the people bear witness in formal statements that they accept the covenant; (5) the king/prophet lists the blessings and curses for obedience or disobedience to the covenant; and (6) the king/prophet makes provisions for depositing a written copy of the covenant in a safe and sacred place and for reading its contents to the people in the future.*

*In addition, the ideal was that the new king take office before the death of the old one, and this transfer of power was connected with the ceremony where the people make or renew their covenant with God. Interestingly, each of these features is found in Mosiah 1–6....*

*- [Stephen D. Ricks, "King, Coronation, and Covenant in Mosiah 1–6," in Rediscovering the Book of Mormon](#)*

What are the odds that King Benjamin's speech would include all the elements of ancient covenant renewal?

See:

- [Stephen D. Ricks, "King, Coronation, and Covenant in Mosiah 1–6," in Rediscovering the Book of Mormon](#)

## **Wouldn't Joseph Smith have probably thought coronations of kings would take place at a palace rather than the temple?**

In Mosiah 1:18 we read:

*And now, it came to pass that Mosiah went and did as his father had commanded him, and proclaimed unto all the people who were in the land of Zarahemla that thereby they might gather themselves together, to go up to the temple to hear the words which his father should speak unto them.*

Stephen D. Ricks notes the significance of the location chosen by King Benjamin:

*A society's most sacred spot is the location where the holy act of royal coronation takes place. For Israel, the temple was that site. So we read that, during his coronation, Joash stood "by a pillar [of the temple], as the manner was" (2 Kings 11:14). However, the temple had not been built when Solomon became king, so he was crowned at Gihon (see 1 Kings 1:45). Gihon was made sacred by the presence of the Ark of the Covenant (which contained the sacred objects from Moses' day) within the special tabernacle that David had made to shelter it. The priest Zadok took "out of the tabernacle" the horn containing oil, from which he anointed Solomon (1 Kings 1:39). In the Nephite case, the temple at Zarahemla was the site chosen for Benjamin's address to the people and for the consecration of his son Mosiah as king (see Mosiah 1:18)*

*- [Stephen D. Ricks, "King, Coronation, and Covenant in Mosiah 1–6," in Rediscovering the Book of Mormon](#)*

How was Joseph Smith able to get all these small details correct?

See:

- [Stephen D. Ricks, "King, Coronation, and Covenant in Mosiah 1–6," in Rediscovering the Book of Mormon](#)

## **Where would Joseph Smith have gotten the idea of shining stones?**

In Ether 3:4, the Brother of Jared asks the Lord to touch the 16 stones to give light:

*And I know, O Lord, that thou hast all power, and can do whatsoever thou wilt for the benefit of man; therefore touch these stones, O Lord, with thy finger, and prepare them that they may shine forth in darkness; and they shall shine forth unto us in the vessels which we have prepared, that we may have light while we shall cross the sea.*

In the narrative it is the Brother of Jared who comes up with the idea of shining stones as a source of light. What are the odds that [Jewish traditions also speak of Noah having shining stones in the Ark to give light?](#)

Where would Joseph Smith have come up with the idea of shining stones to give light in boats?

See:

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Traditions of Shining Stones](#)

## **Would we expect Lehi's poetic couplet to match several features of desert poetry used by the ancient Bedouin of Arabia?**

In 1 Nephi 2:9-10 we read:

*And when my father saw that the waters of the river emptied into the fountain of the Red Sea, he spake unto Laman, saying: O that thou mightest be like unto this river, continually running into the fountain of all righteousness!*

*And he also spake unto Lemuel: O that thou mightest be like unto this valley, firm and steadfast, and immovable in keeping the commandments of the Lord!*

Hugh Nibley comments how this couplet is remarkably similar to ancient Arabian desert poetry which includes the following features:

- *They are ... songs inspired by the sight of water gushing from a spring or running down a valley.*
- *They are addressed to one or (usually) two traveling companions.*
- *They praise the beauty and excellence of the scene, calling it to the attention of the hearer as an object lesson.*
- *The hearer is urged to be like the thing he beholds.*
- *The poems are recited extempore or on the spot and with great feeling.*
- *They are very short, each couplet being a complete poem in itself.*
- *One verse must be followed by its “brother,” making a perfectly matched pair.*

What are the odds that Lehi’s couplet would so closely resemble poetry used by the ancient Bedouin of Arabia?

See:

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Arabian Desert Poetry](#)

## **Wouldn’t Joseph Smith have said the mountains were strong rather than the valley?**

In 1 Nephi 2:10 we read of Lehi speaking to his son Lemuel:

*And he also spake unto Lemuel: O that thou mightest be like unto this valley, firm and steadfast, and immovable in keeping the commandments of the Lord!*

If Joseph Smith had written the Book of Mormon, wouldn’t he have said the mountains were steadfast and immovable rather than the valley? Hugh Nibley rightly asks:

*who ever heard of a steadfast Valley?*

*...It is not the mountain of refuge to which they flee, but the valley of refuge. The great depressions that run for hundreds of miles across the Arabian peninsula pass for the most part through plains devoid of mountains. It is in these ancient riverbeds alone that water, vegetation and animal life are to be found when all else is desolation. They alone offer men and animals escape from their enemies and deliverance from death by hunger and thirst. The qualities of firmness and steadfastness, of reliable protection, refreshment and sure refuge when all else fails, which other nations attribute naturally to mountains, the Arabs attribute to valleys.*

[\*- Hugh Nibley - Nibley, Lehi in the Desert, 92\*](#)

Why does this passage sound like it's written by someone from Arabia rather than America?

See:

- [Michael R. Ash - Challenging Issues, Keeping the Faith: Michael R. Ash: To Arabs, valleys, not mountains, the symbol of permanence](#)

## **If Joseph Smith was copying from the Bible, wouldn't he have said “the city of Jerusalem” rather than the "land of Jerusalem"?**

The Bible never mentions the phrase “the land of Jerusalem” however it appears over 40 times in the Book of Mormon. If Joseph Smith was trying to copy the language of the Bible wouldn't he have called Jerusalem a city?

Michael R. Ash remarks:

*The Bible declares that the Messiah of Israel was to be born in Bethlehem, and the gospel of Matthew records the fulfillment of this prophecy. But the Book of Mormon states ‘...the son of God... shall be born of Mary at Jerusalem, which is the land of our forefathers’.*

*The Tell El Anarima Tablets say the “land of Jerusalem” was an area larger than the city itself. The phrase “land of Jerusalem” is not in the Bible and was not current in Joseph Smith’s day. It is, however, an accurate description for Jerusalem and the surrounding cities and is precisely the language that would have been used by an ancient Israelite in 600 BC.*

*- [Michael R. Ash - Faith and Reason 42: Land of Jerusalem](#)*

Why do the Dead Sea Scrolls and other ancient documents also use this unbiblical phrase? Where would Joseph Smith have learned this?

See:

- [Book of Mormon Central - Why Does the Book of Mormon Talk about a “Land of Jerusalem”?](#)
- [Michael R. Ash - Faith and Reason 42: Land of Jerusalem](#)

## **Is it by chance that there are meaningful similarities between the stone box containing the Nephite relics, and the Israelite Ark of the Covenant?**

Joseph Smith described multiple artifacts in the stone box which Moroni directed him to:

*Arriving at the stone, [Joseph Smith] again lifted it, with the aid of superhuman power, as at first, and secured the first, or uppermost article, this time putting it carefully into the pillow-case, before laying it down. He now attempted to secure the remainder; but just then the same old man appeared, and said to him, that the time had not yet arrived for their exhibition to the world; but that when the proper time came he should have them, and exhibit them with the one he had now secured; .... Joseph ascertained that the remaining articles were a gold hilt and chain, and a gold ball with two pointers. The hilt and chain had once been part of a sword of unusual size; but the blade had rusted away and become useless.*

[- Fayette Lapham, "The Mormons," Historical Magazine 8, no. 5 \(May 1870\): 307:](#)

These artifacts were passed down through the centuries by the Nephites so were of great significance to them, [Evidence Central](#) notes how recent research has shown these artifacts are very similar to what the Israelites passed down through generations in the Ark of the Covenant:

- Stone box / Gold ark
- Gold plates / Stone tablet
- Interpreters / Urim and Thummim
- Breastplate / Breastplate of judgment
- Liahona / Pot of Manna, Aaron's Rod, Brazen Serpent, Urim and Thummim
- Sword of Laban / Sword of Goliath

This would make sense if a group of Israelites branched off and kept similar traditions in the New World. What are the odds that the stone box would include so many similar items to the Ark of the Covenant?

See:

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: The Nephite Ark](#)

## **Why does the Book of Mormon mention veiled references of seers who "saw and heard"?**

After warning the people of false prophets, Jeremiah 23:18 gives a formula for determining true prophets:

*For who hath stood in the counsel of the Lord, and hath perceived and heard his word? who hath marked his word, and heard it?*

[Kevin L. Tolley](#) remarks how the word “perceive” here is better translated from the Hebrew as “seen”. In other words, true prophets see and hear the council of God.

The Book of Mormon writers seemed keen to use the expression of “seeing” and “hearing” in connection with the divine council of God to show they are true prophets. For example, Nephi uses the expression in connection with Lehi’s encounter of God’s council several times such as in 1 Nephi 1:6

*And it came to pass as he prayed unto the Lord, there came a pillar of fire and dwelt upon a rock before him; and he **saw and heard** much; and because of the things which he **saw and heard** he did quake and tremble exceedingly. (emphasis added)*

How would Joseph Smith pick up on Jeremiah’s criteria for true prophets and understand the underlying Hebrew?

See:

- [Kevin L. Tolley - To “See and Hear”](#)

## **Why would Joseph Smith have said Lehi was of the tribe of Joseph if they were scattered by the Assyrians?**

In multiple places in the Book of Mormon, Lehi and his descendants (as well as Laban) claim to be of Joseph and Mannasah. Such as in 1 Nephi 5:14

*And it came to pass that my father, Lehi, also found upon the plates of brass a genealogy of his fathers; wherefore he knew that he was a descendant of Joseph; yea, even that Joseph who was the son of Jacob, who was sold into Egypt, and who was preserved by the hand of the Lord, that he might preserve his father, Jacob, and all his household from perishing with famine.*

If Joseph Smith was knowledgeable about the Bible, wouldn’t he know that the northern kingdom with Joseph’s tribes were scattered by the Assyrians?

Interestingly, [recent research](#) however has shown that some of the tribes of Joseph were refugees in the southern kingdom, including those of high birth.

How would Joseph Smith have known this? If he wrote the Book of Mormon wouldn’t it be more likely that he would say Lehi and his family were from the southern kingdom?

See:

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Descendants of Joseph](#)

## **Why would the Book of Mormon describe baptism as a covenant if New Testament scholarship has only recently brought this to light?**

The Book of Mormon clearly teaches that baptism is to be understood as a covenant. For example in speaking of Jesus' baptism, Nephi says in 2 Nephi 31:7

*Know ye not that he was holy? But notwithstanding he being holy, he showeth unto the children of men that, according to the flesh he humbleth himself before the Father, and witnesseth unto the Father that he would be obedient unto him in keeping his commandments.*

Noel Reynolds remarks:

*Latter-day Saint discourse has long featured and benefited from two different New Testament metaphors in explaining and understanding water baptism. The first is the near universal insight used widely by Christians and pagans alike that washing in water can signify spiritual purification, a washing away of sin or contamination (see Acts 22:15–16, “For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou has seen and heard. And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord”). The second is the more specifically Christian insight of Paul that immersion in water can represent the burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ (see Rom. 6:4, “Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life”). What seems to have gone largely unnoticed in LDS discourse is that discussions of baptism in the Book of Mormon offer instead a third understanding of baptism: that baptism is a witnessing to God of one’s repentance and commitment to follow Jesus Christ*

[- Noel Reynolds - Understanding Christian Baptism through the Book of Mormon](#)

[Recent biblical scholarship](#) has shown that baptism is indeed to be understood as a contract with God or a pledge of faithfulness. Noel Reynolds continues:

*the most thorough and recent historical scholarship identifies very early Christian teachings and practices that strongly suggest their earliest formulation may well have been identical with those found in the Book of Mormon.*

[- Noel Reynolds - Understanding Christian Baptism through the Book of Mormon](#)



Where would Joseph Smith have gotten this idea about baptism if it has only been brought to light recently?

See:

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Baptism as a Covenant](#)

## **Why do other ancient documents support the Book of Mormon's idea that the ancient Joseph prophesied of Moses and Aaron?**

In 2 Nephi 3:10 Lehi recounts a prophecy by Joseph of Egypt. Joseph heard the word of the Lord saying:

*And Moses will I raise up, to deliver thy people out of the land of Egypt.*

Here Lehi claims Joseph knew about the Israelites bondage in Egypt and how they would be delivered by Moses and Aaron, however this is not found in the Bible.

Interestingly John Tvedtnes notes [two second century translations of the Bible in Aramaic which confirm Joseph's prophecy of Moses](#). These documents were not available to Joseph Smith yet they agree with that Book of Mormon.

How would Joseph have known about this?

See:

- [Jeff Lindsay - My Turn: Questions for Anti-Mormons](#)

## **Why would Joseph Smith risk mentioning the building of temples outside of Jerusalem before the discovery of the Jewish community at Elephantine?**

In 2 Nephi 5:16, Nephi builds a temple in the New World:

*And I, Nephi, did build a temple; and I did construct it after the manner of the temple of Solomon save it were not built of so many precious things; for they were not to be found upon the land, wherefore, it could not be built like unto Solomon's temple. But the manner of the construction was like unto the temple of Solomon; and the workmanship thereof was exceedingly fine.*

This is curious because it has traditionally been believed that Jews would not build a temple outside of Jerusalem.

Jeff Lindsay explains why this thinking was wrong:

*In 1925, a group of ancient papyrus documents were discovered on the island of Yeb (also called Elephantine) near the first cataract of the Nile. These documents provided numerous insights into the ancient Jewish community that had thrived there in ancient Egypt. Their history also provides some insight into the Book of Mormon.*

*The Jews at Elephantine built a temple to Yahweh. Through documents discovered in 1925 (the Elephantine Papyri), we can see that they were in contact with the Jews in Jerusalem, and did not seem to be in trouble for having their temple. In fact, after their temple was destroyed by enemies, they made a formal petition to the governor of Judah in 407 B.C. to rebuild the temple, and this petition appears to have been granted, though I understand that they were only to offer plant sacrifices (not animal sacrifices) in the rebuilt temple. An excellent online resource is the "Petition to Authorize Elephantine Temple Reconstruction" from K. C. Hanson's Collection of West Semitic Documents, available at [www.kchanson.com/ANCDOCS/westsem/templeauth.html](http://www.kchanson.com/ANCDOCS/westsem/templeauth.html), which shows the transliterated Aramaic as well as the English translation. (See also "A Passover Letter" from the Jewish official Hananiah at Jerusalem addressed to Yedaniah and the Judahite garrison at Yeb (Elephantine), giving some directions for practicing Passover, and provides no hint of concern about the existence of a Jewish temple at Elephantine.)*

*- [Jeff Lindsay - Lessons from the Elephantine Papyri Regarding Book of Mormon Names and Nephi's Temple](#)*

What are the odds that Joseph Smith would go against traditional thinking and be correct?

See:

- [Jeff Lindsay - Lessons from the Elephantine Papyri Regarding Book of Mormon Names and Nephi's Temple](#)

## **Why would Joseph Smith take a chance on saying John the apostle didn't die?**

The Book of Mormon claims that John the apostle didn't die, but instead remained on earth. 3 Nephi 28:6-7 reads:

*And he said unto them: Behold, I know your thoughts, and ye have desired the thing which John, my beloved, who was with me in my ministry, before that I was lifted up by the Jews, desired of me.*

*Therefore, more blessed are ye, for ye shall never taste of death; but ye shall live to behold all the doings of the Father unto the children of men, even until all things shall be fulfilled according to the will of the Father, when I shall come in my glory with the powers of heaven.*

The traditional understanding is that John died around 100 AD, however some early Christian documents claim, like the Book of Mormon, that John never died. One example is the Discourse on the Abbaton (not translated into English until the 20th century) which says:

*And as for thee, O My Beloved John, thou shalt not die until the thrones have been prepared on the Day of Resurrection, because the thrones of glory shall come down from heaven, and ye shall sit upon them, and I will sit in your midst. All the saints shall see the honour which I will pay unto thee, O My beloved John. I will command Abbaton, the Angel of Death, to come unto thee on that day, and he shall not be in any form that will terrify thee, but he shall come unto thee in the form of a gentle man, with a face like unto that of Michael, and he shall take away thy soul and bring it unto Me. Thy body shall not be in the tomb for ever, neither shall the earth rest upon it forever. All the saints shall marvel at thee because thou shalt not be judged until thou judgest them. Thou shalt be dead for three and a half hours, lying upon thy throne, and all creation shall see thee. I will make thy soul to return to thy body, and thou shalt rise up and array thyself in apparel of glory, like unto that of one who hath stood up in the marriage chamber.*

[- E. A. Wallis Budge, ed., Coptic Martyrdoms in the Dialect of Upper Egypt \(London: Oxford University Press, 1914\), 492–493.](#)

Where would Joseph Smith have gotten this idea from, and why do early Christian documents provide support?

See:

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: John's Translation](#)

## **Why would the name Sidon appear in the Book of Mormon, but not Tyre?**

The Book of Mormon seems to be quite aware of Near Eastern culture and politics. Hugh Nibley explains one aspect which Joseph Smith would not likely have known:

*Now it is significant that whereas the name of Sidon enjoys great popularity in the Book of Mormon, in both its Egyptian (Giddonah) and Hebrew forms, the name of Tyre never appears in the book. That is actually as it should be, for in Lehi's day there was bitter rivalry between the two, and to support the one was to oppose the other. The upstart nobility that were running and ruining things at the court of Zedekiah were putting their money on Tyre, so to speak, and when Nebuchadnezzar came west on the fatal expedition that resulted in the destruction of Jerusalem, one of his main objectives, if not the main one, was to knock out Tyre. Up until quite recently it was believed that his thirteen-year siege of the city on the rock was unsuccessful, but now it is known for sure that Tyre was actually taken and destroyed, upon which Sidon enjoyed a brief revival of supremacy. Now Lehi shared the position of Jeremiah (1 Nephi 7:14), who was opposed to the policy of the court in supporting Egypt against Babylon; that meant that he was anti-Tyre and pro-Sidon.*

- [Hugh W. Nibley, \*An Approach to the Book of Mormon\*, 3rd edition](#)

How would Joseph Smith have guessed any of this? Why does the name Sidon appear in the Book of Mormon but not Tyre?

See:

- [Hugh W. Nibley, \*An Approach to the Book of Mormon\*, 3rd edition](#)

## **What are the odds that the symbol of the tree of life is supported by many other evidences from other ancient Near Eastern cultures, including Mesopotamia and Egypt?**

In 1 Nephi 8 we read of Lehi's dream including the tree of life. Stephen D. Ricks explains why this is significant:

*Given the Semitic background of the Book of Mormon, it is not surprising that an ancient Near Eastern symbol such as the tree of life should appear in the Book of Mormon and be supported by many other evidences from other ancient Near Eastern cultures, including Mesopotamia and Egypt. The tree of life is first mentioned in the account of Lehi's dream, where Lehi states that "it came to pass that I beheld a tree, whose fruit was desirable to make one happy" (1 Nephi 8:10). In Nephi's similar vision the tree of life is associated with the waters of life: "And it came to pass that I beheld that the rod of iron . . . led to the fountain of living waters, or to the tree of life; which waters are a representation of the love of God" (1 Nephi 11:25).<sup>10</sup>*

*Though not expressly named as such, the Semitic kiskanu-tree (like the Sumerian gis-kin) of Mesopotamia "is identical with the tree of Life." As in the Book of*

*Mormon, this tree of life is closely linked to the waters of life, since "the tree of Life constantly needs the Water of Life near which it is growing in the garden of paradise." This is also reminiscent of an ancient Jewish tradition that "the tree of life is planted near the source of the water of life."*

*The ancient Mesopotamian legend of the hero Gilgamesh gives further insight into the "plant of Life" that, according to Geo Widengren, is like the "tree of Life." In the legend, Gilgamesh, exhausted from his search for the very aged Utnapishtim, who lived on an island at the edge of the world, is taken by Utnapishtim "to the washing place" in order to "wash off his grime in water clean as snow." Gilgamesh is then clothed in "a cloak to clothe his nakedness" with a band placed on his head. Utnapishtim later tells him where to get the "plant of Life." Gilgamesh does find the plant, but it is spirited away by a snake, thereby allowing the snake to shed its skin periodically but causing Gilgamesh to fail in his quest.*

*The tree of life and its connection with the waters of life also occur in ancient Egyptian religion and literature: "From the age of the Pyramid texts the word ht n ankh, 'Tree of Life,' appears." There is a miniature statue of Rameses II stretched out on the leaves of the ished (i.e., perseu) tree, the Egyptian tree of life. The inscription on the statue indicates that Rameses' name was written on the leaves of the ished tree, which served as a kind of book of life or book of remembrance. The sacred tree and water are found together in many Egyptian temple complexes.*

*[- Stephen D. Ricks, "Converging Paths: Language and Cultural Notes on the Ancient Near Eastern Background of the Book of Mormon," in Echoes and Evidences of the Book of Mormon](#)*

Where would Joseph Smith be reading about all these ancient traditions such as the tree of life?

See:

- [Stephen D. Ricks, "Converging Paths: Language and Cultural Notes on the Ancient Near Eastern Background of the Book of Mormon,"](#)

## **Was Laban's "fifty" just a random number?**

In 1 Nephi 3:31 we read:

*And after the angel had departed, Laman and Lemuel again began to murmur, saying: How is it possible that the Lord will deliver Laban into our hands? Behold, he is a mighty man, and he can command fifty, yea, even he can slay fifty; then why not us?*

Did Laman really have exactly 50 men? Michael R. Ash explains the significance of this number:

*To modern readers this sounds like a small army indeed, but to those of the ancient Near East, the size of Laban's garrison fits neatly into Old World customs. According to Dr. Hugh Nibley, a permanent garrison in a big city of Lehi's day consisted of thirty to eighty men. In a recently discovered letter of Nebuchadnezzar (a contemporary of Lehi,) the king speaks of a garrison of "fifty". In Babylonia, a platoon in the army consisted of fifty men. This permanent unit was always called a "fifty" just as Nephi spoke of "Laban with his fifty".*

- [Michael R. Ash - Faith and Reason 22: Laban and his "Fifty"](#)

How would Joseph Smith know about garrisons of fifty? Where would he get this number from?

See:

- [Michael R. Ash - Faith and Reason 22: Laban and his "Fifty"](#)

## **Why think it is just a coincidence that Moroni delivered the plates to Joseph Smith during the Feast of Trumpets?**

The angel Moroni first appeared to Joseph Smith on September 21st 1823. The next day (September 22nd) Joseph went to the place where the plates were buried and was instructed to return to the same place every year on the same day until September 22nd 1827 when he was able to finally get the plates.

These dates seem to be of significance:

- September 21st 1823 - Feast of the Tabernacles
- September 22nd 1824 - Eve of Jewish New Year
- September 22nd 1825 - Day of Atonement
- September 22nd 1827 - Feast of the Trumpets

Of particular note is September 22nd 1827, the day Joseph finally received the plates, which fell on the same day as the Feast of the Trumpets.

Lenet Hadley Read comments that:

*Latter-day Saints can find it especially instructive to study some of the meanings Jewish scholars have attributed to the Feast of Trumpets. It signifies (1) the beginning of Israel's final harvest, (2) the day God had set to remember His ancient*

*promises to regather Israel, (3) a time for new revelation that would lead to a new covenant with Israel, and (4) a time to prepare for the Millennium.*

- [Lenet Hadley Read - The Golden Plates and the Feast of Trumpets](#)

Read concludes:

*Was the coming forth of the Book of Mormon on the Feast of Trumpets coincidental? Latter-day Saints who know about these events do not think so. Scriptural and prophetic truth is often manifest through fulfillment. The golden plates were delivered to the young Prophet Joseph Smith early in the morning of 22 September 1827. The Feast of Trumpets, with prayers pleading for God's remembrance of his still-exiled people, had begun at sundown the previous evening. The services continued that morning, with a worldwide sounding of the ram's horn. Unbeknown to Judah, all that those horns represented was now to be fulfilled. For on that day, God remembered His people and set in motion His plan to regather them. On that day, God's final harvest began. On that day, new revelation was granted which would bring a return to renewed covenants. From that day onward, Israel would be called to repentance in preparation for Christ's return and reign. The Book of Mormon exists to serve these ends. Today, Moroni's image trumpets from temple spires around the world a final call to awaken, repent, and prepare.*

- [Lenet Hadley Read - The Golden Plates and the Feast of Trumpets](#)

Of all the days in the calendar, why was the day Joseph received the plates of special significance?

See:

- [Lenet Hadley Read - The Golden Plates and the Feast of Trumpets](#)
- [Book of Mormon Central - Why Did Moroni Deliver the Plates on September 22?](#)

## **Is it a coincidence that the Nephite interpreters are so similar to the Urim and Thummim?**

Joseph Smith said that he interpreted (at least part of) the Book of Mormon using [two transparent stones set in the rim of a bow fastened to a breastplate](#). These artifacts were buried with the gold plates.

Joseph's description is similar to that found in Exodus 28:30 which says:

*And thou shalt put **in the breastplate** of judgment the Urim and the Thummim; and they shall be upon Aaron's heart, when he goeth in before the Lord: and Aaron*

*shall bear the judgment of the children of Israel upon his heart before the Lord continually. (emphasis added)*

The Urim and Thummim in the Bible were also associated with light and used as a means of receiving divine messages.

How many readers of the Bible know the Urim and Thunmin are put “in” the breastplate? Was Joseph Smith so familiar with the Bible that he would (and could) create something so fitting for translation?

See:

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Similarities between the Nephite Interpreters and the Urim and Thummim](#)

## **If Joseph Smith wrote the Book of Mormon, wouldn't we expect his use of the brazen serpent symbol to be stagnant?**

The story of Moses and the brazen serpent appears multiple times in the Book of Mormon and is also alluded to throughout the text.

Neal Rappleye notes how the story is told in different ways for different purposes. For example, Nephi's first telling of the story emphasizes those whose did not look on the serpent (in reaction to Laman and Lemuel's rebelliousness), whereas Nephi's second telling of the story emphasizes how the serpent symbolized Jesus Christ (when teaching “proving unto my people the truth of the coming of Christ”).

The brazen serpent is also mentioned in the Book of Mormon alongside Near Eastern serpent symbolism such as:

- *Raising up*
- *Healing*
- *Life, immortality and resurrection*
- *Salvation*
- *Messiah (Kingship)*
- *Divine messenger and dispenser of justice*
- *One of the heavenly hosts/sons of God*
- *Battle standards*

Rappleye summarizes:

*As illustrated by the various references made throughout this paper, when later Nephite writers mentioned the brazen serpent narrative, in each instance, they generally interpret it along the same lines Nephi did, specifically using same*



*name-titles (Messiah, Son of God) and talking about qualities and attributes of Christ (atonement, eternal life, rising from the dead, resurrection, judgment) that relate to ancient Near Eastern serpent symbolism. In many cases, these are features that are specifically associated with the seraph-serpent in pre-exilic Israelite texts (i.e., Numbers 21:4–9; Isaiah 6; 14:28) and iconography. Thus, with his two retellings of the brazen serpent narrative, Nephi evidently established a standard interpretation of the story that other Nephite writers adopted with minimal change. It should be noted, however, that there are some key developments in how the story is used and interpreted within the text. They are modest, even subtle, developments that make sense as natural outgrowths of how Nephi used the story. Similar innovations of interpretation show up in the ancient Judeo-Christian tradition, and do so in response to similar circumstances and pressures. Thus, the Book of Mormon authentically reflects a living interpretative tradition.*

*- [Neal Rappleye - Serpents of Fire and Brass: A Contextual Study of the Brazen Serpent Tradition in the Book of Mormon](#)*

How would Joseph Smith have understood the brazen serpent story so well and be aware of so much Near Eastern symbolism like this?

See:

- [Neal Rappleye - Serpents of Fire and Brass: A Contextual Study of the Brazen Serpent Tradition in the Book of Mormon](#)

## **If Joseph Smith wrote the Book of Mormon, wouldn't we expect prayers before eating, rather than after?**

Deuteronomy 8:10 instructs the Israelites to give thanks after eating:

*When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the Lord thy God for the good land which he hath given thee.*

Whereas traditional Christians offer prayers before eating, the Book of Mormon contains multiple examples of prayers given after eating in line with Deuteronomy, such as in:

- [Alma 8:21–22](#)
- [3 Nephi 18:9–10](#)
- [3 Nephi 19:24–25](#)
- [3 Nephi 20:9](#)

Wouldn't Joseph Smith have likely included prayers and blessings before food was eaten? How did he remember a scripture from Deuteronomy while dictating the Book of Mormon?

See:

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Blessing Food after Being Filled](#)

## **How could Joseph Smith get the types of ancient Israelite sacrifice and offerings correct?**

The story of Lehi and his family arriving in the wilderness is followed by an account of them creating an altar and making an offering in 1 Nephi 2:7:

*And it came to pass that he built an altar of stones, and made an offering unto the Lord, and gave thanks unto the Lord our God.*

This is perfectly inline with Leviticus 31:1-17 which describes an offering of thanksgiving.

On two later occasions the Book of Mormon says that Lehi offered both sacrifice and burnt offerings:

1 Nephi 5:9

*And it came to pass that they did rejoice exceedingly, and did offer sacrifice and burnt offerings unto the Lord; and they gave thanks unto the God of Israel.*

1 Nephi 7:22

*And it came to pass that we did come down unto the tent of our father. And after I and my brethren and all the house of Ishmael had come down unto the tent of my father, they did give thanks unto the Lord their God; and they did offer sacrifice and burnt offerings unto him.*

These descriptions are perfectly inline with the sacrifice for sins in Leviticus 1:1-16 which is entirely appropriate after Laman and Lemuel attempt to kill Nephi on both occasions they return to Jerusalem.

How would Joseph Smith know the difference between sacrifice and offerings? How did he even get the order of the two correct?

See:

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Lehi's Sacrifices and Burnt Offerings](#)

## Wouldn't Joseph Smith have probably avoided likening Christ to a serpent?

It is likely that Joseph Smith (and most Christians) would associate the symbol of a serpent with the devil, as per the story of Adam and Eve in Genesis. However the symbol of a serpent [was a dual symbol in the ancient world](#) which could represent the devil or deity.

In the Book of Mormon, the symbol of the serpent is used both positively and negatively. It is portrayed positively as Christ in Helaman 8:14-15:

*Yea, did he not bear record that the Son of God should come? And as he lifted up the brazen serpent in the wilderness, even so shall he be lifted up who should come. And **as many as should look upon that serpent should live**, even so **as many as should look upon the Son of God with faith, having a contrite spirit, might live**, even unto that life which is eternal. (emphasis added)*

And portrayed negatively as the devil in 2 Nephi 2:17-18:

*And I, Lehi, according to the things which I have read, must needs suppose that an angel of God, according to that which is written had fallen from heaven; wherefore, he became a devil, having sought that which was evil before God. And because he had fallen from heaven, and had become miserable forever, he sought also the misery of all mankind. Wherefore, he said unto Eve, yea, **even that old serpent, who is the devil**, who is the father of all lies, wherefore he said: Partake of the forbidden fruit, and ye shall not die, but ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil. (emphasis added)*

Why would Joseph Smith compare Christ to a serpent? How did Joseph know about this dual symbolism?

See:

- [Andrew C. Skinner - Serpent Symbols and Salvation in the Ancient Near East and the Book of Mormon](#)
- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Positive Serpent Symbolism](#)

## What would Joseph Smith have known about the likely difference between men's and women's rights in the Book of Mormon?

In the book of Alma we read of Alma and Amulek preaching to the people of Ammonihah. Alma 14:7 tells the fate of Zeezrom and the other men who believed their words:

*And they spit upon him, and cast him out from among them, and also all those who believed in the words which had been spoken by Alma and Amulek; and they cast them out, and sent men to cast stones at them.*

We know that these men were not stoned to death as they are cast out of Ammonihah in the next chapter. However the women and children who believed their words are cast into the fire:

*And they brought their wives and children together, and whosoever believed or had been taught to believe in the word of God they caused that they should be cast into the fire; and they also brought forth their records which contained the holy scriptures, and cast them into the fire also, that they might be burned and destroyed by fire.*

Why the difference between the two groups? Why were the men stoned then cast out whereas the women and children were destroyed by fire?

John Welch explains how women in biblical times did not have the same rights as men:

*Under that law, however, the women, children, or property of these banished men were even less protected. The law was primarily concerned with the conduct of men: “If a man murdereth . . .,” the law read (Alma 34:11; emphasis added). While women and children were highly valued in biblical society, their status was secondary in Israelite law. Women, for example, could not generally serve as witnesses or inherit property equally with their brothers, and their civil rights were in many ways dependant upon the status and situation of their men. Obviously, in Ammonihah the women and children who believed or had been taught to believe in Alma’s doctrines were not given the protections of the law of Mosiah ensuring them the freedom of belief. In what must be seen as another perversion of the intent of the law by the men in Ammonihah, the law as it was applied in that city apparently granted no rights to women and children in this regard. They were taken and, along with the men’s books, were burned (14:8).*

*Because women in biblical societies had great potential to teach and influence religious beliefs in the home (e.g., the concerns expressed about marrying women outside the tribes of Israel in Exodus 34:16 and Deuteronomy 7:4), perhaps the people of Ammonihah saw total destruction of the women as the most sure method of guaranteeing that the teachings of Alma and Amulek would not be perpetuated in the community. With the men already expelled from the city, perhaps the people were concerned that, should these women marry again, or should they be allowed to remain and to raise their children to believe in the words of Alma and Amulek, they would—like the wives of Solomon—turn away the hearts of the people “after other gods” (1 Kings 11:4) or walk in ways not favored by the Ammonihahites.*

- [\*John W. Welch - The Trial of Alma and Amulek\*](#)

Where would Joseph Smith have learned about this?

See:

- [John W. Welch - The Trial of Alma and Amulek](#)
- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Alma and Amulek's Trial](#)

## **If Joseph Smith wrote the Book of Mormon himself would we expect to see in 1 Nephi two authentically preexilic religious symbols (Asherah and Wisdom)?**

In 1 Nephi 11:11, Nephi asks the Spirit to know the interpretation of the tree of life. In response, the Spirit shows Nephi a vision of the virgin Mary (verses 12-20) and asks: “Knowest thou the meaning of the tree which thy father saw?” Rather oddly, Nephi answers yes, however no mention of the tree was given at all in verses 12-20.

Daniel C. Peterson asks:

*Why would Nephi see a connection between a tree and the virginal mother of a divine child? His vision seems to reflect a meaning of the "sacred tree" that is unique to the ancient Near East and, in Israelite history, specifically to the period before the Babylonian captivity — Nephi's era. This can only be fully appreciated when the ancient Canaanite and Israelite associations of that tree are borne in mind.*

*Recent scholarship, including archaeological finds, has demonstrated that the goddess Asherah, worshipped among Israel's Canaanite neighbors as the wife of the supreme god, El, was also revered by many Israelites as the consort of El(ohim) and the (in some accounts, virginal) mother of his children. She was symbolized by a tree, and, in fact, a representation of such a tree stood within the temple at Jerusalem during the time of Lehi.*

*An early Hebrew like Nephi, however, would immediately have understood the representation, by a tree, of a virginal mother of a divine son.*

*- [Daniel Peterson - How Nephi understood the Tree of Life \(and why the Book of Mormon is an ancient record\)](#)*

Peterson concludes:

*The inclusion in 1 Nephi of an authentically pre-exilic religious symbol that could scarcely have been derived by a New York farm boy from his Bible strongly suggests that the Book of Mormon is, indeed, an ancient historical record in the Semitic tradition.*

- [Daniel Peterson - How Nephi understood the Tree of Life \(and why the Book of Mormon is an ancient record\)](#)

Where would Joseph Smith have gotten this information? How likely is it that Joseph would have heard about Asherah?

See:

- [Daniel C. Peterson - Nephi and His Asherah](#)

### **Why does the Book of Mormon describe the ferocious Gaddianton robbers as wearing lamb-skin? Would we expect this rich symbolism if Joseph Smith wrote the book himself?**

The words “lamb” and “sheep” [appear over 100 times in the Book of Mormon](#) most often in a religious sense, as in the “Lamb of God”.

One example is that of the Gaddianton robbers wearing lamb skin in 3 Nephi 4:7:

*And it came to pass that they did come up to battle; and it was in the sixth month; and behold, great and terrible was the day that they did come up to battle; and they were girded about after the manner of robbers; and they had a lamb-skin about their loins, and they were dyed in blood, and their heads were shorn, and they had head-plates upon them; and great and terrible was the appearance of the armies of Giddianhi, because of their armor, and because of their being dyed in blood.*

Why would Joseph Smith say that the ferocious Gaddianton robbers wore lamb skin dyed in blood? Why would he say that wearing this was so terrifying to the Nephites? There appears to be some rich symbolism here that sacrificial lambs were part of the Nephite observation of the Law of Moses and clearly an important part of Nephite worship.

How do we account for this kind of symbolism from Joseph? If he wrote the book himself, wouldn't he have been more likely to use a ferocious animal rather than a lamb?

See:

- [Book of Mormon Central - Why Did the Gadianton Robbers Wear a Lamb Skin?](#)

## Why is the Near Eastern custom of chopping down the tree after a hanging in the Book of Mormon?

3 Nephi 4:28 reads:

*And their leader, Zemnarihah, was taken and hanged upon a tree, yea, even upon the top thereof until he was dead. And when they had hanged him until he was dead they did fell the tree to the earth,*

Why would Joseph Smith say that the tree used for hanging was then cut down? Michael R. Ash explains:

*We now know that such actions have an ancient Near Eastern precedence: “Israelite practice required that the tree upon which the culprit was hung be buried with the body. Hence the tree had to be chopped down. Since the rabbis understood that this burial should take place immediately, the Talmud recommends hanging the culprit on a pre-cut tree or post so that, in the words of Maimonides, ‘no felling is needed’”.*

*- [Michael R. Ash - Faith and Reason 36: Chopping Down The Execution Tree](#)*

How would Joseph have known about this Israelite practice?

See:

- [Michael R. Ash - Faith and Reason 36: Chopping Down The Execution Tree](#)

## Why think it is a coincidence that ancient Near Eastern traditions (not found in the Bible) agree with the Book of Mormon that a remnant of Joseph’s coat survived?

Alma 46:24 mentions that part of Joseph’s coat survived:

*Yea, let us preserve our liberty as a remnant of Joseph; yea, let us remember the words of Jacob, before his death, for behold, he saw that a part of the remnant of the coat of Joseph was preserved and had not decayed. And he said—Even as this remnant of garment of my son hath been preserved, so shall a remnant of the seed of my son be preserved by the hand of God, and be taken unto himself, while the remainder of the seed of Joseph shall perish, even as the remnant of his garment.*

This is intriguing because it is not found in the Bible but is found in [non-Biblical documents such as the Syriac History of Joseph and the Jewish Book of Jasher](#). These documents were

not translated into English until after the publication of the Book of Mormon so where would Joseph Smith get this idea from?

See:

- [Michael R. Ash - Faith and Reason 37: The Rent Garment II](#)
- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Traditions about Joseph's Garment](#)

## How could Joseph Smith subtly use white/light so consistently and in line with ancient tradition?

There are multiple instances in the Book of Mormon where the fruit of the tree of life is referred to as being “white” or “light”. For example in 1 Nephi 8:11:

*And it came to pass that I did go forth and partake of the fruit thereof; and I beheld that it was most sweet, above all that I ever before tasted. Yea, and I beheld that the fruit thereof was white, to exceed all the whiteness that I had ever seen.*

Similarly, Alma speaks of eating the seed which is “light” in Alma 32:35, 42:

*O then, is not this real? I say unto you, Yea, because it is light; and whatsoever is light, is good, because it is discernible, therefore ye must know that it is good; and now behold, after ye have tasted this light is your knowledge perfect?*

*And because of your diligence and your faith and your patience with the word in nourishing it, that it may take root in you, behold, by and by ye shall pluck the fruit thereof, which is most precious, which is sweet above all that is sweet, and which is white above all that is white, yea, and pure above all that is pure; and ye shall feast upon this fruit even until ye are filled, that ye hunger not, neither shall ye thirst.*

This is noteworthy because the association between the tree of life and the white/light fruit is anciently attested. Zofja Ameisenowa and W. F. Mainland comment that:

*It must be noted that in almost all mythologies the Tree of Life is associated with light because the whole of organic life is dependent upon the light of the sun.*

*[- Zofja Ameisenowa and W. F. Mainland, “The Tree of Life in Jewish Iconography,” Journal of the Warburg Institute 2, no. 4 \(1939\), 335.](#)*

If Joseph Smith had made up the story of the tree of life, why would he say the fruit was white?

See:



- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: White/Light Fruit](#)

## Wouldn't Joseph Smith have avoided saying Nephi was a Jew?

In the Book of Mormon Nephi refers to himself as a Jew, such as in 2 Nephi 33:8:

*I have charity for the Jew—I say Jew, because I mean them from whence I came.*

Why would Nephi consider himself a “Jew” if he was of the tribe of Manasseh?

Book of Mormon Central explains:

*The word Jew can be traced to the Hebrew word Yehudi and, contrary to the previously mentioned assumption, was actually used during Pre-exilic times. It was originally applied to members of the tribe of Judah, but after the division of Solomon’s Kingdom (into the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah), the term Jew was applied more generally “to all residents of the Southern Kingdom, irrespective of their tribal status.” The term is used in this political sense by the historian of the book of Kings (2 Kings 16:6; 25:25).*

[- Book of Mormon Central - Was Nephi Really A Jew?](#)

How did Joseph Smith know that Nephi would consider himself a Jew politically?

See:

- [FAIR Latter-day Saints - Jews in the New World](#)
- [Book of Mormon Central - Was Nephi Really A Jew?](#)

## Why is the Book of Mormon using ancient calendrical patterns?

Several passages in the Book of Mormon appear to follow the pattern of Mayan texts which present historical data using the date, details, distance markers, and parentage or family.

[Evidence Central](#) lists 8 instances of this in the Book of Mormon including Alma 63:10-16:

- *Date: And it came to pass **in the thirty and ninth year of the reign of the judges***
- *Details: **Shiblon died also, and Corianton had gone forth to the land northward** in a ship, to carry forth provisions unto the people who had gone forth into that land.*

- *Distance markers: And it came to pass also **in this year** that there were some dissenters who had gone forth unto the Lamanites; and they were stirred up again to anger against the Nephites.*
- *Parentage or family: And thus ended the account of **Alma, and Helaman his son, and also Shiblon, who was his son.***

Why would Joseph Smith include parentage or family details in these contexts? How would Joseph Smith know to present historical data this way?

See:

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Calendrical Pattern](#)

## **Why does King Benjamin's speech in the Book of Mormon contain nearly all the elements of ancient farewell addresses?**

Scholar William S. Kurz (who is not a Latter-day Saint) [examined 22 ancient farewell speeches](#) from Greco Roman antiquity and the Bible, and identified 20 common elements. No speech examined had all 20 elements but King Benjamin's speech in the Book of Mormon contains 16-18 of them. This is impressive as no other ancient farewell speech examined was found to have a greater number than this.

The 20 elements [Kurz identified](#) were:

1. *The summons.*
2. *The speaker's own mission or example.*
3. *Innocence and discharge of duty.*
4. *Impending death.*
5. *Exhortation.*
6. *Warnings and injunctions.*
7. *Blessings.*
8. *Farewell gestures.*
9. *Tasks for successors.*
10. *Theological review of history.*
11. *Revelation of the future.*
12. *Promises.*
13. *Appointment or reference to a successor.*
14. *Bewailing the loss.*
15. *Future degeneration.*
16. *Covenant renewal and sacrifices.*
17. *Providing for those who will survive.*
18. *Consolation to the inner circle.*
19. *Didactic speech.*
20. *Ars moriendi or the approach to death.*

Not only does King Benjamin's speech contain 16-18 but it also contains the [four elements which are fundamentally characteristic of addresses in the Old Testament](#). The Book of Mormon also contains other farewell speeches given by Lehi, Nephi, Jacob, Enos, Mosiah, Mormon and Moroni, each of them contain over half of the 20 elements of farewell speeches named above.

What would Joseph Smith have known about ancient farewell speeches? How did he also manage to include chiasms, patterns from ancient Jewish festivals, ancient patterns of assembly and atonement symbolism all in King Benjamin's address?

See:

- [John W. Welch and Stephen D. Ricks - King Benjamin's Speech: "That Ye May Learn Wisdom"](#)
- [Jeff Lindsay - King Benjamin's Farewell Address: An Ancient Semitic Discourse](#)

## **How do we explain Joseph Smith's use of primordial monsters in Jacob's personification of death and hell?**

Latter-day Saint scholars David E. Bokovoy and John A. Tvedtnes [have discussed](#) how the Book of Mormon contains ties with ancient Near East traditions of personifying death and hell. They remark how the personification of inanimate objects such as sleep, heaven, hell, and death was a widespread phenomenon in the ancient Near East.

In the Book of Mormon death is referred to as a "monster" several times by Jacob, for example in 2 Nephi 9:10 we read:

*O how great the goodness of our God, who prepareth a way for our escape from the grasp of this awful monster; yea, that monster, death and hell, which I call the death of the body, and also the death of the spirit.*

Bokovoy and Tvedtnes conclude:

*The personification of Death and Hell, together with motifs such as bands of death, preparing an escape route, and swallowing up one's adversary, demonstrate an authentic core to the Book of Mormon's claim for ties with the ancient Near East. Until quite recently, biblical scholars were unaware of these cosmological elements in the Old Testament. Yet Book of Mormon authors drew upon these archaic themes with poetic ease when presenting their testimonies that Christ was victorious over the grave.*

- [David E. Bokovoy and John A. Tvedtnes - The Personification of Death and Hell](#)

Would Joseph Smith have understood this kind of symbolism just from reading the Bible if even biblical scholars were unaware of these cosmological elements in the Old Testament?

See:

- [David E. Bokovoy and John A. Tvedtnes - The Personification of Death and Hell](#)
- [Evidence Central: Book of Mormon Evidence: Primordial Monsters](#)

## **Where would Joseph Smith have learned about the names, relative amounts and functions of ancient weights and measurements?**

In the middle of Alma 11 in the Book of Mormon, a detailed description of measurements is outlined. What is impressive is that the measurements correspond with what we know of other ancient cultures:

- Fractions were a part of weights and volume measures actually used in the ancient Near East
- No ability to express a fraction with a numerator greater than one in the Near East
- Use of weights and measures rather than coins as in other ancient cultures

In terms of the names used, John Welch notes:

*The term shilum closely approximates the Hebrew iillum (or shillum) which means “repayment,” “recompense,” or “retribution” (see Hosea 9:7; Isaiah 34:8; Micah 7:3). Moreover, both the Nephite and Hebrew expressions may link to the Akkadian illum (or shilum) in Mesopotamia, which refers to an “area measure.”*

*For the name senum, the correspondences come from Hebrew and Egyptian. On the Hebrew side, “senum” appears to derive from a root having two consonants, sn, perhaps coupled to the Akkadian nominative singular termination -um.<sup>24</sup> An obvious candidate is seni or senayim (dual form), from the Hebrew root for “second,” “two,” or “double.” It is not unreasonable linguistically to see the Hebrew for two as a close relative of the Nephite senum, particularly in view of dialectical exchanges in early Hebrew between s and i (e.g., Judges 12:5–6). The same phonological equivalent may also be seen in the ancient Egyptian cognates for two: sn, snw, snwy, and sny, and Coptic snau.*

*- [John W. Welch - Weighing and Measuring in the Worlds of the Book of Mormon](#)*

Why would Joseph Smith take a chance on creating a measurement system that could be proved to be anachronistic?

See:

- [John W. Welch - Weighing and Measuring in the Worlds of the Book of Mormon](#)

## Why does the Book of Mormon seem to know about Christopher Columbus's self-described motivation for voyaging to the Americas?

It is widely believed that Christopher Columbus was motivated by personal desires and money when he discovered America. However in the Book of Mormon it says in 1 Nephi 13:12:

*And it came to pass that the angel said unto me: Behold the wrath of God is upon the seed of thy brethren. And I looked and beheld a man among the Gentiles, who was separated from the seed of my brethren by the many waters; and I beheld the Spirit of God, that it came down and wrought upon the man; and he went forth upon the many waters, even unto the seed of my brethren, who were in the promised land.*

Why would Joseph Smith say Columbus was spiritually motivated when this was against the dominant narrative?

Daniel C. Peterson comments:

*It is only with the growth of Columbus scholarship in recent years, and particularly with the translation and publication of Columbus's libro de las profecias [Book of Prophecies] in 1991, that English-speaking readers have been fully able to see how remarkably the admiral's own self-understanding parallels the portrait of him given in the Book of Mormon.*

*- Daniel Peterson, "Not Joseph's, and Not Modern," 199. See also, Pauline Moffitt Watts, "Prophecy and Discovery: On the Spiritual Origins of Christopher Columbus's 'Enterprise of the Indies,'" The American Historical Review 90, no. 1 (1985): 73-102, esp. 74:*

Christopher Columbus said in his own writings, which have only recently been discovered:

- *"With a hand that could be felt, the Lord opened my mind to the fact that it would be possible to sail from here to the Indies, and he opened my will to desire to accomplish the project."*
- *"Who can doubt that this fire was not merely mine, but also of the Holy Spirit who encouraged me with a radiance of marvelous illumination from his sacred Holy Scriptures, by a most clear and powerful testimony ... urging me to press forward?"*

- *“Already I pointed out that for the execution of the journey to the Indies I was not aided by intelligence, by mathematics or my maps. It was simply the fulfillment of what Isaiah had prophesied.”*
- *“I feel persuaded, by the many and wonderful manifestations of Divine Providence in my especial favour, that I am the chosen instrument of God in bringing to pass a great event—no less than the conversion of millions who are now existing in the darkness of Paganism.”*
- *“In the name of the most Holy Trinity, who inspired me with the idea and afterward made it perfectly clear to me, that I could navigate and go to the Indies from Spain, by traversing the ocean westwardly.”*

- [Arnold K. Garr, Christopher Columbus A Latter-Day Saint Perspective, 81–83](#)

Why would Joseph Smith go out on a limb like this? How did he know Columbus was spiritually motivated?

See:

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Prophecy of Columbus](#)

## **How would Joseph Smith know there were many prophets in Jerusalem when Lehi was preaching?**

At the start of the Book of Mormon in 1 Nephi 1:4 it reads:

*For it came to pass in the commencement of the first year of the reign of Zedekiah, king of Judah, (my father, Lehi, having dwelt at Jerusalem in all his days); and in that same year there came many prophets, prophesying unto the people that they must repent, or the great city Jerusalem must be destroyed.*

While the point about there being “many” prophets is subtle, it is also accurate. At least nine Israelite prophets were active during this time: Zephaniah, Nahum, Jeremiah, Habakkuk, Huldah, Urijah, Daniel, Ezekiel and Obadiah. There may also have been [others too](#).

Why are subtle details like this correct in the Book of Mormon? How many readers of the Bible would know there were many prophets in Jerusalem around 600 BC?

See:

- [Evidence Central -Book of Mormon Evidence: Many Prophets in Lehi’s Day](#)

## Why is there a curious symbolic pattern of time used in 4 Nephi when nothing is reported to have happened?

4 Nephi 1:6 reports that nothing happened between the 38th year and the 59th year:

*And thus did the thirty and eighth year pass away, and also the thirty and ninth, and forty and first, and the forty and second, yea, even until forty and nine years had passed away, and also the fifty and first, and the fifty and second; yea, and even until fifty and nine years had passed away.*

4 Nephi 1:14 similarly reports that nothing happened between the 71st year and the 79th year:

*And it came to pass that the seventy and first year passed away, and also the seventy and second year, yea, and in fine, till the seventy and ninth year had passed away...*

Why would Joseph Smith report the time in this peculiar fashion?

- 41, 42 to 49
- 51, 52 to 59
- 71, 72 to 79

This method of reporting time uses the sacred number 7 which is used throughout the Book of Mormon, and fits well with [Mormon communicating a message rather than relating history](#). Wouldn't we expect Joseph to have reported time in a more typical way? Wouldn't it have been unnatural for Joseph to have dictated it like this?

See:

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Symbolic Time in 4 Nephi](#)

## Why do ancient texts agree with the Book of Mormon that angels ministered to Adam and Eve?

In Alma 12:28, Alma speaks of Adam and Eve:

*And after God had appointed that these things should come unto man, behold, then he saw that it was expedient that man should know concerning the things whereof he had appointed unto them;  
Therefore he sent angels to converse with them, who caused men to behold of his glory.*

Where did Joseph Smith get the idea that angels appeared to Adam and Eve?

Evidence Central notes how this is consistent with [traditions found in obscure Jewish, Christian, Mandaean and Muslim texts](#):

- The Armenian Christian History of the Repentance of Adam and Eve
- The Conflict of Adam and Eve with Satan
- Life of Adam and Eve

Why would these texts agree with the Book of Mormon? How would Joseph Smith have known this about Adam and Eve?

See:

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Angels Ministered to Adam and Eve](#)

## **What are the odds that Nephi described his family traveling through the only survivable route through Arabia?**

Nephi describes the family's journey from Shazer to Nahom in 1 Nephi 16:13-34. His description comprises:

- A south-southeast direction
- Bordering the Red Sea
- Moving through the most fertile land into the more fertile land
- Moving eastward at Nahom
- Arriving at the coast

What are the odds that his description would accurately describe the [only survivable route through Arabia](#). The Frankincense Trail in Arabia was a trade route being used in Lehi's day which has enough water and adequate terrain for camels to travel on.

How would Joseph know so much about this part of the world?

See:

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: The Frankincense Trail](#)
- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: From Shazer to Nahom](#)



## **If Joseph Smith was a clever multilingual researcher, then wouldn't his descriptions of Arabia have been wrong because contemporary expertise of his day was wrong?**

The Book of Mormon is remarkably accurate in its descriptions of Arabia before Lehi and his family travel to the New World, but where would Joseph Smith have gotten his information?

Even if Joseph had access to the best available information of Arabia it would likely have been wrong.

Michael R. Ash explains:

*In the case of ancient Arabia, we are amazed that Joseph Smith got so many things right when the literature of his day got so many things wrong. Virtually everything we know about ancient Arabia has come to light only since the Book of Mormon was published. As Hugh Nibley pointed out five decades ago in his book "Lehi in the Desert," "The world through which Lehi wandered was to the westerner of 1830 a quaking bog without a visible inch of footing, lost in impenetrable fog; the best Bible students were hopelessly misinformed even about Palestine. Scientific study of the Holy Land began with Edward Robinson in 1838, yet 40 years later a leading authority writes: 'Few countries are more traveled in than Palestine; and in few are the manners and customs of the people less known ...' "*

*the most complete general guide to Arabia that was likely available to Joseph described the whole southern coastline as a "rocky wall," as "dismal and barren," without so much as "a blade of grass or a green thing." One book claimed that Arabia was so hot that animals were roasted on the plains and birds in midair.*

*Very few books mentioned any fertile regions in Arabia, and those that did got the information wrong as well — describing fertile regions as producing rice, maize and tropical fruits. The information in Smith's day was so erroneous that even as late as the 1920s, explorers who visited Southern Arabia were surprised by the thickly wooded valleys. One article in a 1939 scholarly journal theorized that Solomon may have built ships from materials in the Mediterranean but wondered "where on the shores of the Red Sea could timber be found for shipbuilding?"*

*- [Michael R. Ash - Challenging Issues, Keeping the Faith: Book of Mormon gets Old World details right](#)*

How would Joseph know more than the experts of his day?

See:

- [Michael R. Ash - Challenging Issues, Keeping the Faith: Book of Mormon gets Old World details right](#)

## Why would Joseph Smith mention an oasis in the Arabian peninsula that was believed to be nothing but desert?

In 1 Nephi 17:4-5 Lehi and his family reach a place they name Bountiful:

*And we did sojourn for the space of many years, yea, even eight years in the wilderness.*

*And we did come to the land which we called Bountiful, because of its much fruit and also wild honey; and all these things were prepared of the Lord that we might not perish. And we beheld the sea, which we called Irreantum, which, being interpreted, is many waters.*

Following Lehi's trail beginning in Jerusalem and ending east of Nahom, Joseph Smith would have been taking quite a risk in saying there is a land with fruit and honey by the sea, especially if Arabia was believed to just be a desert. However two locations are actually perfect candidates for the description in the Book of Mormon: [Khor Kharfot and Khor Rori](#).

Why would Joseph Smith have taken such a chance like this? Why would he go against the common understanding of Arabia at the time?

See:

- [Jeff Lindsay - Book of Mormon Evidences, Part One](#)

## Why would Joseph Smith think Lehi would name places which likely already had a name?

When Lehi and his family are traveling through Arabia, they give names to the places they stay. For example in 1 Nephi 16:13:

*And it came to pass that we traveled for the space of four days, nearly a south-southeast direction, and we did pitch our tents again; and we did call the name of the place Shazer.*

Wouldn't Joseph Smith have thought that all the places they travel through already have names? While it may seem odd to Book of Mormon readers, the practice of naming places on travels [is consistent with the cultural practices of Bedouin travelers](#).

Evidence Central remarks:

*Once considered strange and a cause for skepticism to nineteenth century readers, Lehi's practice of naming localities and topographical features where they camped*

*and traveled is consistent with what we now know about the customs of those who have dwelt in the desert. Like many other elements in Nephi's account, the attestation of similar naming practices among Bedouin peoples of the region where Lehi would have traveled adds another golden thread to the authenticity of the Book of Mormon.*

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Desert Naming Practices](#)

See:

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Desert Naming Practices](#)

## Was NHM (Nahom) just a lucky guess?

In 1 Nephi 16:34 we read:

*And it came to pass that Ishmael died, and was buried in the place which was called Nahom.*

Why wouldn't Joseph Smith take the easier option and say Lehi and his family simply called the place Nahom? Why would he say it was already called Nahom?

Incredibly there exists one place in all of Arabia called Nihm, Nehem, or Nehhm (Hebrew does not contain any vowels so the place would only be called NHM). NHM is even documented in writings between 700-300 BC. Even more incredible is that NHM included, or was located next to a central burial ground for outlying desert communities which ties in with 1 Nephi 16:34.

What are the odds that there exists a place in Arabia that matches the name and location of Nahom in the Book of Mormon? Isn't this a bullseye for Joseph Smith?

See:

- [Book of Mormon Central - Who Called Ishmael's Burial Place Nahom?](#)

## What were the odds that there was an Ishmael, buried near the Nihm tribal region, around the 6th century BC?

In 1 Nephi 16:34 we read of Ishmael's burial:

*And it came to pass that Ishmael died, and was buried in the place which was called Nahom.*

In addition to there being a place called Nahom in exactly the correct place, there is also evidence of an Ishmael being buried there around the 6th century BC. Sabina Antonini and Alessio Agostini even argue that Ishmael was part of a group who “[were caravaneers engaged in commerce throughout the western side of the Peninsula](#)”.

Why think this is simply a coincidence?

See:

- [Neal Rappleye - An Ishmael Buried Near Nahom](#)

## **What are the odds that Nahom is the only place you can actually turn eastward on the incense trail?**

In 1 Nephi 17:1 Lehi and his family change direction in their journey:

*And it came to pass that we did again take our journey in the wilderness; and we did travel nearly eastward from that time forth. And we did travel and wade through much affliction in the wilderness; and our women did bear children in the wilderness.*

Warren P. Aston comments:

*Only recently has satellite-assisted mapping enabled us to appreciate that after traveling southward into Arabia, as the Lehites did, people are prevented from easterly travel by the shifting, waterless dunes of the vast Empty Quarter, as much today as in the past. However, a narrow band of flat plateaus beginning in the Nihm area, marking the southern end of the Empty Quarter, presents the first opportunity for travel in an easterly direction.*

*While the terrain of this plateau makes easterly travel possible, the plateau is nonetheless waterless and forbidding. It is still avoided today. The difficulty of travel along this route seems to be reflected in Nephi's account, which mentions that the group ate their meat raw (1 Ne. 17:2), they did not use “much fire” (v. 12), and the afflictions and difficulties of the journey could not all be written (v. 6). The Book of Mormon later clarifies these afflictions as “hunger and thirst” (Alma 37:42).*

- [Warren P. Aston - A History of NaHoM](#)

What are the odds Joseph Smith would say Lehi and his family turned eastward at the only place possible?

See:

- [Warren P. Aston - A History of NaHoM](#)

## **Is it a coincidence that Nephi reminded his brothers of the “flying fiery serpents” sent by the Lord to chastise the children of Israel for their murmuring in regions believed to be infested by flying serpents?**

In 1 Nephi 17:41, Nephi reminds Laman and Lemuel of the Israelites rebelling in the wilderness:

*And he did straiten them in the wilderness with his rod; for they hardened their hearts, even as ye have; and the Lord straitened them because of their iniquity. He sent fiery flying serpents among them; and after they were bitten he prepared a way that they might be healed; and the labor which they had to perform was to look; and because of the simpleness of the way, or the easiness of it, there were many who perished.*

Neal Rappleye points out:

*[W]hile traveling through South Arabia and staying in the Dhofar region, Lehi and his family would have encountered the same snake species found in the desert south of Judah and identified with the seraph-serpents from biblical traditions. At least by the time of Herodotus, who wrote about 100 years after Lehi’s journey, local South Arabian legends apparently referred to these snakes as being “winged” and able to fly. This means that between both the Valley of Lemuel and Bountiful — the two locations where most of Nephi’s narrative takes place — the Lehite group had spent a large portion of their time near or within the habitat of the seraph-serpents. As such, when Nephi reminded his brothers of the “flying fiery serpents” sent by the Lord to chastise the children of Israel for their murmuring (1 Nephi 17:41), it would have held a relevance that is often lost on readers today: they, too, were traveling and camping in regions believed to be infested by flying serpents, and if they were not faithful, the Lord could just as easily punish them by unleashing those dangerous snakes.*

*- [Neal Rappleye - Serpents of Fire and Brass: A Contextual Study of the Brazen Serpent Tradition in the Book of Mormon](#)*

Why would Joseph Smith go to such lengths if it would be lost on readers today?

See:

- [Neal Rappleye - Serpents of Fire and Brass: A Contextual Study of the Brazen Serpent Tradition in the Book of Mormon](#)

## Why would Joseph Smith take the risk in mentioning a river that continually flows into the Red Sea?

In 1 Nephi 2:9 Lehi mentions a river that continually flows into the Red Sea:

*And when my father saw that the waters of the river emptied into the fountain of the Red Sea, he spake unto Laman, saying: O that thou mightest be like unto this river, continually running into the fountain of all righteousness!*

It has long been thought that there are no rivers which continually flow into the Red Sea so why would Joseph Smith take a chance on mentioning something which could be empirically disproved like this? Unless Joseph Smith had good information on the area in question it seems rather risky.

However in 1999 George Potter proposed a stream east of the Gulf of Aqaba which meets the criteria. He remarks:

*I have now visited the valley in the months of April, May, November, December and, most recently, January. Colleagues have visited in July and August. We have observed that the volume of water in the river seems rather constant throughout the year (even though from 1995 to 1999 the volume seems to have decreased perhaps 50 percent due to the continued effects of pumping the water in the upper valley). We have also observed throughout the year that vegetation flourishes in the canyon where the river runs, and moss and algae line the banks of the stream.*

*...I have escorted over a dozen people into the valley. Several others have made their own way there based on my directions. Are we witnesses of the river Laman and the valley of Lemuel? In my view, the characteristics of the site are compelling evidence that this is so.*

*- [George D. Potter - A New Candidate in Arabia for the "Valley of Lemuel"](#)*

What are the odds that Joseph Smith would have been correct about a river continually running into the Red Sea? How would he have known that in 19th century America?

See:

- [George D. Potter - A New Candidate in Arabia for the "Valley of Lemuel"](#)
- [Jeff Lindsay - The Valley of Lemuel: Another "Blunder" Becomes Evidence FOR the Book of Mormon](#)

## How could Joseph Smith know so much about ancient Arabia if there were no library books available to him on the subject?

The Book of Mormon is remarkably accurate in its description of ancient Arabia. Where would Joseph Smith have found this information if there were no relevant books available to him?

S. Kent Brown notes:

*A review of the holdings of John Pratt's Manchester lending library and those of Dartmouth College has yielded no evidence that any of the aforementioned works dealing with Arabia—classical or contemporary—existed in these two collections in Joseph Smith's day. They are simply absent from the accession lists of John Pratt's library. In the case of Dartmouth College, the library did not acquire any of these works until after 1830, except volume 2 of Horsley's English translation of d'Anville's work, which came to the library in 1823. Apparently only one of d'Anville's maps came with the translation, but which one is unknown; copies of forty maps came to the library in 1936. Dartmouth College acquired Edward Gibbon's famous historical work only in 1944 and the English translation of Niebuhr's volumes in 1937, much too late for Joseph Smith to have consulted them. Furthermore, the books in John Pratt's library that claimed to treat the ancient world deal with Arabia only in a general way, focusing almost exclusively on the northern area near the Persian Gulf. In this light it is safe to conclude that Joseph Smith did not enjoy access to works on Arabia in either of the libraries that lay near his home at one point or another in his youth. In a similar vein, any hypothesis that Joseph Smith had access to a private library that contained works on ancient Arabia is impossible to sustain*

[- S. Kent Brown, "New Light from Arabia on Lehi's Trail," in Echoes and Evidences of the Book of Mormon](#)

Where would Joseph Smith have gotten all his knowledge about Arabia?

See:

- [S. Kent Brown, "New Light from Arabia on Lehi's Trail,"](#)

## What experience would Joseph Smith have had of desert travelers eating meat raw?

The Book of Mormon claims that Lehi and his family did not have to cook their meat before eating it. In 1 Nephi 17:12 we read:

*For the Lord had not hitherto suffered that we should make much fire, as we journeyed in the wilderness; for he said: I will make thy food become sweet, that ye cook it not;*

Michael R. Ash comments:

*Early critics found this strange because little was known about ancient Arabia when they made this charge. According the Near Eastern archaeologist Dr. Jeffery Chadwick, the Lehites probably didn't make much fire because of the lack of firewood and kindling and because they probably travelled in the cool of the night and rested during the day when no fires for visibility were needed. Dr. Hugh Nibley wrote that many desert travelers ate goat and sheep kidney raw –with a bit of salt. Others ate entire slices of flesh raw, or scorched it quickly over a small fire. In either Nibley or Chadwick's scenario, the actions of the Lehites and their eating of "raw meat" are consistent with what we now know about ancient Arabian travelers.*

- [Michael R. Ash - Faith and Reason 31: Raw Meat in the Book of Mormon](#)

Wouldn't it have been strange for Joseph Smith to include this in the storyline? How would he know about the cooking habits of desert travelers?

See:

- [Michael R. Ash - Faith and Reason 31: Raw Meat in the Book of Mormon](#)

## **Wouldn't Joseph Smith have thought that all "rivers" have water?**

In 1 Nephi 2:6 we read:

*And it came to pass that when he had traveled three days in the wilderness, he pitched his tent in a valley by the side of a river of water.*

Why would Joseph Smith say "river of water"? Book of Mormon Online responds:

*According to Hunter and Ferguson, it is only in the springtime that most of the stream beds in Palestine and the desert by the Gulf of Aqaba contain water. In fact, the writers note that the Hebrew language has one word, "nahar", for "river of water" (see 1 Nephi 2:6) and another for the dry stream bed, "nachal." [Milton Hunter and T. Stuart Ferguson, Ancient America and the Book of Mormon, p. 77]*

- [Book of Mormon Online - Lehites in Jerusalem and Arabia](#)



Wouldn't we expect Joseph Smith to have simply said Lehi pitched his tent by the side of a river? Where would Joseph Smith have learned so much about Arabia?

See:

- [Book of Mormon Online - Lehites in Jerusalem and Arabia](#)

## **Why does the Book of Mormon seem to know that the image of the olive tree was well known and significant in ancient Israel?**

Jacob 5 is the longest chapter in the Book of Mormon and contains the allegory of the scattering and gathering of Israel. This chapter is well-known for being quite complicated and not easy to understand, however it is perfectly accurate in terms of Israelite symbolism. It also is [consistent with other ancient parables](#) and allegories from Near East, Greek, Egyptian and Israelite cultures.

David Rolph Seely remarks:

*The prophecy of Zenos in Jacob 5 is a sophisticated extended comparison using elements of simile, metaphor, parable, and allegory. . . . While Jacob 5 is unique in its sophistication, there is evidence in the ancient Near East that Zenos's allegory of the olive tree does not come out of a vacuum. There are other known examples in ancient Near Eastern literature of extended comparisons such as fables, parables, and perhaps even allegories, but there is nothing of the length and scope of Jacob 5*

*- [David Rolph Seely - The Allegory of the Olive Tree and the Use of Related Figurative Language in the Ancient Near East and the Old Testament](#)*

How would Joseph Smith manage to compose the allegory of the olive tree so consistently with other ancient parables?

See:

- [David Rolph Seely - The Allegory of the Olive Tree and the Use of Related Figurative Language in the Ancient Near East and the Old Testament](#)
- [Book of Mormon Central - What are the Roots of Zenos's Allegory in the Ancient World?](#)

## How would Joseph Smith know so much about olive horticulture?

In addition to Jacob 5 being difficult to follow, it is also remarkably accurate. John Gee and Daniel C. Peterson explain:

*[Jacob 5] purports to be the work of an ancient northern Israelite author, living between 900-700 B.C., about olive growing. Almost every detail it supplies about olive culture can be confirmed in four classical authors whose authority on the subject can be traced back to Syro-Palestine. Zenos's parable fits into the pattern of ancient olive cultivation remarkably well. The placing of the villa above the vineyards [Columella, Rei Rusticae I, 5,7] means that, when the master gives instructions to his servants, they have to "go down" into the vineyard (Jacob 5:15, 29, 38). It was also customary for the master of the vineyard to have several servants (cf. Jacob 5:7,10-11,15-16, 20-21, 25-30, 33-35, 38, 41, 48-50, 57, 61-62,70-72,75). [Cato, De Agri Cultura 10; Varro, Rerum Rusticarum I, 18.] When only one servant is mentioned in Zenos's parable, the reference is most likely to the chief steward. Likewise, Zenos's mention of planting (Jacob 5:23-25, 52, 54), pruning (Jacob 5:11, 47, 76; 6:2), grafting (Jacob 5:8,9-10,17-18, 30, 34, 52, 54-57, 60, 63-65, 67-68), digging (Jacob 5:4, 27, 63-64), nourishing (Jacob 5:4,12, 27, 28,58,71; 6:2), and dunging (Jacob 5:47, 64, 76), as well as the fact that dunging occurs less frequently in the parable than the nourishing, all mark it as an authentic ancient work. The unexpected change of wild olive branches to tame ones (Jacob 5:17-18) would have seemed a divine portent to our ancient authorities. [Theophrastus, Historia Plantarum II, 3,1.]*

*Even more striking, for Joseph Smith to have made up the parable from these classical authors, he would have had to read all four: Theophrastus is the only one to discuss the differences between wild and tame olives, the tendency for wild olives to predominate, and prophetic use of the olive tree as a sign. [Romans 11:16-24 does mention wild and tame and grafting, but nothing about the fruit or the purposes thereof. A casual reading of Paul leaves the impression that it is as easy to be one way as the other.] Varro and Columella are the only ones to acknowledge the Phoenician connections. Cato and Varro are the only ones who discuss the servants' roles. Cato and Columella alone note the placement of the villa above the groves; Varro is the only author to discuss the "main top" in association with the "young and tender branches" (cf. Jacob 5:6). Yet Joseph Smith probably did not have access to these works. And even if he had, he could not read Latin and Greek in 1829. Theophrastus's Historia Plantarum first published in English in 1916, [Theophrastus, Enquiry into Plants, trans. Arthur Hort (London: Heinemann, 1916)] and no part of his De Causis Plantarum was available in English until 1927 [Robert E. Dengler, ... Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1927]. While English translations of Cato, Varro, and Columella were available to the British in 1803, 1800, and 1745 respectively [Thomas Owen, M. Porcius Cato concerning Agriculture (London: White, 1803), ...], it is hardly likely that they were widely*

*circulated in rural New York and Pennsylvania. Joseph Smith could have known nothing about olives from personal experience, as they do not grow in Vermont and New York. Can it reasonably be supposed that Joseph simply guessed right on so many details? And even if he somehow managed to get the details from classical authors, how did he know to put it into the proper Hebrew narrative form? [The narrative of Zenos follows the Hebrew narrative pattern as laid down by Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981).]*

*Even if Joseph Smith had somehow gathered the details of ancient olive culture from someone who knew it intimately, he would still have had no plot. [Zenos's plot is much more complicated than Paul's, and if Joseph Smith is adding to the plot, it must be explained how he got the extra details ... and made them fit in with ancient olive lore.]*

[- John Gee and Daniel C. Peterson - Graft and Corruption: On Olives and Olive Culture in the Pre-Modern Mediterranean](#)

How could Joseph Smith have been so well read? Where would he have been getting all this information from?

See:

- [John Gee and Daniel C. Peterson - Graft and Corruption: On Olives and Olive Culture in the Pre-Modern Mediterranean](#)
- [Jeff Lindsay - Nugget #23: Olive Trees and the Book of Mormon](#)
- [David B. Honey - The Allegory of the Olive Tree. The Olive, the Bible, and Jacob 5](#)

## **What experience would Joseph Smith have had with steel bows and wooden arrows?**

In the Book of Mormon when Nephi's bow breaks, he does not mention breaking any arrows. However 1 Nephi 16:23 says:

*And it came to pass that I, Nephi, did make out of wood a bow, and out of a straight stick, an arrow; wherefore, I did arm myself with a bow and an arrow, with a sling and with stones. And I said unto my father: Whither shall I go to obtain food?*

Wouldn't Joseph Smith with his limited knowledge of bows think that Nephi could simply continue to use the arrows he used before? How would he know that ["the arrows from the steel bow when shot from the wooden bow would be like shooting telephone poles"](#)?

William J. Hamblin notes:

*One doubts that such information was known to Joseph Smith or to many, if any, of his contemporaries. Archery, as a means of self-defense or as a serious method of hunting or warfare, went out of vogue among Europeans many years before the time of Joseph Smith. On the other hand, archery as a sport did not emerge until the latter half of the nineteenth century.*

*David Fox [an experienced archer] concludes: "Nephi's statement that he made an arrow out of a straight stick is an additional subtle but significant example of internal consistency within the Book of Mormon. Anyone unfamiliar with the field of archery would have almost certainly omitted such a statement." Another bull's-eye for the Book of Mormon.*

- [William J. Hamblin - Nephi's Bows and Arrows](#)

Where would Joseph Smith have gotten detailed information about specific subjects like this?

See:

- [Jeff Lindsay - Nugget #2: - Of Arrows and Sticks](#)

## **Why would Joseph Smith say a bow of "fine steel" would break?**

It seems slightly odd that Joseph Smith would choose to include a storyline of a bow made of fine steel breaking. In 1 Nephi 16:18 it says:

*And it came to pass that as I, Nephi, went forth to slay food, behold, I did break my bow, which was made of fine steel; and after I did break my bow, behold, my brethren were angry with me because of the loss of my bow, for we did obtain no food.*

If Joseph Smith wrote the Book of Mormon himself, he would probably have not said the bow was made of fine steel if he was trying to get the reader to believe it would break.

However if Joseph was simply translating the Book of Mormon then it would make sense why the bow would break because it would not be made entirely of steel and would rather be a composite, like biblical "steel" swords.

William J. Hamblin explains:

*Composite bows have a specific structural problem that leaves them susceptible to changes in temperature and climate, which may cause the bow to warp and break. ... Thus, if Nephi's bow were of a composite type, his move from the more temperate*

*climate of Palestine to the dry heat of the Arabian peninsula could have contributed to the risk that his bow might warp and break.*

- [Stephen D. Ricks, William J. Hamblin - Warfare in the Book of Mormon](#)

How would Joseph Smith know so much about different types of bows and arrows?

See:

- [Stephen D. Ricks, William J. Hamblin - Warfare in the Book of Mormon](#)
- [Book of Mormon Central - Why Did Nephi's "Fine Steel" Bow Break?](#)

## **Why would Joseph Smith choose to include a steel sword in Jerusalem if it was thought to be anachronistic in the 1820s?**

Only recently have we discovered steel swords in the Near East so it seems odd that Joseph Smith would have included them in the Book of Mormon.

Evidence Central explains:

*Before archaeologists discovered the long steel sword in Jericho, the description of the sword of Laban in the Book of Mormon may have seemed too fantastic to be true. Some people laughed at the notion of a steel sword in Jerusalem in 600 BC. Similarly, the idea that an ancient Near Eastern sword could be long enough for Nephi to decapitate Laban in the manner described in the Book of Mormon also seemed unbelievable. And then, 150 years after the Book of Mormon was published, archaeologists discovered an artifact that showed that the Book of Mormon's account was not so unbelievable after all.*

- [Book of Mormon Central - What Was the Sword of Laban Like?](#)

Why would Joseph take a chance on including steel swords in Jerusalem if they had not been discovered yet?

See:

- [Book of Mormon Central - What Was the Sword of Laban Like?](#)

## Why would Joseph Smith take a chance on saying an ancient book was written on metal plates?

It seems rather odd that Joseph Smith would have said he found metal plates if he was trying to convince those around him that they were ancient sacred records. Wouldn't Joseph have been more familiar with scrolls? How did he even know that metal plates were an option?

From Hugh Nibley:

*It will not be long before men forget that in Joseph Smith's day the prophet was mocked and derided for his description of the plates more than anything else.*

*- [Hugh Nibley, Lehi in the Desert, CWHN 5:107.](#)*

Since the publication of the Book of Mormon many ancient records have been found to be engraved on metal plates but where did Joseph get the idea from and why would he take such a chance?

See:

- [FAIR Latter-day Saints - Gold Plates Of The Book of Mormon](#)

## How could Joseph Smith introduce roughly 200 new names not found in the Bible?

If Joseph Smith authored the Book of Mormon would we expect him to have used so many unique names? The Book of Mormon Onomasticon project notes that:

*The Book of Mormon contains 337 proper names and 21 gentilics (or analogous forms) based on proper names...Of these 337 proper names, 188 are unique to the Book of Mormon, while 149 are common to the Book of Mormon and the Bible.*

*- [Book of Mormon Onomasticon - Fun Facts About Our Onomasticon](#)*

What other author comparable to Joseph Smith created so many names? Where did he get all the names from and how did he not get confused keeping track of them all? Would we also expect [around 20% of the unique names to only be used once](#)? Isn't that a lot of unnecessary effort?

See:

- [Jeff Lindsay - Book of Mormon Evidences, Part 2](#)

## Why do none of the 188 names that are unique to the Book of Mormon include consonants that do not exist in Hebrew?

The Book of Mormon is remarkable in that it introduces 188 names. We would reasonably expect that if Joseph Smith had created the text himself then some of these names would be out of place, anachronistic or from the wrong region.

Interestingly we find the exact opposite. In fact none of the names that are unique to the Book of Mormon include consonants that do not exist in Hebrew.

The Book of Mormon Onomasticon notes that:

*Of 337 proper names in the Book of Mormon, 188 (about 56 percent) are unique to the Book of Mormon. That is, they occur in the Book of Mormon but not in the Bible.*

*Apart from King James English spellings of biblical names in the Book of Mormon, the letters F, Q, V, W, X, and Y do not appear in transliterated Book of Mormon nouns. The one exception is the /FF/ in ZENIFF and ZIFF. This exception could be explained by an aspirated final /p/.*

*F only appears singly in one such noun which is familiar from the KJV (LUCIFER), but never begins a proper noun in either Bible or Book of Mormon.*

*V only appears inside such nouns which are familiar from the KJV (EVE, LEVI).*

*W only appears inside one such noun which is familiar from the KJV (JEW, JEWS).*

*Y only appears inside such nouns which are familiar from the KJV (MARY, SYRIA, TIMOTHY).*

*Q and X do not appear at all, in either the Bible or Book of Mormon.*

*- [Book of Mormon Onomasticon - Fun Facts About Our Onomasticon](#)*

What are the odds that none of the names unique to the Book of Mormon contain consonants that do not exist in Hebrew? How would Joseph have known to avoid these consonants?

See:

- [John A. Tvedtnes - Hebrew Names in the Book of Mormon](#)
- [Arthur G. Pledger - The W and I](#)

## How would Joseph Smith manage to violate all the rules for choosing fictional names?

If Joseph Smith had written the Book of Mormon he would have needed to choose nearly 200 new names. Sharon Black and Brad Wilcox summarize what we usually see when authors have to choose names:

- *Authors make conscious and deliberate choices for character names, some of which require a great deal of time and consideration.*
- *They choose names that are easily accessible so that readers can clearly distinguish between characters and keep them straight.*
- *They are careful that names fit the characters' personalities, backgrounds, and cultures.*
- *They go to many different sources to find names that are accurate and interesting.*
- *They often choose names that have personal significance for them.*

[- Sharon Black and Brad Wilcox - 188 Unexplainable Names: Book of Mormon Names No Fiction Writer Would Choose](#)

Why did Joseph not follow these general conventions? Where we usually see names that are easily accessible so that readers can clearly distinguish between characters, in the Book of Mormon we see:

- *Two Almas (father and son), three Aarons (unrelated), two Ammons (unrelated), two Amalekis, Abinadi, Abinadom, Abish, Akish, Amulek, Amulon, Amlici, Amalickiah and Ammoron (nasty brothers), and Antipus (one of the generals who helped defeat them).*
- *Gadianton and Gidianhi (a couple of robbers); Gideon, Gilead, Gilgal, Gid, Gidgiddonah, and Gidgiddoni (all military leaders or strategists).*
- *Zarahemla, Zerahemnah, Zeezrom, Zemnarihah, Zenephi, Zenos, Zenock, Zeram, and three Zoram.*
- *Gentilics (derivations of names of persons or lands), including Lamoni (which means "Lamanite"—which he was), Muloki (which probably comes from "Mulekite"), and Moroni (which means "coming from the land of Moron," a Book of Mormon land).*

[- Sharon Black and Brad Wilcox - 188 Unexplainable Names: Book of Mormon Names No Fiction Writer Would Choose](#)

If the Book of Mormon is a work of fiction then why do the names not follow the conventions of works of fiction? If Joseph deliberately went against these conventions, how did he already know what the conventions were?

See:



- [Sharon Black and Brad Wilcox - 188 Unexplainable Names: Book of Mormon Names No Fiction Writer Would Choose](#)

## **If Joseph Smith wrote the Book of Mormon, wouldn't we expect some characters to have surnames?**

Of all the 337 names mentioned in the Book of Mormon, not one has a surname. This is consistent with the Bible but in direct contrast to Joseph Smith's immediate surroundings. If Joseph was simply influenced by the world around him, we might reasonably expect him to have gotten this wrong.

Donald Parry comments:

*Had Joseph Smith authored the Book of Mormon in an attempt to pass it off as an ancient record, he might easily have slipped up by giving at least a few of his characters surnames, as was the custom for centuries before the coming forth of the Book of Mormon*

- [Donald Parry - Echoes and Evidences of the Book of Mormon](#)

How did Joseph manage to escape this easy error?

See:

- [FAIR Latter-day Saints - Peculiarities regarding names](#)

## **Where would Joseph Smith have learned about compound names?**

A proportion of the names in the Book of Mormon end in "-iah" or "-ihah". Hugh Nibley notes how these compound names were peculiar to Palestinian names of Lehi's time but not so prevalent other times:

*"The strong tendency to end in -iah is very striking, since the vast majority of Hebrew names found at Lachish [i.e., from records contemporary with Lehi] end the same way, indicating that -iah names were very fashionable in Lehi's time." Since that was written our view has been confirmed by a study made by D. W. Thomas, who noted that a "striking" peculiarity of Hebrew names in the age of Jeremiah is "the many personal names which end in -iahu." Thus Reifenberg lists from the ancient Hebrew seals of the time such names as Jekamjahu (Jekamiah), Shepatjahu son of Asjahu, Jaazanjahu, Gadjahu (cf. Book of Mormon Gadiandi, Giddianhi), Hilkjahu, Gealjahu, Alijahu, etc. This -iahu ending (German -jahu) is*

*our biblical -iah, -ijah, and by a common metathesis also becomes the extremely common Book of Mormon name ending -ihah*

[- Hugh Nibley - An Approach to the Book of Mormon](#)

How would Joseph Smith know about compound names and specifically those prevalent in Lehi's time?

See:

- [Scot Facer Proctor - Eleven Things You Probably Didn't Know about the Book of Mormon: A New Book](#)
- [FAIR Latter-day Saints - Names in the Book of Mormon—General Observations](#)

## **Why does the Book of Mormon not contain any names compounded with the theophoric Baal element?**

Not only did Joseph Smith include the correct compound names in the Book of Mormon, he also avoided including the wrong compound names.

Michael R. Ash comments:

*For a time, Mormon scholars were confused as to why the Book of Mormon does not include a single name containing the element of Baal, which is so common in the Old Testament. The recent discovery of the Elephantine papyrus from Egypt shows that Israelites eliminated all names with Baal elements during Lehi's day. Of the over four hundred names among the Elephantine manuscripts, not one is compounded of Baal.*

[- Michael R. Ash - Faith and Reason 18: Names in The Book of Mormon](#)

How would Joseph Smith have known this? Wouldn't it have been easy for him to use the Baal element in names if he noticed them in the Old Testament?

See:

- [Michael R. Ash - Faith and Reason 18: Names in The Book of Mormon](#)

## **If Joseph Smith was copying from the Bible, why would he use patristic names in the Book of Mormon?**

If Joseph Smith was trying to make the Book of Mormon appear ancient, why would he use patristic names? Wouldn't he use the Old Testament as a guide?

Tvedtnes, Gee, and Roper explain:

*A feature of the Book of Mormon that is unknown from the Old Testament is the naming of a son after his father. Thus, we have Alma son of Alma, Helaman son of Helaman, Nephi son of Nephi, and Pahoran son of Pahoran. Until recently, patristic names of this sort were unknown from epigraphic sources. But an ostrakon from the late seventh or early sixth century b.c. in the Moussaeiff collection lists one <lkn bn <lkn, "Elikon [or Elkanah] son of Elikon."*

*- [John A. Tvedtnes, John Gee, and Matthew Roper - Book of Mormon Names Attested in Ancient Hebrew Inscriptions](#)*

To be more specific, "the younger" is even [attested in Mesoamerica](#). Why would Joseph have included patristic names if they would have seen out of place at the time?

See:

- [John A. Tvedtnes, John Gee, and Matthew Roper - Book of Mormon Names Attested in Ancient Hebrew Inscriptions](#)

## **Why would Joseph Smith include Greek names in the Book of Mormon (such as Timothy) if he was trying to convince others the book was true?**

On the surface, the Greek names Timothy and Lachoneus in the Book of Mormon may seem out of place however Hugh Nibley points out:

*[R]emember...that in Lehi's day Palestine was swarming with Greeks, important Greeks. Remember, it was Egyptian territory [prior to being seized by Babylon] at that time and Egyptian culture. The Egyptian army, Necho's army, was almost entirely Greek mercenaries. We have inscriptions from that very time up the Nile at Aswan-inscriptions from the mercenaries of the Egyptian army, and they're all in Greek. So Greek was very common, and especially the name Timotheus*

*- [Hugh W. Nibley, "Lecture 27: Omni; Words of Mormon; Mosiah 1: The End of the Small Plates and The Coronation of Mosiah,"](#)*

How would Joseph know that Greek names would be appropriate in the Book of Mormon? Wouldn't he have avoided names his audience might think were out of place?

See:

- [FAIR Latter-day Saints - The name "Timothy" in the Book of Mormon](#)

## How would Joseph Smith manage to choose appropriate names for Lehi's sons?

If Joseph Smith had written the Book of Mormon himself, wouldn't we expect the names to contribute little to the meaning of the text. Curiously we see the opposite.

Hugh Nibley writes:

*It should be noted in speaking of names that archaeology has fully demonstrated that the Israelites, then as now, had not the slightest aversion to giving their children non-Jewish names, even when those names smacked of a pagan background. One might, in a speculative mood, even detect something of Lehi's personal history in the names he gave to his sons. The first two have Arabic names—do they recall his early days in the caravan trade? The second two have Egyptian names, and indeed they were born in the days of his prosperity. The last two, born amid tribulations in the desert, were called with fitting humility, Jacob and Joseph. Whether the names of the first four were meant, as those of the last two sons certainly were (2 Nephi 2:1; 3:1), to call to mind the circumstances under which they were born, the names are certainly a striking indication of their triple heritage, and it was certainly the custom of Lehi's people to name their children with a purpose (Helaman 3:21; 5:6)*

*- Hugh W. Nibley, [An Approach to the Book of Mormon, 3rd edition](#)*

Would Joseph Smith have taken the time to do this intentionally? Wouldn't we expect Joseph, with his limited education, to employ names rather randomly?

See:

- [Hugh W. Nibley, An Approach to the Book of Mormon, 3rd edition](#)

## How would Joseph Smith manage to pick a pair of pendant names for Laman and Lemuel?

Lehi's eldest sons in the Book of Mormon are named Laman and Lemuel. Not only are these Arabic names but they also form a pair of "pendant names".

Hugh Nibley explains:

*But the most striking thing about the names of Laman and Lemuel is the way they go together; as we saw above it has been suggested that the former is but a corruption of the latter. Whether that is so or not, the musical pair certainly belong together and are a beautiful illustration of the old desert custom of naming the first two sons in a family with rhyming twin names, "a pair of pendant names," as Spiegel puts it, "like Eldad and Medad, Hillek and Billek, or Jannes and Jambres. The Arabs particularly seem to enjoy putting together such assonant names YāÇmuÇµ and MaÇµÅ«Çµ for Gog and Magog, HārÅ«n and KārÅ«n for Aaron and Korah, HābÄ«l and KābÄ«l for Abel and Cain, á, «illÄ«t and MillÄ«t for the first dwellers in hell." Speigel is here discussing the names Heyya and Abeyya, and might well have included in his parallels the recently discovered romance of Sul and Shummul. Harut and Marut were the first two angels to fall from grace, like Laman and Lemuel, according to Arab tradition of great antiquity. These names never go in threes or fours but only in pairs, designating just the first two sons of a family with no reference to the rest. This "Dioscuric" practice has a ritual significance which has been discussed by Rendel Harris, but of the actual practice itself, especially among the desert people, there can be no doubt, for we read in an ancient inscription: "N. built this tomb for his sons Hatibat and Hamilat." One could not ask for a better illustration of this little-known and, until recently, unsuspected practice than we find in the Book of Mormon where Lehi names his first two sons Laman and Lemuel.*

- [\*Hugh W. Nibley, An Approach to the Book of Mormon, 3rd edition\*](#)

Where would Joseph Smith have learned about Arabic pendant names? Why think the choice of pendant names are just a lucky coincidence?

See:

- [\*Hugh W. Nibley, An Approach to the Book of Mormon, 3rd edition\*](#)

## Would Joseph Smith have realized that the most common name heard in the Egypt of Lehi's day was the most common name heard among the Nephites?

Not only did Joseph Smith choose correct names in the Book of Mormon but also used some name elements as much as we would expect.

Hugh Nibley explains:

*The most common name heard in the Egypt of Lehi's day was the most common name heard among the Nephites, that of Amon or Ammon (the two spellings are equally common, and Gardiner favors Amun), the god of the empire, who unlike other Egyptian deities never took animal form, was regarded as the universal god, and seems to have been an importation into Egypt from the time of Abraham. His name is very often used in the building of other names, and when so employed it changes its sound according to definite rules. Gardiner in his Egyptian Grammar states:*

*“A very important class of personal names is that containing names known as theophorous, i.e. compound names in which one element is the name of a deity. Now in Graeco-Roman transcriptions it is the rule that when such a divine name is stated at the beginning of a compound [the italics are Gardiner's], it is less heavily vocalized than when it stands independently or at the end of a compound.”*

*The author then goes on to show that in such cases Amon or Amun regularly becomes Amen, while in some cases the vowel may disappear entirely. One need only consider the Book of Mormon Aminidab, Aminadi, Amnihu, Amnor, etc., to see how the rule applies in the West. In the name Helaman, on the other hand, the strong vocalization remains, since the "divine name" is not "stated at the beginning" of the compound. Since the Semitic "l" must always be rendered as "r" in Egyptian (which has no "l"), Helaman would in "un-reformed" Egyptian necessarily appear as the typically Egyptian Heramon*

*[- Hugh W. Nibley, An Approach to the Book of Mormon, 3rd edition](#)*

What are the odds that Joseph would have picked so many names which include “Amon”? Where would he have learned this would be expected in the Book of Mormon?

See:

- [Hugh W. Nibley, An Approach to the Book of Mormon, 3rd edition](#)

## Unless Joseph Smith was a “religious genius”, how could he include attested Egyptian names in the Book of Mormon?

Egyptian was not well understood when the Book of Mormon was published yet it appears Joseph Smith was spot on.

Evidence Central summarizes:

*In 1966 one critic of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints wrote a series of inflammatory letters to several ancient Near Eastern scholars, seemingly designed to elicit negative statements about Latter-day Saint scriptures. This man received an unexpected response from William F. Albright, a prominent biblical scholar at Johns Hopkins University. While Albright was a Protestant (and hence not a believer in the Book of Mormon), he nevertheless wrote back:*

*As you know, when the Book of Mormon was written, Egyptian had just begun to be deciphered and it is all the more surprising that there are two Egyptian names, Paanch and Pahor(an) which appear together in the Book of Mormon in close connection with a reference to the original language as being “Reformed Egyptian.”*

*Unable to offer a viable explanation for how a name such as Paanchi could end up in the Book of Mormon, Albright vaguely suggested that Joseph Smith was some kind of “religious genius.”*

- [Book of Mormon Evidence: Paanchi, an Attested Egyptian Name](#)

Hugh Nibley even noted:

*A striking coincidence is the predominance among both Egyptian and Nephite judge names of the prefix Pa-. In late Egyptian this is extremely common.*

- [Hugh Nibley, Lehi in the Desert/The World of the Jaredites/There Were Jaredites](#)

Where did Joseph Smith learn about Egyptian names? What are the odds that Egyptian and Nephite judges would share common name prefixes?

See:

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Paanchi, an Attested Egyptian Name](#)
- [Book of Mormon Central - Why Did Pahoran, Paanchi, and Pacumeni have Such Similar Sounding Names?](#)

## Why are there Hittite names in the Book of Mormon (in just the right proportion)?

The Book of Mormon contains a “[sprinkling](#)” of Hittite names, which is what we would expect if it were an authentic book.

Hugh Nibley explains:

*The Hittite names in the Book of Mormon all come to us in an Egyptianized form, which is what one would expect in Lehi's Palestine where Hittite names still survived even though Hittite language was probably not used. Thus the Nephite Manti, while suggesting the Egyptian Manti, Monti, Menedi, etc., also recalls the Egyptian name of a Hittite city, Manda. A highly characteristic element of Hittite and Hurrian names are Manti and -andi, likewise common in the Book of Mormon. The Nephite Kumen, Kumen-onhi, Kishkumen certainly remind one of the Egyptian-Hittite name of an important city, Kumani; Nephite Seantum is cognate with Egyptian-Hittite Sandon, Sandas; the Jaredite Akish and Kish are both found in the Old World, where they are of very great antiquity, Akish being the Egyptian-Hittite name for Cyprus. Most interesting is the Nephite city of Gadiandi, whose name exactly parallels the Egyptian rendering of the name of a Hittite city, Cadyanda. It should be borne in mind that one of the great discoveries and upsets of the twentieth century has been the totally unsuspected importance and extent of the Hittite penetration of Hebrew civilization. Every year the Hittites receive new importance in the Hebrew story. The Book of Mormon has not overdone its -andis and -antis!*

- [Hugh W. Nibley, An Approach to the Book of Mormon, 3rd edition](#)

How would Joseph Smith know to include Hittite names and in the right proportion? How would he know about the importance of Hittites in Hebrew history?

See:

- [Hugh W. Nibley, An Approach to the Book of Mormon, 3rd edition](#)

## Why would Joseph Smith use “Alma” as a male name in the Book of Mormon when it is traditionally female?

If Joseph Smith wrote the Book of Mormon we might expect him to avoid including anything which would seem obviously wrong to his readers. So why would Joseph use “Alma” as a male name?



While Alma may be a female name today, it was used as a male name anciently, as attested in discoveries such as [Ancient tablets at Ebla and the Bar Kokhba letters, dating from the period of the Second Jewish Revolt in AD 132–35](#)

From Matthew Roper:

*As can be seen, critics have had a lot of fun with the name Alma, however, in the 1960s Israeli archaeologist Yigael Yadin discovered a land deed near the Dead Sea dating to the early second century A.D. and rendered the name of a Jew mentioned therein as “Alma ben Yehuda” showing for the first time in modern history that the name Alma was an authentic Hebrew male name. Additional research in Ebla, in what is modern Syria, has also turned up this name showing that it goes back to nearly 2200 B.C.*

*- [Matthew Roper, "Right on Target: Boomerang Hits and the Book of Mormon," Proceedings of the 2001 FAIR Conference \(August 2001\).](#)*

Why would Joseph Smith take a chance on a name that people would think is a mistake? Why would he include something that would be a likely distraction?

See:

- [FAIR Latter-day Saints - The name “Alma” in the Book of Mormon](#)

## Why would Joseph Smith use “Sariah” as a female name?

The Book of Mormon only names several women, one of which is “Sariah”. While the name may sound similar to “Sarah” it has traditionally been known as a male name, written as “Seraiah” in the Bible.

But the name of “Sariah” is a hit for Joseph Smith because it has been [discovered as an authentic ancient Semitic feminine name](#).

Tvedtnes, Gee, and Roper explain:

*Previous to its discovery as a woman’s name at Elephantine, Sariah was known from the Bible as a male name, transliterated Seraiah in English, though spelled the same in Hebrew...was originally written without vowels. Indeed, the name seems to have been common in the time of Jeremiah, a contemporary of Lehi and his wife Sariah (see Jeremiah 36:26; 40:8; 51:59, 61; 52:24), and is attested on seals and bullae of that time period.*

*It may seem strange to modern readers that a male name could be given to a woman, but the phenomenon is common in many languages, including English*

(e.g., Jan, Kim, Bobbie), and is known from the Bible (e.g., Abijah is a man's name in 1 Kings 14:1 but a woman's name in 2 Chronicles 29:1). Even the name Solomon (Hebrew *Amh*) is attested on a bulla in the Moussaieff collection as the name of a woman, the "daughter of Shebniah."

- [Tvedtnes, Gee, and Roper, "Book of Mormon Names Attested in Ancient Hebrew Inscriptions." 43](#)

How would Joseph have known this? Why would he have used the male name Sariah if it would just be a stumbling block for the readers?

See:

- [Book of Mormon Central - Were Any Ancient Israelite Women Named Sariah?](#)

## What were the chances that "Aha" was in use long before Lehi's day?

It is one thing for Joseph Smith to use Hebrew names in the Book of Mormon that were known to some in Joseph's day, but quite another to use Hebrew names that were completely unknown in Joseph's day.

Journal of Book of Mormon Studies gives an example:

*In the May/June 1999 issue of Biblical Archaeology Review, P. Kyle McCarter Jr. of Johns Hopkins University reports significant new analyses of three artifacts from ancient Israel. On two points the findings intersect with the Book of Mormon.*

*The objects are bronze arrowheads on which Hebrew inscriptions have been engraved. They come from the eleventh century B.C., a time for which hardly any other instances of Hebrew writing are known. The total number of such arrow points is now near 50, so considerable new light on the history of the Hebrew script is being revealed by examining them.*

*The information of special interest to students of the Book of Mormon concerns metallurgy and a name inscribed on one of the points. Using a high-magnification microscope, Dr. R. Thomas Chase of the Freer Gallery of Art, a division of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington and an authority on ancient bronzes, examined the newest set of points to be located and discovered that on one "the inscription had been incised with a steel [emphasized in the original] engraving tool." This demonstrates that steel was in use by about 1000 BC. The Book of Mormon of course refers to the sword of Laban, who lived four centuries later; that sword was of "the most precious steel" (1 Nephi 4:9). Some have questioned whether*

*steel was known as early as 600 BC. but clearly the new data show that that metal was in use centuries earlier.*

*One of the points examined by Thomas and McCarter bears an inscription that translates as "The arrowhead of 'Aha' son of 'Ashtart.'" The name Aha is apparently the same as that borne by a man mentioned in the Book of Mormon. Alma 16:5 says that Zoram, the chief captain over the armies of the Nephites at that time, "had two sons, Lehi and Aha." Formerly the personal name Aha had not been known from the Bible or other Hebrew-language sources, but this new information documents that the name was in use long before Lehi's day.*

*[- Author unknown, "Out of the Dust: Bronze Arrowheads and the Name Aha," Journal of Book of Mormon Studies 8:2 \(1999\).](#)*

Where would Joseph have gotten the name Aha from if it was only discovered as a Hebrew name recently?

See:

- [FAIR Latter-day Saints - The name "Aha" in the Book of Mormon](#)

## **How do we account for all the other attested names in the Book of Mormon (which are not found in the Bible)?**

The Book of Mormon contains many other names which are attested or plausible such as:

[Akish](#), [Alma](#), [Ammon](#), [Ammonihah](#), [Chemish](#), [Cumorah](#), [Gidgiddoni](#), [Gidgiddonah](#), [Gidianhi](#), [Hagoth](#), [Helaman](#), [Hem](#), [Himni](#), [Isabel](#), [Jarom](#), [Jershon](#), [Josh](#), [Kish](#), [Kishkumen](#), [Korihor](#), [Kumen](#), [Kumenonhi](#), [Lachoneus](#), [Laman](#), [Lemuel](#), [Lehi](#), [Luram](#), [Manti](#), [Mathoni](#), [Mathonihah](#), [Mosiah](#), [Mulek](#), [Muloki](#), [Nephi](#), [Paanchi](#), [Pahoran](#), [Pacumeni](#), [Pachus](#), [Sam](#), [Seantum](#), [Shiblum](#), [Zarahemla](#), and [Zenoch](#)

John A. Tvedtnes, John Gee and Matthew Roper remark:

*In recent years, a large number of ancient writings have been found in and around Israel. While many of these include names found in the Bible and other ancient texts, others were previously unattested in written sources. Some of these previously unattested names are unknown in the Bible but are found in the Book of Mormon. The discovery of these Hebrew names in ancient inscriptions provides remarkable evidence for the authenticity of the Book of Mormon and provides clear refutation of those critics who would place its origin in nineteenth-century America.*

*[- John A. Tvedtnes, John Gee and Matthew Roper - Book of Mormon Names Attested in Ancient Hebrew Inscriptions](#)*

If Joseph Smith made up all the names in the Book of Mormon, would we expect to see so many of them attested?

See:

- [FAIR Latter-day Saints - Names in the Book of Mormon](#)
- [John A. Tvedtnes, John Gee and Matthew Roper - Book of Mormon Names Attested in Ancient Hebrew Inscriptions](#)

## Why does the Book of Mormon seem aware of the huge cultural impact of Egypt on Israel in 600 BC?

The Book of Mormon contains a strong Egyptian influence, including names and the language used on the gold plates.

FAIR Latter-day Saints asks:

*Joseph Smith may have known that Hebrew was the language of Lehi, but how did he know of the huge cultural impact of Egypt on Israel in 600 B.C.? Lehi's descendants used "Reformed Egyptian" to write on the metal plates for brevity, and the 2 languages/cultures clearly influenced the Book of Mormon people.*

*- [FAIR Latter-day Saints - Book of Mormon Names](#)*

How would Joseph Smith know to include such a strong Egyptian influence in the Book of Mormon?

Hugh Nibley points out even the high proportion of Egyptian names is correct:

*[W]e [can now] test certain proper names in the Book of Mormon in the light of actual names from Lehi's world, unknown in the time of Joseph Smith. Not only do the names agree, but the variations follow the correct rules, and the names are found in correct statistical proportions, the Egyptian and Hebrew types being of almost equal frequency, along with a sprinkling of Hittite, Arabic, and Greek names.*

*- [Hugh W. Nibley, An Approach to the Book of Mormon, 3rd edition](#)*

Where would Joseph Smith have learned this? What experience did he have of ancient Egypt and its impact on Israel?

See:

- [FAIR Latter-day Saints - Book of Mormon Names](#)

## What are the odds that the name "Liahona" would be a good fit for the Book of Mormon?

The word "Liahona" is only mentioned once in the Book of Mormon, in Alma 37:38:

*And now, my son, I have somewhat to say concerning the thing which our fathers call a ball, or director—or our fathers called it Liahona, which is, being interpreted, a compass; and the Lord prepared it.*

Why would Joseph Smith give an interpretation of the word? Wouldn't this be an unnecessary risk? However it seems this interpretation was spot on.

Calvin D. Tolman notes:

*The structural sequence of the segments in the name Liahona follow typical Hebrew word order (VSO), where the prefixed lamed represents the verb, l- "prepared" + the subject, Yāh "the Lord" + the object -ona [ʔōnâ] "a vessel," i.e., "prepared the Lord a vessel." Normal English word order would be "the Lord prepared a vessel (SVO)." Alma's explanation places the object first that is a Hebrew technique to give more emphasis to the object, "Liahona, which is being interpreted a compass — and the Lord prepared it" (Alma 37:38). It is proposed that \*ʔōnâ "vessel" is an appropriate Semitic word for the physical object; it is portable; it is a container with spindles; it indicates directions; it is made of fine brass; and it is interpreted "a compass."*

- [Calvin D. Tolman - Liahona: "Prepared of the Lord, a Compass"](#)

How would Joseph Smith know how to form Hebrew words like this, and include the correct meaning?

See:

- [Calvin D. Tolman - Liahona: "Prepared of the Lord, a Compass"](#)

## How could Joseph Smith "have hardly picked a better name" for "Shazer"?

In 1 Nephi 16:13-14, Nephi introduces the place they call Shazer:

*And it came to pass that we traveled for the space of four days, nearly a south-southeast direction, and we did pitch our tents again; and we did call the name of the place Shazer.*

*And it came to pass that we did take our bows and our arrows, and go forth into the wilderness to slay food for our families; and after we had slain food for our families we did return again to our families in the wilderness, to the place of Shazer. And we did go forth again in the wilderness, following the same direction, keeping in the most fertile parts of the wilderness, which were in the borders near the Red Sea*

Hugh Nibley explains the significance of this name:

*The first important stop after Lehi's party had left their base camp was at a place they called Shazer. The name is intriguing. The combination shajer is quite common in Palestinian place names; it is a collective meaning "trees," and many Arabs (especially in Egypt) pronounce it shazher. It appears in Thoghret-as-Sajur (the Pass of Trees), which is the ancient Shaghur, written Segor in the sixth century. It may be confused with Shaghur "seepage," which is held to be identical with Shihor, the "black water" of Josh. 19:36. This last takes in western Palestine the form Sozura, suggesting the name of a famous water hole in South Arabia, called Shisur by Thomas and Shisar by Philby. . . . So we have Shihor, Shaghur, Sajur, Saghir, Segor (even Zoar), Shajar, Sozura, Shisur, and Shisar, all connected somehow or other and denoting either seepage—a weak but reliable water supply—or a clump of trees. Whichever one prefers, Lehi's people could hardly have picked a better name for their first suitable stopping place than Shazer.*

*- [Hugh W. Nibley, An Approach to the Book of Mormon, 3rd edition](#)*

What are the odds that the name Shazer would fit so well?

See:

- [FAIR Latter-day Saints - The place "Shazer" in the Book of Mormon](#)

## **Why would Joseph Smith take the risk in saying that Irreantum means “many waters”?**

1 Nephi 17:5 includes one of only several words defined in the Book of Mormon:

*And we did come to the land which we called Bountiful, because of its much fruit and also wild honey; and all these things were prepared of the Lord that we might not perish. And we beheld the sea, which we called Irreantum, which, being interpreted, is many waters.*

Why would Joseph Smith take the risk of giving the interpretation of a word? Wouldn't that open him up to being proved wrong?

The Book of Mormon Onomasticon offers several (Semitic and Egyptian) [etymologies](#) which mean “abundant watering of completeness”, “fully abundant waters” or “great watercourse of all”.

What are the odds the interpretation given would match up to very plausible translations?

See:

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Irreantum](#)

## **What were the odds that an ancient Egyptian term very similar to “deseret” was associated with the honeybee?**

Ether 2:3 provides an interpretation of the word “deseret”:

*And they did also carry with them deseret, which, by interpretation, is a honey bee; and thus they did carry with them swarms of bees, and all manner of that which was upon the face of the land, seeds of every kind.*

Why would Joseph Smith take a risk in saying there is a connection between the word “deseret” and the honeybee?

Recent scholarship has found that the honeybee has long been associated with the king of Egypt. The crown of Lower Egypt was named dšrt (pronounced Deshret) and [the word was even used as a replacement for “bee” in Egyptian texts.](#)

What are the odds that deseret would have such a meaning? How would Joseph Smith guess this?

See:

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Deseret](#)

## **How would Joseph Smith be able to create a wordplay on “Abish”?**

The Book of Mormon contains many wordplays. While none can be definitively proved, many are quite obvious. One example is found in Alma 19:16:

*And it came to pass that they did call on the name of the Lord, in their might, even until they had all fallen to the earth, save it were one of the Lamanitish women, whose name was Abish, she having been converted unto the Lord for many years, on account of a remarkable vision of her father—*

Matthew L. Bowen comments:

*The mention of “Abish” and a “remarkable vision of her father” (Alma 19:16) is itself remarkable, since women and servants are rarely named in the Book of Mormon text. As a Hebrew/Lehite name, “Abish” suggests the meaning “Father is a man,” the midrashic components ‘ab- (“father”) and ‘iš (“man”) being phonologically evident. Thus, the immediate juxtaposition of the name “Abish” with the terms “her father” and “women” raises the possibility of wordplay on her name in the underlying text. Since ‘ab-names were frequently theophoric — i.e., they had reference to a divine Father (or could be so understood) — the mention of “Abish” (“Father is a man”) takes on additional theological significance in the context of Lamoni’s vision of the Redeemer being “born of a woman and ... redeem[ing] all mankind” (Alma 19:13). The wordplay on “Abish” thus contributes thematically to the narrative’s presentation of Ammon’s typological ministrations among the Lamanites as a “man” endowed with great power, which helped the Lamanites understand the concept of “the Great Spirit” (Yahweh) becoming “man.” Moreover, this wordplay accords with the consistent Book of Mormon doctrine that the “very Eternal Father” would (and did) condescend to become “man” and Suffering Servant.*

*- [Matthew L. Bowen - Father Is a Man: The Remarkable Mention of the Name Abish in Alma 19:16 and Its Narrative Context](#)*

How would Joseph Smith know any Hebrew in order to create wordplays like this?

See:

- [Matthew L. Bowen - Father Is a Man: The Remarkable Mention of the Name Abish in Alma 19:16 and Its Narrative Context](#)

## **Is the wordplay on the name “Alma” just a coincidence?**

Matthew L. Bowen summarizes a wordplay on the name “Alma”:

*The biographical introduction of Alma the Elder into the Book of Mormon narrative (Mosiah 17:2) also introduces the name Alma into the text for the first time, this in close juxtaposition with a description of Alma as a “young man.” The best explanation for the name Alma is that it derives from the Semitic term g’lm (Hebrew ‘elem), “young man,” “youth,” “lad.” This suggests the strong probability of*



*an intentional wordplay on the name Alma in the Book of Mormon's underlying text: Alma became "[God's] young man" or "servant."*

- [Matthew L. Bowen - Alma — Young Man, Hidden Prophet](#)

How would Joseph Smith have known the Hebrew necessary for this wordplay?

See:

- [Matthew L. Bowen - Alma — Young Man, Hidden Prophet](#)

## Why is there a wordplay on the name “Aminadab”?

Matthew L. Bowen explains the meaning of the name “Aminadab”:

*Aminadab, Amminadab, or Amminadib, taken as a theophoric [i.e., divine] name—as names in the Ancient Near East commonly were—denotes “My kinsman is willing”—i.e., Yahweh as “my (divine) kinsman” [‘ammî] “is willing [nādāb].” However, Aminadab can also be taken as a non-theophoric name, meaning, “my (non-divine) kinsman is willing,” “my people are willing”/“noble,” or “my kin are willing”/“noble” (‘ammî “my people” + nādāb “willing”). ...*

*Aminadab is one of a handful of nādāb names born by Israelites in the scriptures, including Abinadab (“my father is willing/generous”), Nadab (“willing,” “generous,” “noble”), and its longer form Nedabiah (“Yahweh is willing,” “Yahweh is generous,” “Yahweh is noble”)*

- [Matthew L. Bowen - “My People Are Willing”: The Mention of Aminadab in the Narrative Context of Helaman 5-6](#)

While Joseph Smith may have seen the name in the Bible, how would he know the meaning? Evidence Central summarizes a wordplay on this name in the Book of Mormon:

*In various ways, the layers of meaning associated with the Hebrew name Aminadab (‘ammî: “people,” “kinsmen,” “divine kinsman”; nādāb: “willing,” “noble”), as found in the Bible, are present in the Book of Mormon. Aminadab himself was a noble and willing kinsman to Nephi and Lehi. Through his efforts, the Lamanites willingly became the Lord’s people. And the Lord—the divine kinsman—willingly accepted the Lamanites as His people, despite their former sins. Furthermore, just as the elements in the name Aminadab are directly associated with sacrificial offerings in the Bible, Jesus directly associated the Lamanite conversion story in the Book of Mormon with sacrificial offerings. Although the name Aminadab is found in the Bible, it seems improbable that Joseph Smith, who*

*was unfamiliar with Hebrew etymologies in 1829, would have been able to draw out the name’s meaning and thematically weave it into the text.*

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Aminadab Wordplay](#)

How would Joseph Smith have been able to “draw out” the name’s meaning to create this wordplay?

See:

- [Matthew L. Bowen - “My People Are Willing”: The Mention of Aminadab in the Narrative Context of Helaman 5-6](#)
- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Aminadab Wordplay](#)

## **Is the wordplay on the name “Antion” a coincidence?**

The Book of Mormon also contains wordplays which would not require any knowledge of Hebrew, but are nevertheless still of interest.

Evidence Central summarizes one example:

*When describing the Nephite monetary system, Mormon mentioned a unit of gold called an antion: “Now an antion of gold is equal to three shiblons” (Alma 11:19). Readers might notice that the name of the chief ruler (“Antionah”) who is discussed in the very next chapter (Alma 12:20) contains the complete name of the gold monetary unit (antion). This suggests that Mormon may have intended for readers to see a play on words here. The plausibility of this proposal is significantly enhanced by the fact that the name Zeezrom, another antagonist in this narrative (Alma 10:31), also contains the complete form of a Nephite monetary unit—in this case, the “ezrom of silver” (Alma 11:6).*

*...There were many judges, lawyers, and other religious leaders who participated in Alma and Amulek’s trial (Alma 14:18, 23, 27), including the chief judge of the land, who is referred to no less than ten times throughout Alma 14. Yet none of these other individuals, including the chief judge, are supplied with names. It seems to be no coincidence that the only named antagonists—Antionah and Zeezrom—bring to mind the very gold and silver that had corrupted the wicked rulers of Ammonihah, which is arguably one of the most prominent themes in the story (see Alma 10:32, Alma 11:3). As Mormon noted, it was their “sole purpose to get gain” (Alma 11:20).*

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Wordplay on Antion](#)

Why would Joseph Smith only specifically name Antion and Zeezrom?

See:

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Wordplay on Antion](#)

## Why would King Benjamin talk about themes related to the meaning of his own name?

Matthew L. Bowen explains one wordplay from the discourse of King Benjamin:

*Royal sonship is a key theme of Mosiah 1–6, including King Benjamin’s seminal address at the temple in Zarahemla (Mosiah 2–5) on the occasion of his son Mosiah’s enthronement. Benjamin, however, caps this covenant sermon, not with an assertion of his son’s royal status and privileges, but with a radical declaration of his people’s royal rebirth (or adoption) as “the children of Christ, his sons and his daughters” (Mosiah 5:7) and their potential enthronement at God’s “right hand” (5:9). Similar to rhetorical wordplay involving proper names found in the Bible, the Book of Mormon, and other ancient texts, Benjamin’s juxtaposition of “sons”/“daughters” and the “right hand” constitutes a deliberate wordplay on his own name, traditionally taken to mean “son of the right hand.” The name of Christ, rather than Benjamin’s own name, is given to all his people as a new name— a “throne” name. However, he warns them against refusing to take upon them this throne name and thus being found “on the left hand of God” (5:10), a warning that also constitutes an allusion to his name. Benjamin’s ultimate hope is for his people’s royal, divine sonship/daughterhood to be eternally “sealed.”*

*- [Matthew L. Bowen - Becoming Sons and Daughters at God's Right Hand: King Benjamin Benjamin's Rhetorical Wordplay on His Own Name](#)*

How would Joseph Smith have known the meaning of “Benjamin”?

See:

- [Matthew L. Bowen - Becoming Sons and Daughters at God's Right Hand: King Benjamin Benjamin's Rhetorical Wordplay on His Own Name](#)

## Why is there a wordplay on the name “Cain” in the Book of Mormon?

While Joseph Smith would have been familiar with the story of Cain, he likely would not have known the meaning of the name.

Matthew L. Bowen explains the wordplay on Cain's name in the Book of Mormon:

*The biblical etiology (story of origin) for the name “Cain” associates his name with the Hebrew verb qny/qnh, “to get,” “gain,” “acquire,” “create,” or “procreate” in a positive sense. A fuller form of this etiology, known to us indirectly through the Book of Mormon text and directly through the restored text of the Joseph Smith Translation, creates additional wordplay on “Cain” that associates his name with murder to “get gain.” This fuller narrative is thus also an etiology for organized evil—secret combinations “built up to get power and gain” (Ether 8:22–23; 11:15). The original etiology exerted a tremendous influence on Book of Mormon writers (e.g., Nephi, Jacob, Alma, Mormon, and Moroni) who frequently used allusions to this narrative and sometimes replicated the wordplay on “Cain” and “getting gain.” The fuller narrative seems to have exerted its greatest influence on Mormon and Moroni, who witnessed the destruction of their nation firsthand — destruction catalyzed by Cainitic secret combinations. Moroni, in particular, invokes the Cain etiology in describing the destruction of the Jaredites by secret combinations. The destruction of two nations by Cainitic secret combinations stand as two witnesses and a warning to latter-day Gentiles (and Israel) against building up these societies and allowing them to flourish.*

- [Matthew L. Bowen - Getting Cain and Gain](#)

How would Joseph Smith manage to create this wordplay if he didn't know the meaning of “Cain”?

See:

- [Matthew L. Bowen - Getting Cain and Gain](#)

## **How would Joseph Smith have been able to create a "masterpiece" in the book of Enos which includes multiple wordplays?**

The name Enos is a Hebrew [poetic term for ‘man’](#) and the meaning of his name forms part of his own introduction (like Nephi):

*Behold, it came to pass that I, Enos, knowing my father that he was a just man—for he taught me in his language, and also in the nurture and admonition of the Lord—and blessed be the name of my God for it*

In addition to this simple wordplay, Bowen notes:

*The fact that ’ėnôš is a poetic synonym of ’iš (“man”) and shares the same plural form, ’ănāšīm, further helps us appreciate Enos’s sophisticated use of Genesis 32*

*and its wordplay. On one level, Enos’s “wrestle” enabled him to identify with his ancestor Jacob/Israel and with his own father Jacob. On still another level, the salient occurrence of ʾiš and ʾānāšīm in the pericope allowed ʾēnōš to identify with Esau and the divine “man” (ʾiš) – the “men” (ʾānāšīm, “Enoses”) – with whom Jacob/Israel “wrestled” and “struggled” and whom he eventually “embraced.”*

*- [Matthew L. Bowen - “I Kneeled Down Before My Maker”: Allusions to Esau in the Book of Enos](#)*

Matthew L. Bowen summarizes how the wordplays in the Book of Enos make it a masterpiece:

*Enos’s writings begin with him as an Esau-like “man” wrestling a Jacob like “wrestle” before God (Enos 1:1-4). Enos initially describes himself in terms reminiscent of Esau – e.g., as one who “hunt[ed]” and “hungered.” They conclude with his “having been wrought upon by the power of God” (i.e., having been sanctified by Christ’s atonement which motivated him to testify of that atonement throughout his life; Enos 1:26). Enos further anticipates his “putting on” immortality (i.e., the divine nature) and becoming like God, this in preparation for “seeing his face with pleasure” (Genesis 1:27).*

*The Genesis 27 narrative, which describes Jacob obtaining the blessing intended for Esau by their father Isaac, creates a strong paronomastic link between the name Esau and the Hebrew verb ʾšh/ʾšy. Accordingly, Enos uses ʾšh/ʾšy-terminology (“Maker,” “how is it done?” “it shall be done unto them,” “wrought upon”) in describing his obtaining of a divine blessing, his Jacob-like transformation through the atonement, and the Lord’s keeping his covenant with Enos and his fathers.*

*Enos’s skillful adaptation and reworking of numerous details from the Jacob-Esau cycle to tell the story of his own divine “wrestle,” experiences with Christ’s atonement, subsequent spiritual “struggles,” and final sanctification through the Christ’s atonement makes his autobiography a short masterpiece. They further reveal Enos to have been a diligent reader of the scriptures and a faithful “man” who became a prophet of God worthy of the legacy of his father Jacob and his patriarchal ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.*

*- [Matthew L. Bowen - “I Kneeled Down Before My Maker”: Allusions to Esau in the Book of Enos](#)*

Would we expect Joseph Smith to be able to create a masterpiece like this?

See:

- [Matthew L. Bowen - “I Kneeled Down Before My Maker”: Allusions to Esau in the Book of Enos](#)

## Where would Joseph Smith have learned how to create a wordplay on the name “Ephraim”?

The phrase “the fruit of my loins” (or variations of this phrase) appears 20 times in the Book of Mormon, with 19 of them being found in 2 Nephi 3. For example Lehi speaks to Joseph in 2 Nephi 3:3-4:

*And now, Joseph, my last-born, whom I have brought out of the wilderness of mine afflictions, may the Lord bless thee forever, for thy seed shall not utterly be destroyed.*

*For behold, thou art the fruit of my loins; and I am a descendant of Joseph who was carried captive into Egypt. And great were the covenants of the Lord which he made unto Joseph.*

Matthew L. Bowen and Loren Blake Spendlove ask:

*So, why would this single chapter in the Book of Mormon use this obscure FL (fruit of my loins) collocation with such frequency when it is rarely found in other books of scripture, including in the other books and chapters of the Book of Mormon? The answer to that question largely resides within the stories of Jacob’s adoption of Ephraim and Manasseh as “Israel” and of Jacob blessing his sons in Genesis 49.*

*- [Matthew L. Bowen and Loren Blake Spendlove - “Thou Art the Fruit of My Loins”: The Interrelated Symbolism and Meanings of the Names Joseph and Ephraim in Ancient Scripture](#)*

They continue:

*Lehi told his son Joseph, “Thou art the fruit of my loins, and I am a descendant of Joseph” (2 Nephi 3:4). The first line, “Thou art the fruit of my loins” parallels the second, “I am a descendant of Joseph.” In essence, Lehi was saying that his own son Joseph, the “fruitful son,” was the fruit of his loins in the same sense that he was the fruit of his father Joseph, the “fruitful son” of Jacob. In a poetic way, Lehi’s son Joseph is both “fruit” (as the son of Lehi) and “fruitful” (named after their common ancestor Joseph, whose name is etiologized with the harvest verb ʿāsap (“gather [in]”; “bring in”; “take away”) and its actual etymological source, the verb yāsap in the sense of “adding” a son or “branch” (bēn) — i.e., “fruit” or posterity. We propose that the abundant use of the FL collocation in JST Genesis 48 and 50 and in the Book of Mormon is best explained as an onomastic wordplay on an allusion to the interrelated meanings of the names Joseph (“may he add”) and Ephraim (“doubly fruitful”).*

*- [Matthew L. Bowen and Loren Blake Spendlove - “Thou Art the Fruit of My Loins”: The Interrelated Symbolism and Meanings of the Names Joseph and Ephraim in Ancient Scripture](#)*

How would Joseph Smith have known how to create this wordplay?

See:

- [Matthew L. Bowen and Loren Blake Spendlove - “Thou Art the Fruit of My Loins”: The Interrelated Symbolism and Meanings of the Names Joseph and Ephraim in Ancient Scripture](#)

## **Why would Joseph Smith use the expression “a garb of secrecy”?**

Not only does the Book of Mormon contain wordplays which could go entirely undetected, it also contains wordplays which could surprise the reader.

John A. Tvedtnes and Matthew Roper discuss an example in Helaman:

*In Helaman 9:6, we read that the Nephite judge had been “stabbed by his brother by a garb of secrecy.” Critics have contended that this makes no sense in English, since “garb” has the same meaning as “garment” or “clothing.” This idiom is the same as the English “under cloak of secrecy.” But the Hebrew word beged means both “garment” or “garb” (e.g., Genesis 39:12–13) and “treachery.” This would seem to be a wordplay in the Hebrew original of the Book of Mormon. As for the preposition “by,” in Hebrew its range of meaning includes “in,” “with,” and “by means of.”*

*- [John A. Tvedtnes and Mark Roper - One Small Step](#)*

Why would Joseph Smith have used a wordplay which could confuse the reader?

See:

- [John A. Tvedtnes and Mark Roper - One Small Step](#)

## **Would Joseph Smith have taken the time to create a wordplay on the name “Heshlon”?**

Some wordplays in the Book of Mormon form the central point in a chiasmus, such as the wordplay on the name “Heshlon”.

Matthew L. Bowen and Pedro Olavarria explain:

*The name Heshlon, attested once (in Ether 13:28), as a toponym in the Book of Mormon most plausibly denotes “place of crushing.” The meaning of Heshlon thus becomes very significant in the context of Ether 13:25–31, which describes the crushing or enfeebling of Coriantumr’s armies and royal power. This meaning is also significant in the wider context of Moroni’s narrative of the Jaredites’ destruction. Fittingly, the name Heshlon itself serves as a literary turning point in a chiasmic structure which describes the fateful reversal of Coriantumr’s individual fortunes and the worsening of the Jaredites’ collective fortunes. Perhaps Moroni, who witnessed the gradual crushing and destruction of the Nephites, mentioned this name in his abridgement of the Book of Ether on account of the high irony of its meaning in view of the Jaredite war of attrition which served as precursor to the destruction of the Nephites.*

*- [Matthew L. Bowen and Pedro Olavarria - Place of Crushing: The Literary Function of Heshlon in Ether 13:25-31](#)*

If it would be difficult enough for Joseph Smith to create wordplays, how more difficult would it be to dictate them as part of a chiasmus?

See:

- [Matthew L. Bowen and Pedro Olavarria - Place of Crushing: The Literary Function of Heshlon in Ether 13:25-31](#)

## Where would Joseph Smith have learned the meaning of the name “Ishmael”?

Ishmael is a Semitic and Hebrew name meaning [“May El \[God\] Hearken”](#) or [“El \[God\] has heard.”](#) Interestingly in 2 Nephi 1:28-29 we read:

*And now my son, Laman, and also Lemuel and Sam, **and also my sons who are the sons of Ishmael**, behold, if ye will **hearken** unto the voice of Nephi ye shall not perish. And if ye will **hearken** unto him I leave unto you a blessing, yea, even my first blessing.*

*But if ye will not **hearken** unto him I take away my first blessing, yea, even my blessing, and it shall rest upon him. (emphasis added)*

Why the repetition of the word “hearken” when speaking to the sons of Ishmael? Matthew L. Bowen comments:

*Lehi’s admonition and blessing, as it appears in Nephi’s text, closely juxtaposes the name Ishmael with a threefold repetition of the verb šāma ‘. If we include “obey” from 2 Nephi 1:27, the repetition is fourfold. The polyptotonic repetition of šāma ‘ around the name Ishmael would have had the immediate rhetorical effect of*



*garnering the attention of Ishmael's sons (and probably any of his daughters who were present on the occasion). The imminence and urgency of their decision to "hearken" is accentuated by the repetition of the root šāma ' in its verbal and onomastic forms.*

*- [Matthew L. Bowen - "If Ye Will Hearken": Lehi's Rhetorical Wordplay on Ishmael in 2 Nephi 1:28-29 and Its Implications](#)*

Is the repetition of the word "hearken" here just a coincidence?

See:

- [Matthew L. Bowen - "If Ye Will Hearken": Lehi's Rhetorical Wordplay on Ishmael in 2 Nephi 1:28-29 and Its Implications](#)

## **Why would Jacob be the only person in the Book of Mormon to use the word "protector" (the meaning of his name)?**

Nephi says in 1 Nephi 5:14:

*And it came to pass that my father, Lehi, also found upon the plates of brass a genealogy of his fathers; wherefore he knew that he was a descendant of Joseph; yea, even that Joseph who was the son of **Jacob**, who was sold into Egypt, and who was **preserved** by the hand of the Lord, that he might **preserve** his father, Jacob, and all his household **from perishing** with famine. (emphasis added)*

Matthew L. Bowen comments on this scripture:

*Indeed, there appears to be an allusion to the meaning of Jacob's name ("may he protect") in the verb translated "preserve" (cf. Genesis 32:20: "And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life [soul] is preserved [wattināṣēl napšī]"; Genesis 45:5: "God did send me [Joseph] before you to preserve life [lēmiḥyâ]"). It is worth noting here that the Semitic verb 'qb as preserved in the Ethiopic verb 'aqaba ("guard, watch, keep watch, safeguard, tend [flocks], preserve ... protect") and substantive participle 'aqābbi ("guardian, guard, keeper, watchman, protector, official" cf. kjv Akkub) and South Arabic 'qbt(n) ("watchtower") and \*m'qbt ("guard, guardian") convey this sense of protection.*

*- [Matthew L. Bowen - Jacob's Protector](#)*

Where would Joseph Smith have found out the meaning of the name "Jacob"?

See:

- [Matthew L. Bowen - Jacob's Protector](#)

## Why is there a wordplay on the name “Jared”?

The Book of Mormon seems to go out of its way to mention “descending” or “coming down” in close proximity to the word “Jared”, such as in Ether 2:4:

*And it came to pass that when **they** [the Jaredites] had **come down** into the valley of Nimrod the Lord **came down** and talked with the **brother of Jared**; and he was in a cloud, and the brother of Jared saw him not. (emphasis added)*

Matthew L. Bowen comments on this scripture:

*As editor Moroni appears to have crafted the narrative to include onomastic wordplay on the name Jared (written in the Hebrew Bible as yered or yāred), a patriarchal name as noted above, which sounds very similar to the Hebrew verb yārad (“descend,” “go down”). The people of Jared “come down” into the valley of Nimrod, the appointed place where the Lord “comes down” to “meet” them.*

*- [Matthew L. Bowen - Coming Down and Bringing Down: Pejorative Onomastic Allusions to the Jaredites in Helaman 6:25, 6:38, and Ether 2:11](#)*

Bowen continues:

*Thus, Moroni appears to have intentionally described the Lord’s theophanic “condescensions” using language from Exodus and its etiological descriptions of the function of the tent of the meeting. We witness the same phenomenon as the narrative progresses. Moroni records, “And it came to pass at the end of four years that the Lord came again unto the brother of Jared [yered/yāred] and stood in a cloud and talked with him. And for the space of three hours did the Lord talk with the brother of Jared and chastened him because he remembered not to call upon the name of the Lord” (Ether 2:14; see further Ether 4:1; 6:2, 19, 21 which echo the foregoing wordplay on [brother of] Jared/yārad).*

*Thus, Moroni seems to have made an ongoing narrative effort to associate the name Jared with the Lord’s theophanic “condescensions” or “coming[s] down” and the origin of the Jaredites as a people with “coming down” or “going down.” One might even go further in surmising that the importance of the name Jared in the foregoing semiotic context offers a plausible explanation for why Moroni consistently opts for the circumlocution “the brother of Jared” over the name Moriancumer (attested only Ether 2:13) in telling his Jaredite narrative. Indeed, this same onomastic principle seems to hold for Mormon’s and Moroni’s respective uses of the term “Jaredites” in Moroni 9:23 and “people of Jared” on the title page of the Book of Mormon and in Moroni 1:1. The term “Jaredites” itself suggests the notion of*

*yōrēdīm* “those who go down” (and eventually “go down to destruction”). In other words, the name “Jaredites” or “people of Jared” tells their story.

- [Matthew L. Bowen - Coming Down and Bringing Down: Pejorative Onomastic Allusions to the Jaredites in Helaman 6:25, 6:38, and Ether 2:11](#)

How would Joseph Smith have known how to dictate these wordplays?

See:

- [Matthew L. Bowen - Coming Down and Bringing Down: Pejorative Onomastic Allusions to the Jaredites in Helaman 6:25, 6:38, and Ether 2:11](#)

## Wouldn't Joseph Smith have needed an understanding of Hebrew to include wordplays such as “Jershon”?

As well as wordplays on people’s names, the Book of Mormon also contains wordplays on place names such as Jershon. The name Jershon [most likely derived from the Hebrew root yrš \(yarash\), which means “to take possession of” or “to inherit”](#).

[Matthew L. Bowen](#) notes how there are multiple wordplays on the name Jershon in the Book of Mormon, such as in Alma 35:14:

*And Alma, and Ammon, and their brethren, and also the two sons of Alma returned to the land of Zarahemla, after having been instruments in the hands of God of bringing many of the Zoramites to repentance; and as many as were brought to repentance were driven out of their land; but **they have lands for their inheritance in the land of Jershon**, and they have taken up arms to defend themselves, and their wives, and children, and their lands (emphasis added)*

Why would this just be a coincidence? How would Joseph Smith have known the Hebrew meaning of “Jershon”?

See:

- [Matthew L. Bowen - “They Were Moved with Compassion” \(Alma 27:4; 53:13\): Toponymic Wordplay on Zarahemla and Jershon](#)

## Is the wordplay on the name “Joseph” just a coincidence?

Some wordplays in the Book of Mormon would require an understanding of a name as well as an understanding of other Hebrew words. The wordplay on the name “Joseph” brings

together two scriptures from Isaiah which share a common verb, as explained by Matthew L. Bowen:

*In explaining the prophecies of Isaiah in which his soul delighted, Nephi sets up an intriguing wordplay on the name Joseph. On several occasions he combines segments of Isaiah 11:11 and Isaiah 29:14 to foretell the gathering and restoration of Israel at the time of the coming forth of additional scripture. The most discernible reason for Nephi's interpretation of these two specific texts in the light of each other is their shared use of the Hebrew verb *yāsap*, which literally means "to add" but can have the more developed senses to "continue" or "proceed to do" something and "to do again." This verb is also the source of the name Joseph, which means "may He [the Lord] add," "He shall add," or "He has added."*

*...Thus when Nephi combined these two prophecies together through their common use of *yāsap*, he was also using a wordplay on the name Joseph both to remind us that it was the seed of Joseph that would be gathered and to foretell the involvement of another Joseph, Joseph Smith, in the gathering and in the coming forth of scripture.*

*Isaiah 11:11 states: "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again [*yôšîp*] the second time to recover the remnant of his people," while Isaiah 29:14 declares: "Therefore, behold, I will proceed [*yôšîp*] to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder." Nephi's joining of these two passages is most noticeable in 2 Nephi 25:17, where he foretells the latter-day gathering of Judah: "And the Lord will set his hand again [*yôšîp*] the second time to restore his people from their lost and fallen state. Wherefore, he will proceed [*yôšîp*] to do a marvelous work and a wonder among the children of men." Here Nephi states that the Lord "shall bring forth his words unto [his people]" words they have not previously had, "for the purpose of convincing them of the true Messiah" (25:18) and "that the promise may be fulfilled unto Joseph [*yôšēp*]" (25:21)*

*- [Matthew L. Bowen - "He Shall Add": Wordplay on the Name Joseph and an Early Instance of Gezera Shawa in the Book of Mormon](#)*

Would Joseph Smith have been able to create a wordplay like this on his own?

See:

- [Matthew L. Bowen - "He Shall Add": Wordplay on the Name Joseph and an Early Instance of Gezera Shawa in the Book of Mormon](#)

## Where would Joseph Smith learn how to create a wordplay on the words “joy” and “boasting”?

In Alma 26:10 Aaron rebukes Ammon:

*And it came to pass that when Ammon had said these words, his brother Aaron rebuked him, saying: Ammon, I fear that thy joy doth carry thee away unto boasting.*

Loren Blake Spendlove explains an interesting element of this exchange:

*[T]he Hebrew Bible render the verbs להלל (lehallel) and להתהלל (lehithallel) — both derived from the root ל-ל-ל (h-l-l) — as either to praise, to boast, or to glory. A key translation feature to point out is that in order for the verb to be rendered as to boast or to glory, the subject of the verb must boast or glory in someone or something (see above examples). The Hebrew equivalent of in is the preposition ב (the letter bet), which is always prefixed to the noun to which it is related. For example, the phrase “to boast/glory in Jehovah” would be expressed as “להתהלל ביהוה” (lehithallel bYahweh). One can boast/glory in the Lord as well as in one’s wisdom, strength, riches, etc.*

*It is equally important to point out that to praise does not carry this same grammatical requirement. Rather, what we often find in the Bible is that when להלל (lehallel) is translated as to praise, the object of the verb (the Lord, for example) is often preceded by the preposition ל (the letter lamed). As with the Hebrew word for in (ל, ב is always prefixed to the object of the verb. The word ל can be translated as to or for, but when referring to the idea of praise, it is an unnecessary preposition in English grammar. So, “to praise Jehovah” would be expressed as “ליהוה להלל” (lehallel lYahweh) in Hebrew, with the ל prefixed to יהוה (Yahweh), resulting in ליהוה (lYahweh).*

*With this introduction to biblical usage we can now examine Ammon’s response to Aaron’s charge of boasting. In the nine verses leading up to Aaron’s rebuke, Ammon never used the words boast or glory, and we find the word praise used only once but as a noun rather than as a verb: “Blessed be the name of our God; let us sing to his praise, yea, let us give thanks to his holy name, for he doth work righteousness forever” (Alma 26:8). However, following Aaron’s accusation, Ammon used the words praise, boast and glory a total of twelve times in his response. These usages appear to be an intentional repetition of Aaron’s original rebuke of boasting and need to be understood as related terms in Hebrew. Ammon’s repeated use of praise, boast, and glory are meant to counter Aaron’s implied accusation that Ammon was boasting in himself. On the contrary, Ammon’s repetitive use of these terms helped clarify that his initial words were intended to be understood as praising, boasting in, and glorying in the Lord, rather than in himself.*

- [Loren Blake Spendlove - Now If This Is Boasting, Even So Will I Boast!](#)

Wouldn't this wordplay be beyond Joseph's comprehension?

See:

- [Loren Blake Spendlove - Now If This Is Boasting, Even So Will I Boast!](#)

## Why is there a wordplay on “Judah/Jews” in the Book of Mormon?

Jeff Lindsay summarizes this wordplay:

*The name Judah and the Jews, with Judah being related to Hebrew roots which can mean "to offer praise out of a feeling of gratitude" or to "praise," "thank," or "acknowledge." In his chapter, "What They the Jews?," Bowen shows how Nephi applies these meanings as he urges the future Gentiles to grateful to the Jews for the scriptures they have preserved for the world and to resist the temptation to despise and persecute the Jews (2 Nephi 29:3-6). "What thank they the Jews?" in 2 Nephi 29:4, the Lord's condemning question of future anti-Semitic Gentiles, appears to provide a direct word play between the words for "Jews" and "thank." To say that the Jews have helped bring forth "salvation" to the Gentiles (also 2 Nephi 29:4) may also be a word play on the name of Jesus. Bowen also observes that Nephi's closing words which call upon us to "respect the words of the Jews" (2 Nephi 33:14) further underscores the revealed message shared in 2 Nephi 29. Bowen also notes that the Book of Mormon offers the strongest condemnation of anti-Semitism found anywhere in the scriptures. How appropriate that it would be done with Hebraic wordplays.*

- [Jeff Lindsay - Book of Mormon Nuggets](#)

Would Joseph Smith have used a Hebrew wordplay to urge Gentiles to be grateful for the Jews?

See:

- [Jeff Lindsay - Book of Mormon Nuggets](#)

## Why does the Book of Mormon associate the name “Laman” with invitations to be “faithful”?

While the name Laman is attested in the Near East, its meaning is uncertain. However Matthew L. Bowen notes:

*If the frequently paired name Lemuel—which transparently means ‘Belonging to El’—can be used as an analogue for Laman, perhaps we get nearer to how the name Laman might have been understood by Hebrew speakers and hearers, if not to an as-yet irretrievable etymology. In this scenario, the initial lē in Laman would, as in the name Lael (lā ‘ēl) and the longer form lēmô in Lemuel, connote possession: ‘belonging to.’ In terms of sound, but not necessarily etymology, the remainder of the name evokes forms of the Semitic/Hebrew root ‘mn: ‘ōmen (‘faithfulness,’ ‘trustworthiness’), ‘āmēn (‘verily, truly,’ ‘surely!’ < ‘trustworthy’), ‘ēmun/‘ēmûn (adjective, ‘faithful, trustworthy’; noun, ‘trusting, faithfulness,’ ‘faithfulness, trustworthiness’), ‘ēmûnâ (‘faith,’ ‘firmness, steadfastness, fidelity’; ‘steadfastness’; ‘trustworthiness, faithfulness’). Thus it is possible to hear something akin to ‘belonging to [the God of] faithfulness’ or ‘belonging to [the God of] truth’ (cf. “God of truth,” “God of faithfulness,” ‘ēlohê ‘āmēn, Isaiah 65:16, cf. Christ as “the Amen” in Revelation 3:14; “the faithful God,” hā ‘ēl hanne ‘ēmān, Deuteronomy 7:9) in the name Laman, whatever its actual etymology. It would have been, in any case, not only natural but almost irresistible for an Israelite to associate the name Laman with the root ‘mn on the basis of homonymy (i.e., a play involving similar sounds or paronomasia).*

*- [Matthew L. Bowen - Laman and Nephi as Key-Words: An Etymological, Narratological, and Rhetorical Approach to Understanding Lamanites and Nephites as Religious, Political, and Cultural Descriptors](#)*

With this meaning of the name Laman, Bowen goes on:

*If the name Laman can be linked to Hebrew ‘mn—even if by sound association, whatever its real etymology—then Nephi’s emphatic attempts to contrast his faith with older brothers Laman’s and Lemuel’s lack of faith become far more than didactic ideation. Laman and Lemuel did not believe their father, “neither did they believe that Jerusalem, that great city, could be destroyed according to the words of the prophets” (1 Nephi 2:13). Nephi, in contrast, states: “I did believe all the words which had been spoken by my father” (1 Nephi 2:16).*

*To brothers lacking covenant ‘ēmûnâ—faith and faithfulness—when seeking the plates of brass: “Wherefore **let us be faithful** in keeping the commandments of the Lord” (1 Nephi 3:16); “I [did] persuade my brethren **that they might be faithful** in keeping the commandments of God” (1 Nephi 3:21); “Let us go up again unto Jerusalem, and **let us be faithful** in keeping the commandments of the Lord” (1 Nephi 4:1); “Yea, and how is it that ye have forgotten that the Lord is able to do all*

*things according to his will, for the children of men?—if it so be that they exercise **faith in him**. Wherefore, **let us be faithful in him**. And if it so be that we are **faithful in him**, we shall obtain the land of promise” (1 Nephi 7:12-13). Later in that same episode Nephi is obliged to exercise his own faith “according to my faith [’ēmūnātī] which is in me [> thee], wilt thou deliver me from the hands of my brethren” (1 Nephi 7:17).*

*- [Matthew L. Bowen - Laman and Nephi as Key-Words: An Etymological, Narratological, and Rhetorical Approach to Understanding Lamanites and Nephites as Religious, Political, and Cultural Descriptors](#)*

Why would Nephi continually encourage Laman to be “faithful”?

See:

- [Matthew L. Bowen - Laman and Nephi as Key-Words: An Etymological, Narratological, and Rhetorical Approach to Understanding Lamanites and Nephites as Religious, Political, and Cultural Descriptors](#)

## **How could Joseph Smith manage to create a wordplay on the word “law”?**

While the Hebrew word “tôrâ” is most often translated as “law” in the Bible, Matthew L. Bowen notes the root of the word:

*More than “law”—and all that “law” has come to connote in English—the Hebrew noun tôrâ denotes “direction, instruction.” The Hebrew word tôrâ almost certainly represents a cognate of the Akkadian târtu(m), “instruction,” “commission,” “directive,” “omen,” “liver” (of an animal), from the verb wâru(m), meaning “instruct, govern.” The noun tôrâ derives from the verbal root yry/yrh (III), meaning “instruct, teach.” However, this verb originally seems to have denoted the idea of “stretching out the finger, or the hand, to point out a route.” For example, Genesis 46:48 records, “And he [Jacob] sent Judah before him unto Joseph [in Egypt], to direct [lēhôrôt, “to point”] his face unto Goshen; and they came into the land of Goshen.” Later, in the Exodus narrative, the narrator states “the Lord shewed him [wayyôrehû, pointed out to Moses] a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet” (Exodus 15:25; italics added). The King James Version of the proverb that states “he [a wicked man] teacheth [mōreh] with his fingers” (Proverbs 6:13; italics added) literally means “he pointeth with his fingers” (New Revised Standard Version, “pointing the fingers”).*

*- [Matthew L. Bowen - Scripture Note: “Pointing Our Souls to Him”](#)*



This is significant because two Book of Mormon scriptures mention the law in connection with “pointing”. First in Jacob 4:5:

*Behold, they believed in Christ and worshiped the Father in his name, and also we worship the Father in his name. And for this intent we keep the law of Moses, it pointing our souls to him; and for this cause it is sanctified unto us for righteousness, even as it was accounted unto Abraham in the wilderness to be obedient unto the commands of God in offering up his son Isaac, which is a similitude of God and his Only Begotten Son.*

Also in Alma 34:14

*And behold, this is the whole meaning of the law, every whit pointing to that great and last sacrifice; and that great and last sacrifice will be the Son of God, yea, infinite and eternal.*

Doesn't this show an understanding of Hebrew which Joseph Smith didn't have?

See:

- [Matthew L. Bowen - Scripture Note: “Pointing Our Souls to Him”](#)

## Why is there a wordplay on the name “Nephi”?

In 1 Nephi 1:1 we read:

*I, Nephi, having been born of goodly parents, therefore I was taught somewhat in all the learning of my father; and having seen many afflictions in the course of my days, nevertheless, having been highly favored of the Lord in all my days; yea, having had a great knowledge of the goodness and the mysteries of God, therefore I make a record of my proceedings in my days.*

Matthew L. Bowen comments on this scripture:

*The first of these “good” terms is Nephi’s own name. As I have noted elsewhere, this suggests deliberate autobiographical wordplay on — or play on the meaning of — Nephi’s name. The wordplay suggests that Nephi’s name (nfr > nfi = “good,” “goodly,” “fine,” “fair”) is appropriate because of the “goodly” quality of the parenting that he received: he “was taught somewhat in all the learning of [his] father.” While that education included at least something of the “knowledge of the goodness and mysteries of God” — Lehi himself had a testimony of God’s “goodness”*

- [Matthew L. Bowen - Nephi’s Good Inclusio](#)

Did Joseph Smith take the time to include this wordplay in the very first verse of the Book of Mormon?

See:

- [Matthew L. Bowen - Nephi's Good Inclusio](#)

## How would Joseph Smith be able to dictate a wordplay on the name “Noah”?

The Bible includes wordplays on the name “Noah”, as explained by Matthew L. Bowen:

*The use of polyptoton and paronomasia together involving a single name is also found in Biblical Hebrew narrative. ... “Noah,” which connoted “[divine] rest,” interplays with forms of the related root \*nwh and the unrelated root \*nhm (to “comfort,” “console,” “be sorry,” “regret”) throughout the flood narrative. Noah (nōa ḥ, “[divine] rest”) is said to “comfort” (ye naḥa mēnû) his forefathers concerning their work and toil (Genesis 5:29), which interplays with the Lord’s “regretting” (wayyināḥem, niḥamtî) over having created humanity (6:6–7), the ark coming to “rest” (wattānaḥ, 8:4), the dove’s attempt to find “rest” (mānōa ḥ, 8:9), and the “sweet savour” (rēa ḥ hannîḥōa ḥ) of the sacrifice that appeased the Lord after the flood (8:21).*

- [Matthew L. Bowen - “And He Was a Young Man”: The Literary Preservation of Alma’s Autobiographical Wordplay](#)

Interestingly the Book of Mormon also includes wordplays on the name Noah but in an ironic sense:

*We find a similar use of polyptoton and paronomasia on \*nwh and \*nhm in the lead-up to Alma’s story. King Noah and his priests are caricatured as the moral obverse of the biblical Noah. King “Rest” causes the people to “labor exceedingly to support iniquity” (Mosiah 11:6), while his priests laze about on an ornate breastwork built so “that they might rest [\*wayyannîḥû] their bodies and their arms upon [it] while they should speak lying and vain words to [the] people” (11:11). Ironically, neither Noah nor his priests understood their role in achieving Isaiah’s prophetic promise “the Lord hath comforted [niḥam] his people” (Isaiah 52:9; quoted by a priest in Mosiah 12:23, see 12:20–27), an idea integral to the folkmeaning of Noah’s name: (“This same shall comfort us [ye naḥa mēnû] concerning our work and toil of our hands,” Genesis 5:29) and to Zeniff’s hopes for his son and his people (cf. Mosiah 10:22).*

- [Matthew L. Bowen - “And He Was a Young Man”: The Literary Preservation of Alma’s Autobiographical Wordplay](#)

Why is this wordplay in the Book of Mormon? Would Joseph Smith have known the Bible well enough to compose this?

See:

- [Matthew L. Bowen - “And He Was a Young Man”: The Literary Preservation of Alma’s Autobiographical Wordplay](#)
- [Matthew L. Bowen - “This Son Shall Comfort Us”: An Onomastic Tale of Two Noahs](#)

## Why is there a wordplay on the name “Onidah”?

The hill “Onidah” is mentioned in Alma 32:4 when Alma and Amulek are teaching the poor. This is of interest as [many other geographical references are sparse in this part of the Book of Mormon narrative](#).

The Hebrew noun ‘ōni means “affliction” or “poverty” and it is noticeable how much this meaning is mentioned on the hill Onidah. Evidence Central notes all the references:

*Mormon mentions the hill Onidah as he introduces Alma’s teachings to the Zoramites. Alma “beheld that their **afflictions** had truly humbled them, and that they were in preparation to hear the word” ([Alma 32:6](#)). When the leader of the disenfranchised group approaches Alma, the prophet notes, “ye have desired to know of me what ye shall do because ye are **afflicted**” ([Alma 32:24](#)). After teaching them about faith, he then recited a prayer from the prophet Zenos who said, “And thou didst hear me because of mine **afflictions** ... Therefore, I will cry unto thee in all mine **afflictions**” ([Alma 33:11](#)). When Alma finished his sermon, Amulek then addressed the crowd, again noting, “ye have desired of my beloved brother that he should make known unto you what ye should do, because of your **afflictions**” ([Alma 34:3](#)).*

*After preaching to them about repentance and the Atonement of Christ, he then taught that they should “visit the sick and afflicted” ([Alma 34:28](#)) and said, “I would exhort you to have patience, and that ye bear with all manner of afflictions” ([Alma 34:40](#)). He urged them not to revile against those who wronged them, “but that ye have patience, and bear with those afflictions, with a firm hope that ye shall one day rest from all your afflictions” ([Alma 34:41](#)).*

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Wordplay on Onidah](#)

Why the repetition of “afflictions” on the hill “Onidah”?

See:

- [Matthew L. Bowen - He Knows My Affliction: The Hill Onidah as Narrative Counterpart to the Rameumptom](#)
- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Wordplay on Onidah](#)

## Where would Joseph Smith learn how to create a wordplay on the name “Shilom”?

Some wordplays in the Book of Mormon are made more obvious through the use of chiasmus, such as the wordplay on “Shilom”.

Matthew L. Bowen explains how the name Shilom [comes from the Hebrew root “peace”](#). And how this makes perfect sense when seen how it is used in Mosiah 9:5-6:

*A. And it came to pass that I went again with four of my men into the city, in unto the king*

*B. that I might know the disposition of the king,*

*C. that I might know if I might go in with my people*

*D. and possess the land in **peace** [šālôm]*

*A' And I went in unto the king*

*B' and he covenanted with me*

*C' that I might possess the land of Lehi-Nephi,*

*D' and [possess] the land of **Shilom***

Isn't this strong evidence for wordplays in the Book of Mormon?

See:

- [Matthew L. Bowen - “Possess the Land in Peace”: Zeniff’s Ironic Wordplay on Shilom](#)
- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Wordplay on Shilom](#)

## Why is there a wordplay on the name “Zarahemla” in the Book of Mormon?

The two Hebrew terms “zera” and “hemla” combined to mean [“seed of compassion” or “seed of pity”](#) (“seed” could refer equally to plants or offspring). It is interesting to see how the name Zarahemla is used in close proximity to this meaning, as laid out by Evidence Central:

*Mormon described Ammon as “a strong and mighty man, and a descendant [zera] of Zarahemla” ([Mosiah 7:3](#)). When Ammon introduced himself to King Limhi, he said, “I am Ammon, and am a descendant [zera] of Zarahemla, and have come up*

out of the land of Zarahemla” ([Mosiah 7:13](#)). This would have confirmed to Limhi that the people of Zarahemla were yet alive because Ammon—a descendant of Zarahemla—was yet alive and standing before him.

Mormon wrote, “Now there were not so many of the children of Nephi, or so many of those who were descendants of Nephi, as there were of the people of Zarahemla, who was a descendant [zera] of Mulek, and those who came with him out of the wilderness” ([Mosiah 25:2](#)). The Nephite dissenter Coriantumr was also “a descendant [zera] of Zarahemla” ([Helaman 1:15](#)). When Nephi prophesied against the wicked in the city of Zarahemla, he cited an example of the Lord’s power to deliver from destruction, “Yea, do ye not behold that the seed [zera] of Zedekiah are with is?” ([Helaman 8:21](#)).

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Wordplay on Zarahemla](#)

The Book of Mormon also includes wordplays on the “[compassion](#)” or “[pity](#)” element of “Zarahemla”. Would we expect Joseph Smith to put this much effort into the Book of Mormon?

See:

- [Matthew L. Bowen - “They Were Moved with Compassion” \(Alma 27:4; 53:13\): Toponymic Wordplay on Zarahemla and Jershon](#)
- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Wordplay on Zarahemla](#)

## Why does the Book of Mormon continually refer to the Zoramites being “lifted up”?

The Book of Mormon seems to combine the concept of “lifting up” with the name “Zoram”. This would be quite fitting as the name “Zoram” would [likely have been heard and interpreted by an Israelite as belonging to the abundance of -ram names](#), meaning “high” or “exalted”. Evidence Central comments:

*Alma, on two separate occasions, contrasted the Zoramites’ prideful behavior with righteous themes of being “lifted up.” In the first instance, Alma compared the hearts of the Zoramites, which were “lifted up unto great boasting, in their pride,” with his own righteous prayer, in which he “lifted up his voice to heaven” ([Alma 31:25–26](#)). In the second instance, Alma counseled his son Shiblon to not be “lifted up unto pride” or “pray as the Zoramites do” ([Alma 38:11, 13](#)). He contrasted this with the promise that Shiblon would be “lifted up at the last day” if he remembered to put his “trust in God” (v. 5).*

*Further evidence for intentional wordplay comes from the way that the names Cezoram and Seezoram (each a variant of Zoram) are associated with being proud*

*and lifted up. It was in the context of the assassination of a chief judge named Cezoram that the people “began to seek to get gain that they might be lifted up one above another” ([Helaman 6:15–17](#)). Likewise, it was during the reign of Seezoram that the Nephites were “lifted ... up beyond that which is good” ([Helaman 7:26](#)). Thus, during the tenure of these leaders—each with Zoram-associated names—the Nephites generally began to be lifted up in wickedness much like the prideful Zoramites.*

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Wordplay on Zoram](#)

Would Joseph Smith have known how to create wordplays on the same compound element of different names?

See:

- [Matthew L. Bowen - “See That Ye Are Not Lifted Up”: The Name Zoram and Its Paronomastic Pejoration](#)
- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Wordplay on Zoram](#)

## **Why are there so many other possible Hebrew (and other) wordplays in the Book of Mormon?**

The reason why wordplays are significant if found in the Book of Mormon is because they are not obvious in English. Daniel C. Peterson explains:

*Matt Bowen, who has a degree in Hebrew Bible from Catholic University in Washington D.C., has found similar wordplays going on in the Book of Mormon, with the names in the Book of Mormon. And that, from my point of view is extraordinarily interesting and significant because it suggests that the Book of Mormon was not written in English because the wordplays disappear in English. They don't work, but they work if you understand what the underlying Hebrew was likely to have been based on the meaning of the name.*

- [Daniel C. Peterson - Apologetics: What, Why and How?](#)

In addition to the wordplays already covered, the following are also possible wordplays: [Ammon](#), [cast out and give place](#), [Gideon](#), [iron rod](#), [Liahona](#), [Mary](#), [Mormon](#), [Moronihah](#), [Mosiah](#), [Nahom](#), [obscurity and dust](#), [Paanchi](#), [Zeezrom](#)

How would Joseph Smith have managed to include so many Hebrew wordplays into the Book of Mormon if he did not know Hebrew?

See:

- [Book of Mormon Notes - Wordplay in the Book of Mormon](#)

## Why does the Book of Mormon contain so many subordinate clauses which wouldn't be expected in English?

The original translation of the Book of Mormon curiously contained the word “that” in around 170 places we would not expect in English but would make perfect sense in Hebrew.

John A. Tvedtnes explains:

*Biblical Hebrew begins subordinate clauses with prepositions plus a word that translates as that, such as in Ezekiel 40:1: "after that the city was smitten." Such a use of that in English is awkward and therefore rare. Yet it appears frequently in the Book of Mormon, another evidence of Hebrew influence. It was even more frequent in the 1830 edition, but many of the thats were dropped from later editions to read more smoothly (noted in the following examples by brackets).*

*"And because that they are redeemed from the fall" (2 Nephi 2:26)*

*"because that my heart is broken" (2 Nephi 4:32)*

*"because that ye shall receive more of my word" (2 Nephi 29:8)*

*"because [that] they had hardened their hearts" (1 Nephi 16:22)*

*"because [that] ye are of the house of Israel" (2 Nephi 6:5)*

*"before [that] they were slain" (1 Nephi 13:15)*

*"before [that] he shall manifest himself in the flesh" (Enos 1:8)*

*"and after that I had been lifted up upon the cross" (3 Nephi 27:14)*

*"after that I am gone to the Father" (3 Nephi 28:1)*

*"after [that] I have abridged" (1 Nephi 1:17)*

*"after [that] he hath been commanded to flee" (1 Nephi 3:18)*

*- [John A. Tvedtnes - The Hebrew Background of the Book of Mormon](#)*

Why would Joseph Smith have included the word “that” like this? Surely Joseph did not know the Bible well enough to include [six of the seven types](#) of archaic subordinate “that” usage found in the King James Bible?

See:

- [Stanford Carmack - A Comparison of the Book of Mormon's Subordinate That Usage](#)
- [John A. Tvedtnes - The Hebrew Background of the Book of Mormon](#)

## Why do we see a repetition of the definite article throughout the Book of Mormon (like we would expect in Hebrew)?

The Book of Mormon contains many examples of the word “the” being repeated unnecessarily. This sounds strange in English but perfectly normal in Hebrew.

Donald W. Parry explains:

*Unlike English, in which a series of nouns can be introduced by a single definite article (the), Hebrew repeats the definite article for each noun. This kind of repetition is seen throughout the Book of Mormon. A prime example is "We did observe to keep the judgments, and the statutes, and the commandments of the Lord" (2 Nephi 5:10). Of course, it would be much more usual in English to render this as "We did observe to keep the judgments, statutes, and commandments of the Lord."*

*[- Donald W. Parry, "Hebraisms and Other Ancient Peculiarities in the Book of Mormon"](#)*

Why would Joseph have dictated the text like this? Why did he repeat the definite article unless the words were provided to him?

See:

- [Donald W. Parry, "Hebraisms and Other Ancient Peculiarities in the Book of Mormon"](#)

## Why would Joseph Smith repeat possessive pronouns?

In English, the possessive pronoun is not usually repeated in lists. In Hebrew however, the possessive pronoun is repeated each time. The Book of Mormon contains many examples of this Hebraism, as Donald W. Parry explains:

*In lists the Hebrew language repeats the possessive pronoun (e.g., their, our, your, thy, his, her) before each of the nouns to which it refers, a convention that is uncommon in English usage. The Old Testament (Hebrew Bible) preserves many examples of this Hebrew usage. For instance, the pronoun our is used six times in the King James Version of Exodus 10:9: "And Moses said, We will go with our young and with our old, with our sons and with our daughters, with our flocks and with our herds will we go" (emphasis added). Other biblical examples include the repetition of our five times in Deuteronomy 26:7, their four times in Genesis 10:20, your five times in Exodus 12:11, your four times in Leviticus 26:30, and our six times in Nehemiah 9:32.*



*Many examples of this usage appear in the Book of Mormon. For instance, the possessive pronoun your is used twelve times in 3 Nephi 30:2:*

*Turn, all ye Gentiles, from your wicked ways; and repent of your evil doings, of your lyings and deceivings, and of your whoredoms, and of your secret abominations, and your idolatries, and of your murders, and your priestcrafts, and your envyings, and your strifes, and from all your wickedness and abominations, and come unto me, and be baptized in my name, that ye may receive a remission of your sins, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. (emphasis added)*

*Other examples of the repeated possessive pronoun in the Book of Mormon include your four times in Mosiah 4:30, their eight times in Mosiah 11:3, your three times in Alma 32:42, our nine times in Alma 44:5, thy four times in Alma 38:3, and their twelve times in Helaman 3:14*

*[- Donald W. Parry, "Hebraisms and Other Ancient Peculiarities in the Book of Mormon"](#)*

How would Joseph Smith know about this Hebraism? Why would he repeat the possessive pronoun unless he was provided the words?

See:

- [FAIR Latter-day Saints - Pronouns in the Book of Mormon](#)

## **Why would the Book of Mormon contain the emphatic pronoun?**

The Book of Mormon includes a Hebraism known as the emphatic pronoun. This repetition of the person pronoun is a deliberate emphasis which can be seen as redundant in English.

Donald W. Parry explains:

*For purposes of emphasis, biblical Hebrew sometimes repeats the personal pronoun. This usage, termed the "emphatic pronoun," occurs when the pronoun is the subject, as in Genesis 6:17, where the Lord states, "Behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth" (emphasis added); or when the pronoun is the object, as in Genesis 27:38, where Esau implores his father to "bless me, even me also, O my father" (emphasis added). Some translators do not translate the emphatic pronoun, perhaps considering it unnatural or simply redundant in English.*

*The Book of Mormon also has examples of the emphatic pronoun. King Benjamin, speaking to a Nephite multitude, says, "And I, even I, whom ye call your king, am no better than ye yourselves are" (Mosiah 2:26; see v. 4)*

*- [Donald W. Parry, "Hebraisms and Other Ancient Peculiarities in the Book of Mormon,"](#)*

Another example is in Mosiah 10:10

*And it came to pass that we did go up to battle against the Lamanites; and I, even I, in my old age, did go up to battle against the Lamanites. And it came to pass that we did go up in the strength of the Lord to battle.*

How did Joseph Smith know about the emphatic pronoun if most people probably do not notice it in the Bible? How would Joseph remember to include it while dictating the Book of Mormon?

See:

- [Donald W. Parry, "Hebraisms and Other Ancient Peculiarities in the Book of Mormon,"](#)

## **Where would Joseph Smith have learned about Gezera Shawa?**

Gezera Shawa is a Hebraism in which two seemingly unrelated passages of scripture are brought together because they share a common word.

Matthew L. Bowen explains that:

*The Book of Mormon contains several quotations from the Hebrew Bible that have been juxtaposed on the basis of shared words or phrases, this for the purpose of interpreting the cited scriptural passages in light of one another.*

*- [Matthew L. Bowen - Onomastic Wordplay on Joseph and Benjamin and Gezera Shawa in the Book of Mormon](#)*

One example is found in 2 Nephi 25:17 in which Nephi brings together two scriptures from the Old Testament that share a common word. What is impressive about this example is that the common word is not the same in English, it can only be seen in Hebrew.

*And the Lord will set his hand again the second time to restore his people from their lost and fallen state. Wherefore, he will proceed to do a marvelous work and a wonder among the children of men.*

In this instance Isaiah 11:11 and Isaiah 29:14 are quoted from the Old Testament together which share the common word “yosip” which means both “again” and “proceed”.

Why would Joseph Smith have brought these two scriptures together if he didn’t understand the underlying Hebrew?

See:

- [Michael De Groote - Hebrew wordplay in the Book of Mormon](#)
- [Matthew L. Bowen - Onomastic Wordplay on Joseph and Benjamin and Gezera Shawa in the Book of Mormon](#)

## Why does the Book of Mormon include examples of anapodoton?

In Alma 36:9 we read a curiously worded imperative:

*And he said unto me: If thou wilt of thyself be destroyed, seek no more to destroy the church of God.*

This scripture does not seem to make sense in English but reflects the Hebraism anapodoton as explained by FAIR Latter-day Saints:

*Anapodoton is a figure in which a main clause is suggested by the introduction of a subordinate clause, but the main clause never occurs. It is an intentional sentence fragment.*

- [FAIR Latter-day Saints - Hebraisms in the Book of Mormon](#)

Incomplete positive if-clauses (with a negative meaning) are characteristic of imperative statements in Hebrew, but it is likely Joseph Smith would have had no idea of this, so why are they found in the Book of Mormon?

See:

- [FAIR Latter-day Saints - Hebraisms in the Book of Mormon](#)

## Why are there so many prepositional phrases rather than adverbs in the Book of Mormon?

The Book of Mormon contains many examples of prepositional phrases used rather than adverbs. This may seem odd in English but makes perfect sense in Hebrew.

John A. Tvedtnes explains:

*Hebrew has fewer adverbs than English. Instead, it often uses prepositional phrases with the preposition meaning in or with. The English translation of the Book of Mormon contains more of these prepositional phrases in place of adverbs than we would expect if the book had been written in English originally—another Hebraism. Here are some examples:*

*"with patience" instead of patiently (Mosiah 24:15)*

*"with much harshness" instead of very harshly (1 Nephi 18:11)*

*"with joy" instead of joyfully (Jacob 4:3)*

*"in spirit and in truth" instead of spiritually and truly (Alma 34:38)*

*"in righteousness" instead of righteously (1 Nephi 20:1)*

*"with gladness" instead of gladly (2 Nephi 28:28)*

[- John A. Tvedtnes - The Hebrew Background of the Book of Mormon](#)

How do we account for this if Joseph Smith was the author?

See:

- [John A. Tvedtnes - The Hebrew Background of the Book of Mormon](#)

## Why does the Book of Mormon contain examples of nouns missing after numbers?

Donald W. Parry explains a Hebraism in the Book of Mormon:

*Often in biblical Hebrew, an expected noun does not follow a number. For instance, Genesis 45:22 states that Joseph "gave three hundred of silver" to Benjamin, without stating that the three hundred probably refers to pieces of silver. In order to fix what would have been an awkward omission in English, the King James translators supplied the word pieces but italicized it to show that it is not part of the original text. Other biblical examples of the number without the noun include "ten weight of gold" (Genesis 24:22; the KJV adds shekels to its translation: "ten shekels weight of gold"), "he measured six of barley" (Ruth 3:15; the KJV adds measures:*

"he measured six measures of barley"), and "a captain of fifty with his fifty" (2 Kings 1:9).

*In the Book of Mormon, Laman and Lemuel ask, "How is it possible that the Lord will deliver Laban into our hands? Behold, he is a mighty man, and he can command fifty, yea, even he can slay fifty; then why not us?" (1 Nephi 3:31). The number fifty, used twice in this passage, is not followed by a noun. Does fifty refer to men, warriors, princes, commanders of armies? The context does not make this certain. Other Book of Mormon examples include "my little band of two thousand and sixty fought most desperately" (Alma 57:19); "Wherefore, by the words of three, God hath said, I will establish my word" (2 Nephi 11:3); "And it came to pass that there were two hundred, out of my two thousand and sixty" (Alma 57:25).*

[- Donald W. Parry, "Hebraisms and Other Ancient Peculiarities in the Book of Mormon," in Echoes and Evidences of the Book of Mormon](#)

Wouldn't we expect Joseph Smith to add in the noun whenever he mentioned a number?

See:

- [Donald W. Parry, "Hebraisms and Other Ancient Peculiarities in the Book of Mormon," in Echoes and Evidences of the Book of Mormon](#)

## **Why does the Book of Mormon contain so many cognates that wouldn't be expected in English?**

In many ways the Book of Mormon sounds like a Hebrew text. John A. Tvedtnes explains one example:

*Cognates are related words that come from the same root. For example, the English noun student is cognate to the verb study and the adjective studious. In Hebrew, a verb is sometimes followed by a noun that is a cognate, such as "wrote upon it a writing" (Exodus 39:30) and "she vowed a vow" (1 Samuel 1:11). In English, cognates are used much less often. Using such cognates is often considered an awkward or inelegant style in English. Someone writing in English would be more likely to use "she vowed" or "she made a vow." Even in translation from the Hebrew, the King James Bible sometimes avoids using cognates. In Genesis 1:11, a literal translation of the Hebrew would be "Let the earth grass grass," but the English translation reads "Let the earth bring forth grass."*

*The Book of Mormon uses cognates much more often than we would expect if the book had originally been written in English. These cognates show the Hebrew influence of the original. One of the best-known examples is "I have dreamed a*

*dream" (1 Nephi 8:2). That is exactly the way that the same idea is expressed in literal translation of the Old Testament Hebrew (see Genesis 37:5; 41:11).*

*Here are some other examples of the use of cognates in the Book of Mormon, each followed by the more normal expression for English:*

*"work all manner of fine work" (Mosiah 11:10) instead of work well*

*"and he did judge righteous judgments" (Mosiah 29:43) instead of judge righteously or make righteous judgments*

*"build buildings" (2 Nephi 5:15; Mosiah 23:5) instead of erect buildings or simply build*

*"this was the desire which I desired of him" (Enos 1:13) instead of what I desired*

*"I will work a great and a marvelous work" (1 Nephi 14:7) instead of perform a great and marvelous work*

*"taxed with a tax" (Mosiah 7:15) instead of taxed*

*"cursed with a sore cursing" (2 Nephi 1:22; Jacob 3:3) instead of cursed sorely[*

*[- John A. Tvedtnes, "The Hebrew Background of the Book of Mormon," in Rediscovering the Book of Mormon](#)*

How would Joseph Smith have known about cognates and effortlessly use them while dictating the Book of Mormon? Wouldn't it have been difficult enough to simply dictate a coherent storyline?

See:

- [FAIR Latter-day Saints - Cognates in the Book of Mormon](#)

## **Why are there hundreds of examples of the construct state in the Book of Mormon?**

The Book of Mormon contains many examples of the construct state which we would expect if the base language was Hebrew.

Donald W. Parry explains:

*Biblical Hebrew juxtaposes two or more nouns to form a construct chain. When this Hebrew form is translated into English, the term of is often added to show the relationship between the nouns. In Hebrew one says "tables of stone" (Exodus 24:12) or "the word of the Lord" (Genesis 15:4), not "stone tables" or "the Lord's word."*

*There are numerous examples of the construct state in the Book of Mormon. These include "plates of brass" (1 Nephi 3:24), "rod of iron" (1 Nephi 8:19), "sword of*

*Laban" (2 Nephi 5:14), "temple of Solomon" (2 Nephi 5:16), "the commandments of the Lord" (2 Nephi 5:19), "land of promise" (1 Nephi 17:33), "works of darkness" (2 Nephi 25:2), and "plans of awful wickedness" (Helaman 6:30). Also, the term Lord's is found "but twice in the entire Book of Mormon, while the equivalent of the construct state of nouns using his name occurs about three hundred times in a possessive sense in expressions such as 'commandments of the Lord,' 'name of the Lord,' 'people of the Lord,' 'presence of the Lord,' 'promises of the Lord.'" Similarly, the term God's is found twice in the Book of Mormon, while the construct forms "church of God," "commandments of God," "kingdom of God," "Spirit of God," and so on are found more than 450 times. The overwhelming practice of preferring the construct state over the possessive and related forms is a strong indication of Hebraic writing.*

*[- Donald W. Parry, "Hebraisms and Other Ancient Peculiarities in the Book of Mormon," in Echoes and Evidences of the Book of Mormon](#)*

How would Joseph have remembered the construct state hundreds of times while dictating? If Joseph Smith was dictating the content on the fly, wouldn't we expect "the Lord's..." to appear more than twice?

See:

- [FAIR Latter-day Saints - The construct state in the Book of Mormon](#)

## **How would Joseph Smith remember to include so many compound prepositions when dictating?**

Many phrases in the Book of Mormon seem to be longer than they need to be. John A. Tvedtnes explains one such Hebraism:

*Hebrew often uses compound prepositions, made up of a preposition plus a noun, in places where English would normally use just a preposition. For example, Hebrew uses compound prepositions that would be translated literally as by the hand of and by the mouth of. English would normally use just by. The Book of Mormon contains many examples that appear to show the influence of this Hebrew use of compound prepositions:*

*"ye shall be taken by the hand of your enemies" (Mosiah 17:18)*

*"I have also acquired much riches by the hand of my industry" (Alma 10:4)*

*"sold into Egypt by the hands of his brethren" (Alma 10:3)*

*"the words which have been spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets" (1 Nephi 3:20)*

*"by the mouth of angels, doth he declare it" (Alma 13:22)*

*Hebrew uses another compound preposition that would be translated literally as from before the presence of or from before the face of. English would normally use simply from. The influence of the Hebrew can be seen in these Book of Mormon passages:*

*"they fled from before my presence" (1 Nephi 4:28)*

*"he had gone from before my presence" (1 Nephi 11:12)*

*"they were carried away . . . from before my face" (1 Nephi 11:29)*

*[- John A. Tvedtnes, "The Hebrew Background of the Book of Mormon," in Rediscovering the Book of Mormon](#)*

If Joseph Smith dictated the Book of Mormon on the fly, how did he manage to remember all these Hebraisms? Why did they seem to be included so effortlessly?

See:

- [John A. Tvedtnes, "The Hebrew Background of the Book of Mormon," in Rediscovering the Book of Mormon](#)

## **Why do lists in the Book of Mormon repeat conjunctions?**

In English the word “and” is normally used in a list only before the final item. However in Hebrew the conjunction is usually found between each item in the list. We see this pattern used in the Book of Mormon much more than we would expect, which makes sense in Hebrew.

One example from the Book of Mormon is found in 2 Nephi 5:15:

*in all manner of wood, and of iron, and of copper, and of brass, and of steel, and of gold, and of silver, and of precious ores.*

In addition to simply repeating the conjunction, Hebrew also repeats related elements such as prepositions, articles, and possessive pronouns.

Some examples from the Book of Mormon are:

*And it came to pass that he departed into the wilderness. And he left his house, and the land of his inheritance, and his gold, and his silver, and his precious things, and took nothing with him, save it were his family and provisions, and tents, and [he, 1830] departed into the wilderness" (1 Nephi 2:4).*

*"And it came to pass that we went down to the land of our inheritance, and we did gather together our gold, and our silver, and our precious things" (1 Nephi 3:22).*



" . . . All mankind were in a lost and in a fallen state . . . " (1 Nephi 10:6).

" . . . My gospel . . . and my rock and my salvation . . . " (1 Nephi 13:36).

" . . . The city of Laman, and the city of Josh, and the city of Gad, and the city of Kishkumen, have I caused to be burned with fire" (3 Nephi 9:10).

" . . . All their men and all their women and all their children . . . " (Mosiah 24:22).

How much effort would it have taken for Joseph Smith to have included these while dictating? Wouldn't Joseph have needed to translate at a much slower pace to include all these Hebraisms?

See:

- [John A. Tvedtnes - The Hebrew Background of the Book of Mormon](#)

## Would we expect Joseph Smith to have conjunctions rather than the word “but”?

The Book of Mormon uses conjunctions in other ways consistent with Hebrew, including as a replacement for the word “but”.

From John A. Tvedtnes

*Another difference between Hebrew and English conjunctions is that in Hebrew the same conjunction can carry both the meaning and also the opposite meaning but. Here are two well-known Bible passages in which the King James Version renders the conjunction but:*

*“Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it” (Genesis 2:16-17).*

*“And as for Ishmael . . . I will make him a great nation. But my covenant will I establish with Isaac” (Genesis 17:20-21).*

*Evidence for Hebraism in the Book of Mormon lies in the fact that some passages use the conjunction and when but is expected. Here, for example, are two different versions of the Lord’s promise to Lehi:*

*“Inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments ye shall prosper in the land; but inasmuch as ye will not keep my commandments ye shall be cut off from my presence” (2 Nephi 1:20; compare Alma 50:20).*

*“Inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments ye shall prosper in the land; and inasmuch as ye will not keep my commandments ye shall be cut off from my presence” (2 Nephi 4:4).*

*In one of the quotations of this promise, Joseph Smith rendered the conjunction and, while in another place, he rendered it but. In other Book of Mormon passages, Joseph translated and when in English we would expect but because a contrastive meaning is clearly called for:*

*“And when I speak the word of God with sharpness they tremble and anger against me; and (= but) when I use no sharpness they harden their hearts against it” (Moroni 9:4).*

*“He commanded the multitude that they should cease to pray, and also his disciples. And (= but) he commanded them that they should not cease to pray in their hearts” (3 Nephi 20:1).*

*- [John A. Tvedtnes - The Hebrew Background of the Book of Mormon](#)*

Wouldn't this kind of language be unnatural and unfamiliar to Joseph Smith?

See:

- [John A. Tvedtnes - The Hebrew Background of the Book of Mormon](#)

## **Why does the Book of Mormon contain examples of using conjunctions for parentheses?**

Conjunctions are also used in the Book of Mormon in place of where we would usually expect parentheses.

From John A. Tvedtnes

*Another difference in the use of conjunctions is that in biblical Hebrew, a language with no punctuation, the conjunction also serves as a marker of parenthesis. The words we would put inside parentheses in English are preceded by the conjunction in Hebrew, and, at the conclusion, the next phrase is introduced by the conjunction. In the following biblical example, the same conjunction has been variously rendered and, for, and that by the King James translators to fit the requirements of the English language: “As they that bare the ark were come unto Jordan, and the feet of the priests that bare the ark were dipped in the brim of the water, (for Jordan overfloweth all his banks all the time of harvest,) that the waters . . . stood and rose up” (Joshua 3:15-16). We see that for and that, two English renditions of the same*

*Hebrew conjunction, served to set off what the English translators chose to mark with the parentheses.*

*The Book of Mormon also uses conjunctions to mark parenthetical phrases. In the Book of Mormon examples listed below, I have added parentheses to illustrate:*

*“After I, Nephi, having heard all the words of my father, concerning the things which he saw in a vision, and also the things which he spake by the power of the Holy Ghost, which power he received by faith on the Son of God (and the Son of God was the Messiah which should come) and it came to pass that I, Nephi, was desirous also that I might see, and hear, and know of these things” (1 Nephi 10:17, reading of 1830 edition).*

*“When Jesus had spoken these words unto Nephi, and to those who had been called, (now the number of them who had been called, and received power and authority to baptize, was twelve) and behold, he stretched forth his hand . . . ” (3 Nephi 12:1).*

*- [John A. Tvedtnes - The Hebrew Background of the Book of Mormon](#)*

In addition to everything else Joseph Smith would have needed to remember while dictating the Book of Mormon, how would he remember to use conjunctions this way?

See:

- [John A. Tvedtnes - The Hebrew Background of the Book of Mormon](#)

## **Why does the Book of Mormon use the Hebraism “and also”?**

John A. Tvedtnes explains one use of conjunctions which we would expect in Hebrew but not English:

*Another Hebrew-like use of the conjunction in the Book of Mormon is the expression and also. In Hebrew, it is used to emphasize the close links between two things, as in this biblical passage: “Both drink thou, and I will also draw for thy camels” (Genesis 24:44). Here are some examples from the Book of Mormon that seem to reflect the Hebrew usage:*

*“They . . . worshiped the Father in his name, and also we worship the Father in his name” (Jacob 4:5).*

*“The Lord hath heard the prayers of his people, and also the prayers of his servant, Alma” (Mosiah 27:14).*

“ . . . What the Lord had done for his son, and also for those that were with him . . . ”  
(Mosiah 27:21).

“Now the sons of Mosiah were numbered among the unbelievers; and also one of the sons of Alma was numbered among them” (Mosiah 27:8).

- [John A. Tvedtnes - The Hebrew Background of the Book of Mormon](#)

Wouldn't this kind of language be unnatural to Joseph Smith? How could he remember to use this unnatural phrase if he also needed to concentrate on making a coherent storyline?

See:

- [John A. Tvedtnes - The Hebrew Background of the Book of Mormon](#)

## Why are there Hebraic conditionals (if/and) in the Book of Mormon?

The original manuscripts of the Book of Mormon contain expressions which are uncharacteristic of English. One example is that of [Hebraic conditionals](#) in which the word “and” is used rather than “then”.

An example of this is 1 Nephi 17:50 which says:

*if he should command me that I should say unto this water be thou earth, and it shall be earth.*

Oliver Cowdery changed this sentence when copying the original manuscript to create the printer's manuscript. The word “and” was removed to make it sound more natural in English:

*if he should command me that I should say unto this water be thou earth, it shall be earth.*

Seven instances of this Hebraic conditional are even included in Helaman 12: 13-21:

*13 yea and if he saith unto the earth move and it is moved  
14 yea if he say unto the earth thou shalt go back that it lengthen out the day for many hours and it is done  
16 and behold also if he saith unto the waters of the great deep be thou dried up and it is done  
17 behold if he saith unto this mountain be thou raised up and come over and fall upon that city that it be buried up and behold it is done*

*19 and if the Lord shall say be thou accursed that no man shall find thee from this time henceforth and forever and behold no man getteth it henceforth and forever  
20 and behold if the Lord shall say unto a man because of thine iniquities thou shalt be accursed forever and it shall be done  
21 and if the Lord shall say because of thine iniquities thou shalt be cut off from my presence and he will cause that it shall be so*

We know of thirteen occurrences of this conditional printed in the first edition of the Book of Mormon which were later removed by Joseph Smith in the second edition of the Book of Mormon in 1837. Why would Joseph have included them in the first place?

See:

- [Royal Skousen - Hebraic Conditionals in the Book of Mormon](#)

## **If Joseph Smith wrote the Book of Mormon himself, would we expect to see the archaic rhetorical device of enallages?**

The Book of Mormon contains examples of “enallages” which are a syntactic technique found in the Bible that Joseph Smith would not likely have known about.

Loren Blake Spendlove explains:

*“Enallage,” derived from the Greek word meaning “interchange,” is an intentional substitution of one grammatical form for another, such as changing pronouns from the singular to the plural or vice versa. This intentional substitution can also involve different combinations of switching the form of personal address. For example, enallage can include switching from second-person to third-person address or other variations.*

- [Loren Blake Spendlove - Limhi's Discourse: Proximity and Distance in Teaching](#)

An example is found in 1 Nephi 2:19-20

*And it came to pass that the Lord spake unto me saying, Blessed art thou, Nephi, because of thy faith, for thou hast sought me diligently, with lowliness of heart. And inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments, ye shall prosper and shall be led to a land of promise, yea, a land which is choice above all lands.*

Another is found in Mosiah 7 when Limhi and his people were in bondage to the Lamanites. Limhi begins his address in chapter 7 by referring to the people he is talking to in the first and second person.

*O ye, my people, lift up your heads and be comforted; for behold, the time is at hand, or is not far distant, when we shall no longer be in subjection to our enemies, notwithstanding our many strugglings, which have been in vain; yet I trust there remaineth an effectual struggle to be made. Therefore, lift up your heads, and rejoice, and put your trust in God. (Mosiah 7:18–19)*

In verse 25 Limhi suddenly shifts and begins referring to the same people he is talking to in the third person.

*For if this people had not fallen into transgression the Lord would not have suffered that this great evil should come upon them. But behold, they would not hearken unto his words; but there arose contentions among them, even so much that they did shed blood among themselves. And a prophet of the Lord have they slain; yea, a chosen man of God, who told them of their wickedness and abominations, and prophesied of many things which are to come, yea, even the coming of Christ. (Mosiah 7:25–26)*

The shift is most obvious in verse 28:

*And now, because he [Abinadi] said this, they did put him to death; and many more things did they do which brought down the wrath of God upon them. Therefore, who wondereth that they are in bondage, and that they are smitten with sore afflictions? (Mosiah 7:28)*

Spendlove notes how:

*This shift to the third person helped create distance between Limhi's people and their actions. It allowed his people to view, perhaps a little more objectively, the severity of their crimes, including the murder of the prophet*

*- [Loren Blake Spendlove - Limhi's Discourse: Proximity and Distance in Teaching](#)*

Limhi then reverts back to the first and second person in verse 32

*And now, behold, the promise of the Lord is fulfilled, and ye are smitten and afflicted. But if ye will turn to the Lord with full purpose of heart, and put your trust in him, and serve him with all diligence of mind, if ye do this, he will, according to his own will and pleasure, deliver you out of bondage. (Mosiah 7:32–33)*

Spendlove concludes:

*Just as shifting to the third person created distance between his people and their actions, Limhi's switch back to the second person in the final verses helped his people get a personal look at their dire situation and recognize a possible solution to their bondage.*

- [Loren Blake Spendlove - Limhi's Discourse: Proximity and Distance in Teaching](#)

How would Joseph Smith be able to include this syntactic technique while dictating a long and complex book?

See:

- [Loren Blake Spendlove - Limhi's Discourse: Proximity and Distance in Teaching](#)
- [Kevin L. Barney - Enallage in the Book of Mormon](#)

## **Was Joseph Smith aware of all the repetitive resumption (Epanalepsis) in the Book of Mormon?**

The Book of Mormon contains 84 instances (by 15 different authors) of [Epanalepsis or repetitive resumption](#). This editorial technique is used commonly in the Bible but was not known when the Book of Mormon was published.

Repetitive resumption is when the author repeats a phrase in order to bookend a specific thought or interject commentary and additional information. The repetition of the phrase would be a signifier for the reader that the additional commentary was over.

One example from the Book of Mormon is found in Alma 3:1:

*And it came to pass that the Nephites who were not slain by the weapons of war, after having buried those who had been slain—now the number of the slain were not numbered, because of the greatness of their number—after they had finished burying their dead they all returned to their lands, and to their houses, and their wives, and their children*

How would Joseph Smith know to include this technique if it was not known until recently?

See:

- [Larry G. Childs - Epanalepsis in the Book of Mormon](#)
- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Repetitive Resumption](#)

## **Why do we see evidence of antenantiosis in the Book of Mormon?**

The Book of Mormon contains many examples of antenantiosis, which would not likely be included if Joseph Smith was dictating a long and complex book on the fly.

Gail Call explains:

*An interesting figure of speech used in the Book of Mormon is called antenantiopsis. It is the practice of stating a proposition in terms of its opposite. The result is to express the positive in a very high degree, or as the biblical scholar E. W. Bullinger puts it, "We thus emphasize that which we seem to lessen."*

*For instance, when Jacob counsels to "despise not the revelations of God" (Jacob 4:8), he is not merely saying that one should not despise the revelations; he is actually urging the righteous to hold the revelations of God in the highest esteem. The unexpected negative increases the force of the idea that it apparently understates. It seems to make us notice and dwell on the expression, so that we can learn more from it.*

*Thus in the promise, "if ye do this, and endure to the end, ye will in nowise be cast out" (Mormon 9:29), Moroni is actually promising that the faithful who endure will be blessed beyond measure. When Mosiah says, "It is not expedient that such abominations should come upon you" (Mosiah 29:24), he is not merely saying that the people should not commit or allow such abominations, he is forcefully admonishing the people to prevent them. When Amulek warns that "he [the devil] rewardeth you no good thing" (Alma 34:39), he does not mean just the lack of a good reward, but the surety of tremendously evil results—torment, captivity, and damnation.*

*Other Book of Mormon uses of antenantiopsis appear in Mosiah 2:9; 19:17; Alma 12:14; 30:21; 34:39; 46:30; 50:27; and 3 Nephi 5:1; 6:18; 7:18. It is an interesting figure of speech, drawn to our attention by biblical scholarship, that helps illuminate the forceful effectiveness of many of the prophetic messages of the Book of Mormon.*

*[- Gail Call, Antenantiopsis in the Book of Mormon](#)*

Wouldn't Joseph avoid this kind of complexity when dictating?

See:

- [Gail Call, Antenantiopsis in the Book of Mormon](#)

## **Why does the Book of Mormon contain the classical rhetorical device of merismus?**

The Book of Mormon contains over 130 instances of the classical rhetorical device of merismus.



Noel B. Reynolds explains that merismus is:

*a classical rhetorical device in which the division of an important topic or statement into component parts allows for its full invocation by explicit listing of selected parts only. In the Hebrew Bible merismus occurs as concise or condensed expressions that, by mentioning the first and last or more prominent elements of a series, invoke the entire list.<sup>28</sup> In other words, once a pattern is established in the form of A, B, C, D, E, F (such as the list of elements of the gospel), the mere mention of two or more of these items, such as A and F, is used to represent the entire series. Understood as a formula composed of a list of ordered items, the gospel lends itself well to this rhetorical device. For example, a typical Book of Mormon merism states that believing in Jesus and enduring to the end is life eternal (see 2 Nephi 33:4). While repentance, baptism, and the gift of the Holy Ghost are not explicitly mentioned, they are implied by the use of merismus. Thus, using the pattern described above, the scripture uses the items A, E, and F to evoke the entire list in the minds of readers.*

*A conservative count of gospel-related merisms in the Book of Mormon gives at least 130 meristic statements of the gospel or doctrine of Christ.<sup>29</sup> The use of this ancient rhetorical device in the Book of Mormon, combined with the use of other ancient literary devices, most famously chiasmus, is strong evidence that the Book of Mormon was not the product of nineteenth-century America. Though not the way American writers would ordinarily have invoked formulas or lists, it is an appropriate rhetorical device for a book with ancient biblical connections*

*[- Noel B. Reynolds, "By Objective Measures: Old Wine in New Bottles," in Echoes and Evidences of the Book of Mormon](#)*

Would we expect to see merismus in the Book of Mormon if Joseph Smith dictated the content on the fly? Why are there so many examples of it in the Book of Mormon?

See:

- [Noel B. Reynolds - Biblical merismus in Book of Mormon gospel references](#)

## **Why is there gradation in the Book of Mormon just like the Old and New Testaments?**

Gradation is a form of parallelism found in the Old and New Testament (as well as the Book of Mormon) which occurs when the same word or words are found in successive clauses or sentences.

An example from the Bible is the following on Joel 1:3-4

*Tell ye  
your children of it, and let  
your children tell  
their children, and  
their children another generation. That which the palmerworm hath left hath the  
locust eaten; and that which the  
locust hath left hath the  
cankerworm eaten; and that which the  
cankerworm hath left hath the  
caterpillar eaten.*

One example from the Book of Mormon is found in Alma 42:17-20

*Now, how could a man repent except he should  
sin? How could he  
sin if there was no  
law? How could there be a  
law save there was a  
punishment? Now, there was a  
punishment affixed, and a just  
law given, which brought remorse of conscience unto man. Now, if there was no  
law given—if a man murdered he should  
die—would he be afraid he would  
die if he should murder? And also, if there was no law given against  
sin men would not be afraid to  
sin.*

How did Joseph Smith know about gradation? If it appears in the Book of Mormon by chance then why does gradation appear mainly in sermons, letters and prophecies?

See:

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Gradation](#)

## **Why does the Book of Mormon contain examples of janus parallelism?**

In 1978, Cyrus H. Gordon defined and outlined a previously unknown literary technique he called Janus parallelism. The Roman god Janus had two faces, one looking forward and one looking back, hence the name. A Janus parallelism is where the middle stich in poetry is ambiguous in that it is applicable to both the preceding and following stich. In other words there is a double parallel in the poem.

One example is from the Book of Job 1:20 which says:

- 1) *he rends his garment;*
- 2) *he shears his head;*
- 3) *he falls to the ground; and*
- 4) *he prostrates himself*

The first two actions are those of mourning and the final election is that of praising. The third action is deliberately ambiguous as it could relate to both.

Examples of Janus parallelisms have also been found in the Book of Mormon by Paul Hoskisson such as 1 Nephi 18:16, 2 Nephi 4:20 and 1 Nephi 10:13 which says:

*that we should be led with one accord into the land of promise,  
unto the fulfilling of the word of the Lord,  
that we should be scattered upon all the face of the earth.*

In this instance, the “fulfilling of the word” relates to both being led to a land of promise and being scattered upon the face of the earth.

Where would Joseph Smith have learned to do this?

See:

- [Paul Y. Hoskisson - Additional Janus Parallels in the Book of Mormon](#)

## **Would we expect “prophetic perfect” in the Book of Mormon if Joseph Smith wrote it himself?**

The Bible includes many examples of where prophets prophesy in the present tense or as if the things in the prophecy have already occurred. For example, rather than saying “Christ will come” they would say “If Christ did not come”. This is known as prophetic perfect.

An example from the Bible is in Isaiah 53:3-5 which says:

*He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief:  
and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him  
not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem  
him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our  
transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was  
upon him; and with his stripes we are healed*

We see examples of prophetic perfect in the Book of a Mormon too such as in Mosiah 16:16:

*And now if Christ had not come into the world, speaking of things to come as though they had already come, there could have been no redemption.*

Why would Joseph Smith have spoken in this tense? How would he know about prophetic perfect?

See:

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Prophetic Perfect](#)

## Why would Joseph Smith say that Moroni waved the “rent” of his garment?

In the original 1830 version of the Book of Mormon it says in Alma 46:

*And when Moroni had said these words, he went forth among the people, waving **the rent of his garment** in the air, that all might see the writing which he had wrote upon the rent, and crying with a loud voice... (emphasis added)*

John A. Tvedtnes explains:

*When the word “rent” is used as a noun in English, it may refer to a hole caused by rending, but not, to my knowledge, to a portion of rent cloth; the unlikely usage of “rent” in English as a noun no doubt contributed to the fact that, in subsequent editions of the Book of Mormon, it was changed to read “rent part” (Alma 46:19). But the Hebrew would, in this instance, use but one word, qera ‘, “rent (part),” coming from qāra ‘, “he rent, tore,” for nouns, in Hebrew, are derived from roots—as are Hebrew verbs—by the addition of certain vowel patterns that distinguish them from other parts of speech.*

- [John A. Tvedtnes - Hebraisms in the Book of Mormon: A Preliminary Survey](#)

Where would Joseph Smith have learned so much Hebrew? Would he really have added this in to make the book sound more authentic?

See:

- [John A. Tvedtnes - Hebraisms in the Book of Mormon: A Preliminary Survey](#)

## Where would Joseph Smith have learned to include polysemy in the Book of Mormon?

In Alma 44 we see an example of polysemy (multiple meanings of a word):

*And it came to pass that the soldier who stood by, who smote off the scalp of Zerahemnah, took up the scalp from off the ground by the hair, and laid it upon the point of his sword, and stretched it forth unto them, saying unto them with a loud voice:*

*Even as this scalp has fallen to the earth, which is the scalp of your **chief**, so shall ye fall to the earth except ye will deliver up your weapons of war and depart with a covenant of peace. (emphasis added)*

Matthew L. Bowen notes how both "[head](#)" in the anatomical sense and "[head](#)"/"[chief](#)" in a [sociological leadership sense are represented by a single word in Hebrew \(rō'š\)1 and Egyptian \(tp\).](#)

With this in mind, Bowen argues:

*...the great fear that the Lamanite soldiers exhibited was due to how they heard the word "chief" used by Moroni's soldier. If "chief"/"head" (sociological) and "head" (anthropological) were represented by the same term in their own language, they would have not only heard "this is the scalp of your chief," but "this is the scalp of your head" — i.e., your own "heads." The scalp, of course, was the extension of Zerahemnah's anatomical "head," just as they were extensions of him as their sociological "head" or "chief." Not wanting their own "heads" to become like their "head"/"chief" Zerahemnah and his fallen scalp, these warriors "threw down their weapons" (i.e., caused them to "fall") at the feet of Moroni.*

- [Matthew L. Bowen - The Scalp of Your Head: Polysemy in Alma 44:14–18](#)

Mormon seems to continue this double meaning a few verses later in Alma 44:18:

*But behold, their naked skins and their bare heads were exposed to the sharp swords of the Nephites; yea, behold they were pierced and smitten, yea, and did fall exceedingly fast before the swords of the Nephites; and they began to be swept down, even as the soldier of Moroni had prophesied.*

Bowen continues:

*The "heads" of the Lamanites who refuse the "covenant of peace" become like their head, Zerahemnah and his scalp: "pierced and smitten" (cf. "smote," vv. 12–13), and they "fall [to the earth] exceedingly fast." The correspondence between Mormon's use of the term translated as "heads" here and "chief" (Alma 44:14) becomes clearest*

*when we consider that both are most likely represented by the same word in the underlying text.*

- [Matthew L. Bowen - The Scalp of Your Head: Polysemy in Alma 44:14–18](#)

Finally, in 3 Nephi 4:28 we see another example of this same polysemy:

*And their leader, Zemnarihah, was taken and hanged upon a tree, yea, even upon the top thereof until he was dead. And when they had hanged him until he was dead they did fell the tree to the earth, and did cry with a loud voice, saying:*

Why would Joseph Smith add in the extra detail that their “leader” Zemnarihah was hanged at the “top” of the tree? How would Joseph be able to use Hebrew or Egyptian polysemy like this?

See:

- [Matthew L. Bowen - The Scalp of Your Head: Polysemy in Alma 44:14–18](#)

## **How would Joseph Smith know about the idiom of “calling” names?**

Latter-day Saint scholar John A. Tvedtnes has noted an interesting idiom regarding names in the Book of Mormon.

In English we would say a parent “called his son John”, whereas in Hebrew a parent would “call the name of his son John”. In Hebrew it is the name that is “called” rather than the person or place.

The Book of Mormon is consistent with this Hebrew idiom. In many places of the Book we see that the names of places are “called” such as:

*"we did call the name of the place Shazer" (1 Nephi 16:13)*

*"and they called the name of the city Moroni" (Alma 50:13-14)*

*"he had three sons; and he called their names Mosiah, and Helorum, and Helaman" (Mosiah 1:2)*

*"they called their names Anti-Nephi-Lehies" (Alma 23:17)*

How did Joseph Smith know about this? If Joseph wrote the Book of Mormon himself we would've expected him to have said:

*"we did call the place Shazer"*

*"and they called the city Moroni"*

*"he had three sons and he called the Mosiah, Helorum and Helaman"*

*“they called themselves Anti-Nephi-Lehies”*

Where would Joseph Smith have learned this and how would he remember to use it while dictating the Book of Mormon?

See:

- [John A. Tvedtnes - The Hebrew Background of the Book of Mormon](#)

## **Where would Joseph Smith have learned the Book of Mormon should include simile curses like in the ancient Near East?**

Simile curses are a certain type of curse in which the person makes an accompanying ritual or conceptual comparison in order to emphasize the nature of the curse. In some instances a physical action is taken whereas other times the ritual is purely symbolic.

Simile curses appear throughout ancient Near Eastern texts, including the Old Testament, in contexts such as treaties, religious covenants, and prophecies. The Book of Mormon also contains similar curses in the correct context, for example by Moroni’s soldier to Zerahemnah (Alma 44:14):

*Even as this scalp has fallen to the earth, which is the scalp of your chief, so shall ye fall to the earth except ye will deliver up your weapons of war and depart with a covenant of peace*

And in Alma 46:22

*We covenant with our God, that we shall be destroyed, even as our brethren in the land northward, if we shall fall into transgression; yea, he may cast us at the feet of our enemies, even as we have cast our garments at thy feet to be trodden under foot, if we shall fall into transgression.*

What are the odds that we would find simile curses in the Book of Mormon? Where would Joseph have learned about these? Would we expect him to be able to compose simile curses in the correct contexts?

See:

- [Mark J. Morrise - Simile Curses in the Ancient Near East, Old Testament, and Book of Mormon](#)
- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Simile Curses](#)

## **If the Book of Mormon were really engraved on metal plates, why is it so wordy?**

The Book of Mormon, just like the Old Testament, feels unnecessarily wordy. This is consistent though with writing in Hebrew.

1 Nephi 1:7-8 reads

*And it came to pass that he returned to his own house at Jerusalem; and he cast himself upon his bed, **being overcome with the Spirit** and the things which he had seen.*

***And being thus overcome with the Spirit**, he was carried away in a vision, even that he saw the heavens open, and he thought he saw God sitting upon his throne, surrounded with numberless concourses of angels in the attitude of singing and praising their God. (emphasis added)*

This type of “wordiness” and unnecessary repetition is consistent with the Hebrew of the Bible such as in Genesis 26:8

*And it came to pass, when he had been there a long time, that Abimelech king of the Philistines looked out at a window, and saw, and, behold, Isaac was sporting with Rebekah his wife.*

If Joseph Smith dictated the Book of Mormon on the fly, how would he have remembered to include so many Hebraisms?

See:

- [Jeff Lindsay - Why is the Book of Mormon so Wordy?](#)

## **Why would 1 Nephi 1:6 say the pillar of fire “dwelt” on the rock, rather than sat or rested?**

In 1 Nephi 1:6 we read:

*And it came to pass as he prayed unto the Lord, there came a pillar of fire and dwelt upon a rock before him; and he saw and heard much; and because of the things which he saw and heard he did quake and tremble exceedingly.*

The meaning of the word “dwelt” or “dwell” is “live in or at a specified place”. This is an odd choice of wording for a pillar of fire; however the Hebrew verb “yashab” means “to [dwell, inhabit or sit](#)”.



Why would Joseph choose such an odd word in this instance? What are the odds that the word he chose has a Hebrew basis?

See:

- [Abarim Publications' Biblical Dictionary](#)

## Why would Alma 49:22 curiously say that arrows were “thrown”?

In Alma 49:22 it says:

*Now when they found that they could not obtain power over the Nephites by the pass, they began to dig down their banks of earth that they might obtain a pass to their armies, that they might have an equal chance to fight; but behold, in these attempts they were swept off by the stones and **arrows which were thrown** at them; and instead of filling up their ditches by pulling down the banks of earth, they were filled up in a measure with their dead and wounded bodies. (emphasis added)*

It is quite curious that Joseph would say that arrows were “thrown”, they are usually shot or cast. However the Hebrew verb “[yara](#)” means all three. It means to throw, shoot or cast, which means it is entirely appropriate to say that stones and arrows are both thrown.

How do we explain this choice of wording from Joseph Smith?

See:

- [Abarim Publications' Biblical Dictionary](#)

## Why does the Book of Mormon contain examples of plural amplification?

The Book of Mormon uses plural amplification to add emphasis in the text.

Donald W. Parry explains:

*In order to amplify or emphasize an idea, biblical Hebrew sometimes uses a noun in the plural when a singular is expected. The King James translators translated these Hebrew plural nouns into the English singular. In the following examples from the Old Testament the Hebrew readings appear in brackets.*

*thy brother's blood [bloods] crieth unto me from the ground (Genesis 4:10)  
and strength of salvation [salvations] (Isaiah 33:6)  
O Lord God, to whom vengeance [vengeances] belongeth (Psalms 94:1)  
Wisdom [wisdoms] crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets (Proverbs  
1:20)  
the wicked . . . shall be brought forth to the day of wrath [wraths] (Job 21:30)*

*In many instances the Book of Mormon contains Hebrew-like plural nouns instead of the expected singular:*

*there shall be bloodsheds (2 Nephi 1:12)  
the understandings of the children of men (Mosiah 8:20)  
great condescensions unto the children of men (Jacob 4:7)  
labor with their mights (Jacob 5:72)  
great slaughters with the sword (1 Nephi 12:2)  
there were . . . magics (Mormon 1:19)  
their cunning and their lyings (Alma 20:13)  
mine afflictions were great above all (1 Nephi 15:5)  
destructions of my people (1 Nephi 15:5)  
foolish imaginations of his heart (1 Nephi 2:11)*

[- Donald W. Parry, "Hebraisms and Other Ancient Peculiarities in the Book of Mormon," in Echoes and Evidences of the Book of Mormon, edited by Donald W. Parry, Daniel C. Peterson, and John W. Welch \(Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2002\), Chapter 7](#)

How would Joseph Smith have known about this and how would he remember to include it (along with all the other Hebraisms) while dictating?

See:

- [FAIR Latter-day Saints - Use of the plural in the Book of Mormon](#)

## **How could Joseph Smith consistently dictate the Book of Mormon without using any punctuation?**

Unlike every book Joseph Smith would have read, the Book of Mormon did not have any punctuation.

John Gee explains the significance of this:

*According to John Gilbert, the typesetter, the printer's manuscript of the Book of Mormon was unpunctuated: "Every Chapter, if I remember correctly, was one solid paragraph, without a punctuation mark, from beginning to end." This is in keeping*

*with many ancient languages and scripts that work without punctuation marks. Ancient languages tend to do without typographic punctuation; they use words for punctuation instead. This verbal punctuation provides the signposts that control and structure the flow of the narrative.*

*- [John Gee - Verbal Punctuation in the Book of Mormon I: \(And\) Now](#)*

Wouldn't it have been difficult for Joseph to use verbal punctuation while dictating? Why did he not slip up at some point and dictate some punctuation?

See:

- [John Gee - Verbal Punctuation in the Book of Mormon I: \(And\) Now](#)

## **How would Joseph Smith remember to use the expression “and now” to mark a new chapter in the Book of Mormon?**

The dictated Book of Mormon contained no punctuation but instead relied on verbal punctuation. One example is the use of “and now” as a break or marker. The phrase “and now” is the most common form of break in the original chapters of the Book of Mormon but also serves as a break within chapters. Such as on the title page:

*Which is to show unto the remnant of the house of Israel what great things the Lord hath done for their fathers; and that they may know the covenants of the Lord, that they are not cast off forever — And also to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God, manifesting himself unto all nations — And now, if there are faults they are the mistakes of men; wherefore, condemn not the things of God, that ye may be found spotless at the judgment-seat of Christ.*

The phrase “and now” is of Hebrew origin and used in the Bible as well as Hebrew letters. William M. Schniedewind explains the importance of this phrase:

*The expression, w ʾ(h), “and now,” was an important device that functioned as a new paragraph marker and was learned by ancient scribes when practicing the writing of model letters. The use of w ʾ(h) is especially important in ancient Hebrew because the writing system did not have many auxiliary markers to mark semantic functions in the way we have in modern languages (e.g., commas, periods, spaces, line breaks, tabs, paragraphs, etc.).*

*- [Schniedewind, The Finger of the Scribe, 111.](#)*

How did Joseph Smith know to use this particular phrase when dictating the Book of Mormon? Don't breaks like this require more planning and forethought by Joseph?

See:

- [John Gee - Verbal Punctuation in the Book of Mormon I: \(And\) Now](#)

## What are extrapositional nouns and pronouns doing in the Book of Mormon?

The Book of Mormon has been found to contain extrapositional nouns and pronouns that we would not expect in English.

John A. Tvedtnes explains:

*Hebrew often uses a noun or pronoun as the direct object of the verb in one clause and a pronoun referring to the same person or thing in the following clause in a way that seems unnecessary or redundant in English. For example in Genesis 1:4, we read, "God saw the light, that it was good." In this case, the King James Bible reflects the Hebrew wording, despite the fact that in English the normal way of saying this would be, "God saw that the light was good."*

*- John A. Tvedtnes, "The Hebrew Background of the Book of Mormon," in [Rediscovering the Book of Mormon](#), edited by John L. Sorenson and Melvin J. Thorne (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Co.; Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1991), Chapter 8*

Examples in the Book of Mormon include:

- "I beheld, and saw the people of the seed of my brethren that they had overcome my seed" (1 Nephi 12:20).
- "I beheld the wrath of God, that it was upon the seed of my brethren" (1 Nephi 13:14).
- "And I beheld the Spirit of the Lord, that it was upon the Gentiles" (1 Nephi 13:15).
- "I . . . beheld the power of the Lamb of God, that it descended" (1 Nephi 14:14)

If Joseph Smith was expending effort to add in all these Hebraisms, wouldn't it have been obvious to the scribes?

See:

- [FAIR Latter-day Saints - Pronouns in the Book of Mormon](#)

## Would Joseph Smith have known the Bible so well to use the same verbs (and additional like terminology) to describe the purges of priests?

Matthew L. Bowen notes a striking similarity between one passage in the Bible, and the Book of Mormon:

*The Deuteronomistic Judahite historian who wrote 2 Kings 23:5 and Mormon, the Nephite historian who wrote Mosiah 11:5 both used identical – or nearly identical – verbs (and additional like terminology) to describe the purges of the priests their fathers ordained – purges that came to define their kingships. The Deuteronomistic writer used this language to positively evaluate Josiah’s kingship (“And he put down [wěhišbît] the idolatrous priests whom the kings of Judah had ordained”), whereas Mormon levies a negative evaluation against Noah (“for he put down [cf. Hebrew hišbît] all the priests that had been consecrated by his father”). Mormon’s adaption and use of ancient Israelite historiographic conventions is evident in his reliance on the royal “walk/not walk in the ways of X” formula (wayyēlek bēderek X/[lō’] hālak bēderek X). Thus, Mormon appears to have drawn a deliberate historical contrast (or comparison) between kings Josiah and Noah. All of the foregoing data recommends Mosiah 11:11 as a significant, rather than a small historical and narratological detail in the Book of Mormon. The foregoing much more likely reflects the tendencies and concerns of ancient authors having an Israelite religious and cultural heritage who were attempting to write history, than it does the imaginative genius of a young man living in 19th century rural New York. We can thus see these historical and narrative details as additional evidence for the Book of Mormon’s antiquity and authenticity.*

*- [Matthew L. Bowen - Putting Down the Priests: A Note on Royal Evaluations, \(wě\)hišbît, and Priestly Purges in 2 Kings 23:5 and Mosiah 11:5](#)*

Did Joseph Smith really know the Bible so well? How much effort would it have taken to remember this biblical passage when dictating the relevant part of the Book of Mormon?

See:

- [Matthew L. Bowen - Putting Down the Priests: A Note on Royal Evaluations, \(wě\)hišbît, and Priestly Purges in 2 Kings 23:5 and Mosiah 11:5](#)

## Why would Joseph Smith use the expression "we might have enjoyed" in the Book of Mormon?

Some expressions in the Book of Mormon are right at home in biblical Hebrew, as explained by Matthew L. Bowen:

*The verbal expression “we might have enjoyed,” as used in a complaint that Nephi attributes to his brothers, “we might have enjoyed our possessions and the land of our inheritance” (1 Nephi 17:21), reflects a use of the Hebrew verb yrš in its progressive aspect, “to enjoy possession of.” This meaning is evident in several passages in the Hebrew Bible, and perhaps most visibly in the KJV translation of Numbers 36:8 (“And every daughter, that possesseth [Hebrew yōrešet] an inheritance [naḥălâ] in any tribe of the children of Israel, shall be wife unto one of the family of the tribe of her father, that the children of Israel may enjoy [yîršû] every man the inheritance [naḥălât] of his fathers”) and Joshua 1:15 (“then ye shall return unto the land of your possession [lě`ereş yěruššatkem or, unto the land of your inheritance], and enjoy it [wîrištem `ôtâh].”*

*- [Matthew L. Bowen - “We Might Have Enjoyed Our Possessions and the Land of Our Inheritance”: Hebrew yrš and 1 Nephi 17:21](#)*

We know that Joseph Smith would read the Bible but why would Joseph notice expressions like this if most other people don't?

See:

- [Matthew L. Bowen - “We Might Have Enjoyed Our Possessions and the Land of Our Inheritance”: Hebrew yrš and 1 Nephi 17:21](#)

## **Why would Joseph Smith correct mistakes by simply restating the point?**

If the gold plates were genuine we would expect the writers to sometimes make mistakes. In Alma 24:19 we read:

*And thus we see that, when these Lamanites were brought to believe and to know the truth, they were firm, and would suffer even unto death rather than commit sin; and thus we see that they buried their weapons of peace, or they buried the weapons of war, for peace.*

Tyle Griffin points out how this type of error correction would be expected on the plates:

*I love telling my students, “This book is so good that even when it’s wrong, it’s right.” For instance, you’re probably familiar with the passage in Alma 24 when Mormon tells you, “And thus we see that they buried their weapons of peace.” And then he says, “Or, they buried the weapons of war, for peace.” You unpack that and you say, “What in the world just happened there? What did he say that for?” And you picture him scratching or engraving in the metal plates, and I know everybody in this room has done that, where you’ve been writing along or typing along and*

*your brain gets ahead of your hands, and what happens? You write things out of order. I can picture Mormon looking down the corridor of time at you with your laptops and your word processors and your erasers and him going, “Oh, if only you knew how hard it is when you let your head get ahead of your hands.” So he has to fix it with words.*

*To me, that might not prove anything to anybody else, but to me, if a farm boy is making the story up, and if he says to his scribe, “Thus we see that they buried their weapons of peace,” what would any farm boy do at that point as he recognizes, “Oh, whoops! Scratch that Oliver, take that out. Make it, “Thus we see they buried the weapons of war, for peace.”” But if he’s translating an ancient record, he’s not going to scratch it; he’s going to keep it.*

*- [Tyler Griffin - Book of Mormon Geographical References: Internal Consistency Taken to a New Level](#)*

If Joseph Smith dictated the Book of Mormon, why didn't he ask the scribe to cross this part out rather than use words to correct it?

See:

- [Tyler Griffin - Book of Mormon Geographical References: Internal Consistency Taken to a New Level](#)

## **Why do the authors in the Book of Mormon have different improvisation pattern signatures?**

Gerald E. Smith introduces the concept of corrective conjunction phrases as follows:

*Orators and writers use corrective conjunctions all the time to correct or clarify, often while speaking extemporaneously, to achieve greater precision in the point they want to make. For example, in September 1859, during the American presidential Lincoln-Douglas debates, Abraham Lincoln said to an audience in Columbus, Ohio, “In 1784, I believe, this same Mr. [Thomas] Jefferson drew up an ordinance for the government of the country upon which we now stand, **or, rather** a frame or draft of an ordinance for the government of this country.” (emphasis added)*

*- [Gerald E. Smith - Improvisation and Extemporaneous Change in the Book of Mormon \(Part 1: Evidence of an Imperfect, Authentic, Ancient Work of Scripture\)](#)*

Smith has identified 170 example of corrective conjunction phrases in the Book of Mormon, for example from the earliest text of Alma 17:18:

*Now Ammon being the chief among them,  
**or rather** he did administer unto them,  
 he departed from them,  
 after having blessed them according to their several stations,  
 having imparted the word of God unto them,  
**or** administered unto them before his departure.  
 And thus they took their several journeys throughout the land. (emphasis added)*

Looking at five different types of changes, Smith identifies how the authors of the Book of Mormon have different improvisation pattern signatures. Summarized as follows:

- *Mormon's improvisations as an author appear to be driven by an impulse in history and war — evidence of an occupational orientation as a military historian. In these two categories we find the greatest incidence of Mormon's extemporaneous changes — those places deemed important and challenging because there we see pauses to make corrections.*
- *...The improvisations found in Nephi's texts appear most frequently in prophecy and doctrinal narratives, and much less so in historical narratives.*
- *...The improvisations found in Alma's texts appear notably in doctrinal narratives, but also quite broadly in history, exhortation, geography, and prophecy narratives.*
- *...The prolific improvisations found in Abinadi's texts appear solely in doctrinal texts, and mostly are Type 2 Amplifying and clarifying.*
- *...The prolific improvisations found in Limhi's texts (third-most in the Book of Mormon) appear mostly in history, then military, geography, and doctrine texts, with extemporaneous changes that are both Type 2 Amplifying or clarifying, and Type 1 Correcting or fixing.*
- *...The prolific improvisations found in Benjamin's texts appear in exhortation, prophecy, doctrine, and history, and are virtually always Type 2 Amplifying and clarifying.*

*- [Gerald E. Smith - Improvisation and Extemporaneous Change in the Book of Mormon \(Part 1: Evidence of an Imperfect, Authentic, Ancient Work of Scripture\)](#)*

Smith concludes:

*What is noticeable from these six author improvisation pattern signatures is how distinctly different they are from each other. Some are narrowly focused in editorial content (Abinadi, Mormon, and Nephi), and others have greater content diversity (Alma, Limhi, and Benjamin), and emphasizing different types of improvisation — Type 1 Correcting and fixing versus Type 2 Amplifying, clarifying, and augmenting. What we see here is evidence, statistically, and visually, that the improvisations found in the texts of Book of Mormon authors appear to be works of multiple authors, rather than a single author like Joseph Smith or Moroni — both later contributors to the Book of Mormon's construction.*



[- Gerald E. Smith - Improvisation and Extemporaneous Change in the Book of Mormon \(Part 1: Evidence of an Imperfect, Authentic, Ancient Work of Scripture\)](#)

How does this correlate with Joseph Smith being the sole author of the Book of Mormon?

See:

- [Gerald E. Smith - Improvisation and Extemporaneous Change in the Book of Mormon \(Part 1: Evidence of an Imperfect, Authentic, Ancient Work of Scripture\)](#)

## **Why does the Book of Mormon use so many English words to describe what could have simply been translated as “the law”?**

In 2 Nephi 5:10 we read::

*And we did observe to keep the judgments, and the statutes, and the commandments of the Lord in all things, according to the law of Moses.*

Would we expect Joseph Smith with his limited education to use language like this? Wouldn't we expect him to simply say they kept the commandments? This list of similar legal terms also occurs in other places in the Book of Mormon and resembles 1 Kings 2:3:

*And keep the charge of the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, that thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest, and whithersoever thou turnest thyself:*

How would Joseph know of the difference between statutes, commandments and judgments in the law? Do casual readers of the Bible usually notice this kind of language?

See:

- [Book of Mormon Central - Why Does the Book of Mormon Use So Many Different Terms for “Law”?](#)

## **Why would there be deflected agreement (the grammatical phenomenon found in Semitic languages) in the Book of Mormon?**

Andrew C. Smith explains deflected agreement:

*Deflected agreement is a technical term borrowed from the Arabic linguistics community that is also descriptive of a particular phenomenon in classical Hebrew. This term describes a grammatical principle generally referred to by Arab linguists as “feminine singular agreement with nonhuman plurals.” The basis of grammatical agreement in Semitic languages is that words from different categories or parts of speech (nouns, verbs, adjectives, etc.), when grammatically juxtaposed to one another, must agree in a number of details: number, gender, and, to a certain degree, definiteness. A type of DA, wherein parts of speech are grammatically juxtaposed but do not agree in number or gender, is also seen in biblical Hebrew, albeit more rarely. According to Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar, “Plurals of names of animals or things, and of abstracts, whether they be masculine or feminine, are frequently construed with the feminine singular of the verbal predicate.*

- [Andrew C. Smith - Deflected Agreement in the Book of Mormon](#)

Deflected agreement is found in the Bible and Andrew C. Smith has identified 329 instances in the original editions of the Book of Mormon which can be split into three types:

1. *Verbal - nonhuman plural subjects with singular agreement expressed by the associated verbs*
2. *Pronominal - a plural antecedent is referenced using the singular pronoun “it” instead of the normative English pronouns “they” or “them”*
3. *Demonstrative - words used to distinguish certain entities from one another either spatially or in abstract senses within discourse*

One example is found in 1 Nephi 15:3 which says:

*For he truly spake **many great things unto them, which was** hard to be understood, save a man should inquire of the Lord. (emphasis added)*

Why did Joseph Smith use deflected agreement while dictating the Book of Mormon? Why is the distribution of deflected agreement not standard across all the 15 books?

See:

- [Andrew C. Smith - Deflected Agreement in the Book of Mormon](#)

## **How could Joseph Smith appropriately make use of the phrase “and behold” in the Book of Mormon?**

Recent Biblical scholarship has discovered the importance of the phrase “and behold” which allows the reader to view the scene through the eyes of the character (which is often a surprise). Importantly, sometimes it is used [even though the text has already stated what has](#)

[happened, so that the reader can step into the eyes of the character who is experiencing what is seen for the first time.](#)

The Book of Mormon uses this phrase the same as the Bible to show surprise from the perspective of the character. For example in Alma 19:18 which says:

*And they began to assemble themselves together unto the house of the king. And there came a multitude, and to their astonishment, they beheld the king, and the queen, and their servants prostrate upon the earth, and they all lay there as though they were dead; and they also saw Ammon, and behold, he was a Nephite.*

Also in Helaman 5:36-37:

*And it came to pass that he turned him about, and behold, he saw through the cloud of darkness the faces of Nephi and Lehi; and behold, they did shine exceedingly, even as the face of angels ... And it came to pass that this man did cry unto the multitude, that they might turn and look. And behold, there was power given unto them that they did turn and look, and they did behold the faces of Nephi and Lehi.*

Where would Joseph Smith have learned how to use “and behold” if it was only understood recently?

See:

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: “And Behold”](#)

## **Would we expect to see hal-clauses in the Book of Mormon if Joseph Smith created it himself?**

Brian D. Stubbs explains:

*Circumstantial or (hal-clauses) denote an accompanying state or circumstance that has previously come into existence, yet is still applicable to the time of the main clause. Two structures in English that structurally best illustrate the presence of Hebrew or Egyptian hal-clauses include the following:*

1. *being + past participle/adjective/noun*
2. *having + past participle (to denote a previous happening as background):*

- [Brian D. Stubbs - A Short Addition to Length: Some Relative Frequencies of Circumstantial Structures](#)

An example of hal-clauses is found in Alma 2:1-2

*And it came to pass in the commencement of the fifth year of their reign there began to be a contention among the people; for a certain man, being called Amlici, **he being** a very cunning man, yea, a wise man as to the wisdom of the world, **he being** after the order of the man that slew Gideon by the sword, who was executed according to the law—*

*Now this Amlici had, by his cunning, drawn away much people after him; even so much that they began to be very powerful; and they began to endeavor to establish Amlici to be a king over the people.*

Where did Joseph Smith learn about hal-clauses? Why are there [more than 5 times the amount of hal-clauses in the Book of Mormon](#) compared to other writings of Joseph such as the Doctrine and Covenants?

See:

- [Brian D. Stubbs - A Short Addition to Length: Some Relative Frequencies of Circumstantial Structures](#)
- [Brian D. Stubbs - A Lengthier Treatment of Length](#)

## **How could Joseph Smith consistently describe going “up” while moving toward Jerusalem, and going “down” while moving away from Jerusalem (exactly as the Hebrews and Egyptians did)?**

If Joseph Smith was dictating the Book of Mormon on the fly we would expect some inconsistencies in the storyline or in the finer details.

Amazingly, Joseph mentions 26 journeys to and from Jerusalem in 1 Nephi and is consistent in the usage of “up” and “down” each time. [Evidence Central](#) lists the 26 consistent instances of going “up” to Jerusalem, and going “down” when moving away:

- “he came down by the borders near the shore of the Red Sea” (1 Nephi 2:5)
- “seek the records, and bring them down hither into the wilderness” (1 Nephi 3:4)
- “I, Nephi, and my brethren took our journey ... to go up to the land of Jerusalem” (1 Nephi 3:9)
- “we had gone up to the land of Jerusalem” (1 Nephi 3:10)
- “we will not go down unto our father in the wilderness” (1 Nephi 3:15)
- “let us go down to the land of our father’s inheritance” (1 Nephi 3:16)
- “we went down to the land of our inheritance” (1 Nephi 3:22)
- “we went up again unto the house of Laban” (1 Nephi 3:23)
- “Behold ye shall go up to Jerusalem again” (1 Nephi 3:29)

- *“Let us go up again unto Jerusalem” (1 Nephi 4:1)*
- *“Therefore let us go up [to Jerusalem]” (1 Nephi 4:2)*
- *“Let us go up [to Jerusalem]” (1 Nephi 4:3)*
- *“they did follow me up until we came without the walls of Jerusalem” (1 Nephi 4:4)*
- *“if he would go down in the wilderness with us” (1 Nephi 4:33)*
- *“if thou wilt go down into the wilderness to my father” (1 Nephi 4:34)*
- *“he promised that he would go down into the wilderness unto our father” (1 Nephi 4:35)*
- *“we had come down into the wilderness unto our father” (1 Nephi 5:1)*
- *“bring them down again unto us in the wilderness” (1 Nephi 5:5)*
- *“we journeyed in the wilderness up to the land of Jerusalem” (1 Nephi 5:6)*
- *“bring down Ishmael and his family into the wilderness” (1 Nephi 7:2)*
- *“I, Nephi, did again ... go up to Jerusalem” (1 Nephi 7:3)*
- *“we went up unto the house of Ishmael” (1 Nephi 7:4)*
- *“they took their journey with us down into the wilderness” (1 Nephi 7:5)*
- *“if ye have choice, go up to the land [of Jerusalem]” (1 Nephi 7:15)*
- *“we did come down unto the tent of our father” (1 Nephi 7:22)*
- *“I and my brethren and all the house of Ishmael had come down unto the tent (1 Nephi 7:22)*

What are the odds that Joseph wouldn't slip up once during dictation? Why are there no signs in the manuscript that he corrected himself?

See:

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Jerusalem's Elevation](#)

## **Would we expect paired tricola in the Book of Mormon if Joseph Smith wrote it himself?**

A tricolon is an ancient poetic device in which three words or phrases are combined to emphasize a point. Tricola are found throughout the Bible but only recently has paired tricola been discovered.

Paired tricola are two tricola which share a common colon. Jeff Lindsay explains:

*Paired tricola, at first glance, may look like a bicolon adjacent to a tricolon, but those five lines actually have two interwoven tricola wherein the last colon of the first tricolon is also the first colon of the last tricolon. A paired tricolon often appears with other bicola before or after. The added words in these paired tricola - words which seem out of place if one expects only bicola - often add to the meaning and power of the poetry.*

*- [Jeff Lindsay - Paired Tricola in the Book of Mormon](#)*

The Book of Mormon appears to contain paired tricola which would be very unexpected if Joseph Smith had dictated it on the fly. Jeff Lindsay highlights 1 Nephi 22:15-17 as a paired tricola:

*A1: (15,16) day cometh ... wicked ....as stubble, day cometh they must be burned  
A2: (16) time cometh - fullness of the wrath of God upon men - not suffer wicked to destroy the righteous*

*B: (17) He will preserve the righteous - even if fullness of his wrath must come*

*C1: (17) the righteous be preserved - even unto destruction of enemies by fire*

*C2: (17) the righteous need not fear - saved, even as by fire*

In this instance, the first tricola contains elements of time and coming, and the second tricola contains elements of being preserved. However the common colon contains both.

How would Joseph Smith have been able to compose paired tricola like this while dictating the Book of Mormon?

See:

- [Jeff Lindsay - Paired Tricola in the Book of Mormon](#)

## **What knowledge would Joseph Smith have had of colophons (used extensively in Egyptian documents)?**

The Book of Mormon includes books which start or end with a summary of what is about to come, or a summary of what has just happened. These summaries are known as colophons and are found in ancient documents.

John A. Tvedtnes explains:

*Hugh Nibley pointed out several years ago, they appear in several Egyptian documents. For example, the Bremer-Rhind papyrus opens with a colophon that gives the date, the titles of the author, genealogical information about his parents, and a curse upon anyone who might tamper with the document (in other words, an avowal that the record is true). These textual elements functioned in antiquity somewhat like a copyright or seal of approval.*

*- [John A. Tvedtnes, "Colophons in the Book of Mormon," in Reexploring the Book of Mormon, edited by John W. Welch \(Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1992\), Chapter 3](#)*

An example of a colophon is found in 1 Nephi:

*An account of Lehi and his wife Sariah, and his four sons," and ends, "This is according to the account of Nephi; or in other words, I, Nephi, wrote this record."*

Why would Joseph Smith go to the trouble of adding them at all? It certainly would make dictating a book on the fly much more difficult. It would require either accurately stating in advance what is about to happen or accurately describing what has happened. Why would Joseph Smith make the Book of Mormon more difficult for himself by including these unnecessary colophons?

See:

- [FAIR Latter-day Saints - Colophons in the Book of Mormon](#)

## **What would have made Joseph Smith think of putting the Book of Mormon's title page at the back, rather than the front?**

There are many curious aspects of the Book of Mormon which, on their own, are not definitive evidence that the Book is of ancient origin, but combined create a compelling case. One such example is that the title page was located at the back of the book rather than the front.

Joseph Smith wrote that:

*the title page of the Book of Mormon is a literal translation, taken from the very last leaf, on the left hand side of the collection or book of plates, which contained the record which has been translated.*

*- [History of the Church, 1:71.](#)*

Why would Joseph have said that the title page was on the very last leaf (in other words, at the back)? Isn't this completely against all his experience of books? The practice of writing the name, author and title of the book at the back is of ancient origin which seems to have originated in Mesopotamia and it is unclear how Joseph would have known about it.

Why didn't Joseph make a big deal of this fact if he deliberately did it to look authentic?

See:

- [FAIR Latter-day Saints - Gold Plates Of The Book of Mormon](#)

## If Joseph Smith wrote the Book of Mormon himself, would we expect to see examples of subscriptio in the text?

In Words of Mormon 1:3 we read Mormon's introduction to the small plates:

*And now, I speak somewhat concerning that which I have written; for after I had made an abridgment from the plates of Nephi, down to the reign of this king Benjamin, of whom Amaleki spake, I searched among the records which had been delivered into my hands, and I found these plates, which contained this small account of the prophets, from Jacob down to the reign of this king Benjamin, and also many of the words of Nephi.*

If Joseph Smith created the Book of Mormon wouldn't he naturally put this introduction before the small plates rather than after? This practice of "subscriptio" is common in Mesopotamia and other parts of the ancient world but it is unlikely that Joseph Smith would have known that.

Why would Joseph introduce the small plates after the reader has already read them?

See:

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Subscriptio](#)

## Why would Joseph Smith dictate "Ramath" instead of the usual "Ramah" the Book of Mormon version of Isaiah 10:29?

In 2 Nephi 20:29 we read:

*They are gone over the passage; they have taken up their lodging at Geba; **Ramath** is afraid; Gibeah of Saul is fled. (emphasis added)*

This is curious because it is slightly different to the King James Version of the scripture (Isaiah 10:29) which reads:

*They are gone over the passage: they have taken up their lodging at Geba; **Ramah** is afraid; Gibeah of Saul is fled. (emphasis added)*

The small difference is "Ramath" vs "Ramah". Robert F. Smith explains why Joseph not adding the extra "t" is important:

*Indeed, there is no "t" in the Hebrew text, the Greek Septuagint, or even in the Syropalestinian Aramaic version. The "t" appears, however, in the later Jewish Aramaic translation known as Targum Pseudo-Jonathan, as well as in the*



*Christian Syriac Peshitta version. The words there are Ramata and Rameta, respectively (as is also evident in the Old Syriac Rametha for New Testament Arimathea in Matthew 27:57)*

- [Robert F. Smith - Textual Criticism of the Book of Mormon](#)

Why think the extra “t” is a coincidence if it corresponds with other translations?

See:

- [Robert F. Smith - Textual Criticism of the Book of Mormon](#)

## Why doesn't the Book of Mormon include "Ariel" when quoting Isaiah 29:7?

In 2 Nephi 27:3 we read:

*And **all the nations that fight against Zion**, and that distress her, shall be as a dream of a night vision; yea, it shall be unto them, even as unto a hungry man which dreameth, and behold he eateth but he awaketh and his soul is empty; or like unto a thirsty man which dreameth, and behold he drinketh but he awaketh and behold he is faint, and his soul hath appetite; yea, even so shall the multitude of all the nations be that fight against Mount Zion. (emphasis added)*

This is curious because it is different to the King James Version of the scripture (Isaiah 29:7) which reads:

*And the multitude of all **the nations that fight against Ariel**, even all that fight against her and her munition, and that distress her, shall be as a dream of a night vision. (emphasis added)*

Robert F. Smith explains why this is interesting:

*King James “Ariel,” a poetic term for Jerusalem, is not to be found in the 2 Nephi 27:3 quotation of Isaiah 29:7. However, it is also absent from the Jewish Aramaic Targum—which replaces it with “the City.” The Book of Mormon reads Zion instead. This fits well, however, since “Mount Zion” appears at the end of the verse (Isaiah 29:8), and “Zion” and “Mount Zion” parallel each other here.*

- [Robert F. Smith - Textual Criticism of the Book of Mormon](#)

Where would Joseph Smith have gotten this alternative (yet appropriate) translation from?

See:

- [Robert F. Smith - Textual Criticism of the Book of Mormon](#)

## Is it a coincidence that 1 Nephi 7:11 confuses the words "how" and "what" just like in 1 Samuel 12:24?

The Book of Mormon translation seemed to encounter similar problems to the Bible translation.

1 Nephi 7:11 reads:

*Yea, and how is it that ye have forgotten **what** great things the Lord hath done for us, in delivering us out of the hands of Laban, and also that we should obtain the record? (emphasis added)*

Similarly, 1 Samuel 12:24 reads:

*Only fear the Lord, and serve him in truth with all your heart: for consider **how** great things he hath done for you. (emphasis added)*

Robert F. Smith explains an interesting points regarding these two scriptures:

*At 1 Nephi 7:11, the Original and Printer's Manuscripts of the Book of Mormon, as well as the 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon, all use the word how, which was changed in the 1837 and all subsequent editions to read what. However, even the King James translators could not decide, in translating a closely similar phrase in 1 Samuel 12:24, whether how or what was a more accurate translation of the Hebrew relative particle 'asher. They thus placed the one in the text and the other in the margin (the reasons for marginal readings are explained at length in the introduction to their 1611 edition of the King James Version). Exactly the same variant readings occur in the texts we have of the Title Page of the Book of Mormon.*

- [Robert F. Smith - Textual Criticism of the Book of Mormon](#)

Why would Joseph Smith encounter the same issues as the translators of the King James Bible?

See:

- [Robert F. Smith - Textual Criticism of the Book of Mormon](#)

## Why does the Book of Mormon seem to understand the word “Rameumptom” has Hebrew roots meaning a high/holy stand?

In several places in the Book of Mormon a word or name is followed by its interpretation. One example is that of [Rameumptom](#).

Alma 31:13 reads:

*For they had a place built up in the center of their synagogue, a place for standing, which was high above the head; and the top thereof would only admit one person.*

Later in the chapter the name and interpretation are given:

*Now the place was called by them Rameumptom, which, being interpreted, is the holy stand.*

This would be a bold move by Joseph Smith if he had written the Book of Mormon himself because the interpretation could be proved wrong. However the Book of Mormon Onomasticon explains how it is spot on:

*The first element of the name is most likely related to HEBREW rām, “to be high, to be exalted,” and rāmâ, “eminence, high place,” the same root that appears in the biblical geographic name RAMAH, “hill” (cf. Book of Mormon RAMAH). RAMEUMPTOM could be a noun chain with râme as a masculine construct plural, meaning “the elevations of.” The -umptom would then be a nomen rectum, possibly from HEBREW ʿōmed, “place, position, location,” with either a pronominal suffix, analogous to the 3rd person plural possessive pronoun -ām, or with the nominalizing ending -ōm. The latter ending is probably to be preferred because of the analog form in Arabic, ʿumdān “standing.” Given these two HEBREW lexemes, rām and ʿōmed, the meaning of RAMEUMPTOM would then be “the heights/elevations of (their) stand” (RFS), a definition that accords well with the interpretation that the Book of Mormon writers provided.*

- [Book of Mormon Onomasticon - Rameumptom](#)

Why would Joseph Smith intentionally include the definition of the word Rameumptom? Wouldn't this leave him open to being exposed? How did he manage to create a word with the correct Hebrew meaning?

See:

- [Book of Mormon Onomasticon - Rameumptom](#)
- [FAIR Latter-day Saints - The name "Rameumptom" in the Book of Mormon](#)

## Why would Joseph Smith be so confident to give the interpretation of the word Rabbanah?

In Alma 18:13 we read of the word “Rabbanah” and its interpretation:

*And one of the king’s servants said unto him, Rabbanah, which is, being interpreted, powerful or great king, considering their kings to be powerful; and thus he said unto him: Rabbanah, the king desireth thee to stay.*

Why would Joseph include the interpretation if he didn’t know any other languages at the time? The word Rabbanah is a direct hit for Joseph Smith, as explained by Matthew Bowen:

*The servants of Lamoni, however, ask Ammon to stay calling him by the name “Rabbanah” which is glossed as “great or powerful king,” a title evidently built from the Semitic root \*rbb/rby, which denotes “greatness” or “muchness” (rabb is still the word for [divine] “Lord” in modern Arabic).*

*- [Matthew L. Bowen - Father Is a Man: The Remarkable Mention of the Name Abish in Alma 19:16 and Its Narrative Context](#)*

Why would Joseph take an unnecessary chance by giving the interpretation of words in the Book of Mormon?

See:

- [Matthew L. Bowen - Father Is a Man: The Remarkable Mention of the Name Abish in Alma 19:16 and Its Narrative Context](#)
- [Book of Mormon Onomasticon - Rabbanah](#)

## If Joseph Smith wrote the Book of Mormon wouldn’t he have probably used the phrase “sorrows of death” rather than “bands of death”?

The phrase “bands of death” is mentioned five times in the Book of Mormon, by Abinadi and Alma the younger.

Interestingly this phrase does not appear in the King James Version of the Bible but it does appear in the underlying Hebrew of the Old Testament.

The underlying Hebrew “heveli-mot” appears in Psalms 18:4 and 116:3 but is translated in the King James Version as “sorrows of death”, however other translations translate it as “cords”, “ropes” or “snares” of death.

How would Joseph Smith have arrived at “bands of death” from reading about “sorrows of death” in his Bible? Where would Joseph have learned these other translations?

See:

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: “Bands of Death” and “Chains of Hell”](#)

## Why does the Book of Mormon seem to know that “let his face shine” is a Hebrew idiom for “smile”?

The priestly blessing of Aaron to the children of Israel, as recorded in Numbers 6:24–26 says:

*The Lord bless thee, and keep thee: The Lord make his face **shine** upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace. (emphasis added)*

This scripture is very similar to 3 Nephi 19:25 which says:

*Jesus blessed them as they did pray unto him; and his countenance did **smile** upon them, and the light of his countenance did shine upon them. (emphasis added)*

The key difference between the two is the word “shine” in the Bible, and “smile” in the Book of Mormon. Evidence Central explains:

*The New American Bible has a footnote to Numbers 6:25 which indicates that the expression “let his face shine” is “a Hebrew idiom for ‘smile.’” Additionally, biblical scholar M. I. Gruber has explained that the phrase in verse 26, “lift up his countenance,” should be rendered idiomatically as “smile.” With this in mind, the statement that Jesus’ countenance “did smile” upon the people in 3 Nephi 19:25 is a very appropriate expression of the Hebrew idiom found in Numbers 6:25–26.*

*The English word smile doesn’t show up in the King James Version of the Bible. And yet here it is in 3 Nephi 19, being used in a way that appropriately expresses the underlying Hebrew idiom from Numbers 6:24–25, a passage which is clearly being alluded to, based on both wording and context. Not only is this allusion textually appropriate, but its presence strongly suggests that whoever authored it was familiar with the underlying Hebrew idiom in Numbers 6.*

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Christ’s Priestly Blessing](#)

Where would Joseph have learned this? Why did he not ensure someone noticed these small details as evidence that the book was true?

See:

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Christ's Priestly Blessing](#)

## Why would Joseph Smith have spoken of “flying” fiery serpents?

Sometimes the Book of Mormon adds extra detail to the Bible, such as in 1 Nephi 17:41:

*And he did straiten them in the wilderness with his rod; for they hardened their hearts, even as ye have; and the Lord straitened them because of their iniquity. He sent **fiery flying serpents** among them; and after they were bitten he prepared a way that they might be healed; and the labor which they had to perform was to look; and because of the simpleness of the way, or the easiness of it, there were many who perished. (emphasis added)*

This is curious because the King James Version of the Bible does not speak of “flying” fiery serpents related to this story Nephi was referencing. So why did Joseph Smith include that extra word?

The underlying Hebrew word used to describe the fiery serpents in Deuteronomy 8:15 (seraphim) means a winged creature so Joseph Smith was entirely appropriate to add the word “flying”.

How would Joseph have known the underlying Hebrew of the King James Version of the Bible?

See:

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Flying Fiery Serpents](#)

## Why would the Book of Mormon demonstrate the nuances of meaning contained within the Hebrew word “netzach”?

Several passages in the Book of Mormon reference Isaiah 25:8 which says:

*He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the Lord hath spoken it.*

The Hebrew word translated here as “victory” is “netzach” however this Hebrew word has a range of meanings and is also translated as (or can mean):

- *Victory forever*
- *Having been strong*
- *For ever*
- *Splendor*
- *Glory*
- *The Lord*

David J. Larsen notes that:

*the noun form of netzach, as it appears in the Hebrew Old Testament, most often carries the meaning of “forever, perpetual.” However, there are a small number of instances in which the noun apparently refers to a person (likely “the glory/strength/victor”) or to victory/success/strength. The translators that produced the Greek Septuagint kept the Hebrew meaning in most of the above-cited passages but understood netzach to be a reference to the end times in most of the Psalms passages.*

*- [David J. Larsen - Death Being Swallowed Up in Netzach in the Bible and the Book of Mormon](#)*

Turning to the relevant passages in the Book of Mormon, we see variations in the use of netzach. Abinadi says in Mosiah 16:8:

*But there is a resurrection, therefore the grave hath no victory, and the sting of death is **swallowed up in Christ.** (emphasis added)*

Aaron says in Alma 22:14:

*And since man had fallen he could not merit anything of himself; but the sufferings and death of Christ atone for their sins, through faith and repentance, and so forth; and that he breaketh the bands of death, that the grave shall have no victory, and that the sting of death should be **swallowed up in the hopes of glory;** and Aaron did expound all these things unto the king. (emphasis added)*

Mormon says in Alma 27:28

*And they did look upon shedding the blood of their brethren with the greatest abhorrence; and they never could be prevailed upon to take up arms against their brethren; and they never did look upon death with any degree of terror, for their hope and views of Christ and the resurrection; therefore, death was **swallowed up to them by the victory of Christ over it.** (emphasis added)*

How was Joseph Smith able to create these subtle variations in the meaning of Isaiah 25:8?

Larsen concludes:

*If Abinadi, Aaron, and Alma or Mormon, the authors of the Book of Mormon passages discussed here, were indeed familiar with the Hebrew text of Isaiah's words in Isaiah 25:8, then this study demonstrates that they had a particularly keen understanding of the range of possible meanings behind this Hebrew term. They were apparently familiar enough with the nuances of meaning contained within the word *netzach* to be able use it or to paraphrase it suitably in addressing various audiences.*

*- [David J. Larsen - Death Being Swallowed Up in Netzach in the Bible and the Book of Mormon](#)*

How would Joseph have been able to do this if he didn't understand the underlying Hebrew?

See:

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Swallowed Up in Netzach](#)
- [David J. Larsen - Death Being Swallowed Up in Netzach in the Bible and the Book of Mormon](#)

## **Why does the Book of Mormon contain unusual word meanings and phrasing that are completely unattested in either Joseph Smith's time or in the eighteenth century, yet can be commonly found in the centuries before that time?**

In addition to the Book of Mormon containing archaic syntactic patterns, Royal Skousen and Stanford Carmack have also shown that the Book of Mormon contains word meanings and phrases which are unattested in Joseph's time yet are commonly found in the centuries before:

*break (to stop or interrupt), but (unless, except), call of (need for), consigned that (assigned that), counsel (to consult, counsel with), course (direction), cross (to contradict), depart (to divide, separate, part), desirous (desirable), devour (to consume, eat up), extinct (physically dead), flatter (to coax, entice), give (to describe, portray), idleness (meaningless words or actions), manifest (to expound, unfold), mar (to hinder, stop), nithermost (nethermost), opinion (expectation), profane (to act profanely), reign (to arraign), scatter (to separate from the main group), sermon (conversation, discussion), study (to concentrate thought upon), subsequent (consequent), welfare (success), whereby (why)*

*- [Stanford Carmack and Royal Skousen - Revisions in the Analysis of Archaic Language in the Book of Mormon](#)*



Why would these words (and unusual meanings) be in Joseph Smith's vocabulary?

See:

- [Kyler Rasmussen - Estimating the Evidence. Episode 9: On Too-Old English](#)
- [Stanford Carmack and Royal Skousen - Revisions in the Analysis of Archaic Language in the Book of Mormon](#)

## Why does the Book of Mormon contain such sophisticated and principled command syntax?

Stanford Carmack has studied the use of command syntax in the Book of Mormon and found it is different from the King James Version of the Bible but follows typical Early Modern English construction.

For example 3 Nephi 20:14 reads

*the Father hath **commanded me that** I should give unto you this land for your inheritance (emphasis added)*

Whereas we see the following style in the Bible and Modern English:

*the Father hath **commanded me to** give unto you this land for your inheritance*

Stanford Carmack concludes:

*...in order to maintain a belief that Joseph Smith authored the BofM, one must assume that he chose to consciously and independently adopt an obsolete finite-clause construction as the main form of command syntax, against the KJB and his own language. One must also ascribe to him the ability to follow principled usage patterns not found in the KJB and incapable of being derived from a normal reading of that text. These include: favoring active finite and passive infinitival complementation, as well as heavy doses of layered syntax (both obscure phenomena to be found mainly at the beginning of the EModE period); nearly always using finite syntax with four types of embedded complexity; always employing finite syntax with an auxiliary (occasionally shall), except when the embedded subject was second person (optionally); and always using main-clause raised objects with embedded infinitives. Because syntactic knowledge is largely tacit, Joseph Smith would have been unaware of such linguistic fine points, just as we are today. And because much of this language was inaccessible to him, it is possible to assert with confidence that he would have been incapable of implementing this complex syntax in the remarkably consistent fashion the text presents.*

[- Stanford Carmack - What Command Syntax Tells Us About Book of Mormon Authorship](#)

How was Joseph Smith able to follow principle usage patterns not found in the Bible? How was he aware of such “linguistic fine points”?

See:

- [Stanford Carmack - What Command Syntax Tells Us About Book of Mormon Authorship](#)

## Why do we see examples of the dative impersonal in the Book of Mormon?

[Stanford Carmack notes](#) how the Book of Mormon contains many examples of “dative impersonal constructions” such as:

*It grieveth me that...*

This archaic grammatical form is Early Modern English (centuries before Joseph Smith's day) and while the dative impersonal appears 9 times in the Bible, the Book of Mormon contains non-biblical examples such as:

- it supposeth me that
- it sorroweth me
- it whispereth me

How did Joseph Smith know of this ancient grammatical form and how did he dictate [50 examples](#) including those not found in the Bible?

See:

- [Stanford Carmack - A Look at Some “Nonstandard” Book of Mormon Grammar](#)
- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Dative Impersonals](#)

## Why would Joseph Smith frequently use the “periphrastic did” in the Book of Mormon?

The “periphrastic did” is an ancient grammatical form in which the verb “did” is used as an auxiliary verb, such as in 1 Nephi 1:15:

*And after this manner was the language of my father in the praising of his God; for **his soul did rejoice**, and his whole heart was filled, because of the things which he had seen, yea, which the Lord had shown unto him. (emphasis added)*

This form is used over 1,700 times in the Book of Mormon in connection with over 400 verbs yet this ancient grammatical form [all but vanished sometime in the 1700s](#).

Stanford Carmack remarks:

*Writers cannot manufacture out of thin air vanished forms and lexical meaning when language shift has taken place, thereby obscuring prior usage. That of course is precisely the case of the BofM's past-tense syntax. High-rate nonemphatic adp did adjacency disappeared before the 18c and was not generally known. So Joseph Smith had no knowledge that it was used at high rates during the 16c and the 17c. (The anomalous use of biblical did eat would not have told him that, just as it does not tell us that today.)*

- [Stanford Carmack - The Implications of Past-Tense Syntax in the Book of Mormon](#)

How do we account for the high usage of the “periphrastic did” in the Book of Mormon if it reflects [Early Modern English more than the Bible?](#)

See:

- [Stanford Carmack - The Implications of Past-Tense Syntax in the Book of Mormon](#)
- [Stanford Carmack - Is the Book of Mormon a Pseudo-Archaic Text?](#)
- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Periphrastic Did](#)

## **Why would Joseph Smith have dictated the phrase “the more part of”?**

The phrase “the more part of” peaked in popularity in the 1500s but was not popular at the time of the King James Version of the Bible. It is not found anywhere in the Bible but the shorter version “the more part” does appear twice. Interestingly, “the more part of” appears 26 times in the earliest edition of the Book of Mormon and the shorter version does not appear at all.

Why was Joseph Smith using such an old expression that was not found in the Bible?

In his analysis, Stanford Carmack concludes:

*To sum up, had Joseph Smith come up with the language of the Book of Mormon himself, out of his own language, it is possible but unlikely that he would have used “the more part” in the dictation. Also, had he followed rare biblical usage*

*(comprising less than 0.001% of the words), then he likely would have used the short biblical phrase several times, instead of “the more part of them” every time. Finally, if we suppose that Smith was the translator (in the usual sense of the term), then it is highly unlikely that the Book of Mormon would have “a more part of” and “the more parts of” (three times total).*

*- [Stanford Carmack - The More Part of the Book of Mormon Is Early Modern English](#)*

If Joseph Smith was simply copying biblical language why did he not use the biblical version of “the more part of”?

See:

- [Stanford Carmack - The More Part of the Book of Mormon Is Early Modern English](#)

**If Joseph Smith wrote the Book of Mormon himself, then why are there deep syntactic patterns that match the sixteenth century and are a poor fit for either the English of King James Bible or for eighteenth- and nineteenth-century imitations of biblical style?**

Scholars Royal Skousen and Stanford Carmack have found that much of the English in the Book of Mormon is not that of Joseph’s time, nor of the Bible, in fact it is identified as “Early Modern English” from centuries earlier.

Stanford Carmack has compared nine key syntactic features that characterize Early Modern English, with their use in the Book of Mormon, the Bible and other 19th century works. These syntactic features include:

- *Agentive of and by - “God was commanded of the Lord”*
- *Lest syntax - “But O my people, beware lest shall..”*
- *Personal that which and who(m)*
- *Periphrastic did*
- *More-part usage - “the more parts of his gospel”*
- *Had (been) spake*
- *The (-th) plural - “they dieth”*
- *Verbal complementation patterns after verbs*
- *Verbal complementation after the adjective desirous*

Carmack concludes:

*The above comparative linguistic evidence indicates that the Book of Mormon was not fashioned in the image of pseudo-biblical writings, or in the image of the King James Bible, or in the image of Joseph Smith's own language. Nevertheless, Book of Mormon language contains a wealth of archaic forms and structures. This runs counter to the received view of many commentators who have imagined it to be a flawed imitation of biblical language. A variety of substantive linguistic evidence argues that Book of Mormon grammar is deeply and broadly archaic and very different, in one case after another, from both pseudo-biblical grammar and King James style. Many more types of syntax could be given, but the above is sufficient to dismiss the view that pseudo-biblical writings approach the Book of Mormon in archaic form and structure. Those who espouse such a view have ignored crucial syntactic and morphosyntactic evidence.*

[- Stanford Carmack - Is the Book of Mormon a Pseudo-Archaic Text?](#)

How is this compatible with Joseph Smith being the sole author?

See:

- [Stanford Carmack - Is the Book of Mormon a Pseudo-Archaic Text?](#)
- [Kyler Rasmussen - Estimating the Evidence. Episode 9: On Too-Old English](#)

## **If Joseph Smith wrote the Book of Mormon himself, why would he use the "plural was"?**

The original text of Alma 7:18-19 reads:

*I had much desire that **ye was** not in the state of dilemma like your brethren, even so I have found that my desires have been gratified. For I perceive that ye are in the paths of righteousness (emphasis added)*

This usage of the “plural was” may sound strange to the modern reader but its usage in the Book of Mormon closely matches Early Modern English. Stanford Carmack has documented the varied and different uses in the Book of Mormon and concluded it to be “well-formed”.

Carmack concludes:

*The foregoing textual examples show us that the earliest text of the Book of Mormon contains a wide range of diverse expression that matches the Early Modern period, at times unexpectedly. Thanks to the groundbreaking work of Royal Skousen, and texts/corpora provided by EEBO– TCP, ECCO–TCP, Google books, and Mark Davies, this study has been possible. They have provided heretofore inaccessible evidence that it is reasonable to consider the past-tense verb agreement found in the Book of Mormon to be well-formed Early Modern English. It bears repeating that*

*this view of the earliest text is a comprehensive one that is explanatory. From this rich perspective, the Book of Mormon is full of beautiful old language and intriguing linguistic variation.*

- [Stanford Carmack - The Case of Plural Was in the Earliest Text](#)

Why does the Book of Mormon not sound like Joseph Smith's natural language or that of the Bible?

See:

- [Stanford Carmack - The Case of Plural Was in the Earliest Text](#)

## **Why does the Book of Mormon contain complex finite cause syntax which is utterly different from what we encounter in the King James Bible and pseudo-archaic texts?**

The original dictated version of the Book of Mormon contains 12 examples of complex finite cause syntax such as 1 Nephi 17:46:

*he can cause the earth that it shall pass away*

Stanford Carmack summarizes the significance of this:

*This is not King James language or currently known to be pseudo-archaic language (language used by modern authors seeking to imitate biblical or related archaic language), but it does occur in earlier English, almost entirely before the year 1700. In the Book of Mormon, the syntax is always expressed with the modal auxiliary verbs should and shall. Twenty-five original examples of this specific usage have been identified so far outside of the Book of Mormon (not counting two cases of creative biblical editing — see the appendix). The text's larger pattern of clausal verb complementation after the verb cause, 58 percent finite in 236 instances, is utterly different from what we encounter in the King James Bible and pseudo-archaic texts, which are 99 to 100 percent infinitival in their clausal complementation. The totality of the evidence indicates that Joseph Smith would not have produced this causative syntax of the Book of Mormon in a pseudo-archaic effort. Therefore, this dataset provides additional strong evidence for a revealed-words view of the 1829 dictation.*

- [Stanford Carmack - The Book of Mormon's Complex Finite Cause Syntax](#)

Carmack has found that complex finite cause syntax has not been found to occur in:

- *the King James Bible (including the Apocrypha: about 932,000 words)*
- *25 pseudo-archaic texts (first published between 1740 and 1888)*
- *Joseph Smith's early writings (10 letters and his 1832 personal history)*
- *any original writings first published after 1713, outside of the Book of Mormon*

- [Stanford Carmack - The Book of Mormon's Complex Finite Cause Syntax](#)

If Carmack has [not encountered any text that has sustained heavily finite verb complementation](#), where did Joseph Smith get this from and how did he achieve it while dictating?

See:

- [Stanford Carmack - The Book of Mormon's Complex Finite Cause Syntax](#)

## **Wouldn't it have been too difficult for Joseph Smith to consciously manipulate relative pronoun usage in a sustained manner?**

In 2021 Stanford Carmack published his findings relating to relative pronoun usage. He summarizes:

*This study compares personal relative pronoun usage in the earliest text of the Book of Mormon with 11 specimens of Joseph Smith's early writings, 25 pseudo-archaic texts, the King James Bible, and more than 200,000 early modern (1473–1700) and late modern (1701–1800+) texts. The linguistic pattern of the Book of Mormon in this domain — a pattern difficult to consciously manipulate in a sustained manner — uniquely points to a less-common early modern pattern. Because there is no matching of the Book of Mormon's pattern except with a small percentage of early modern texts, the indications are that Joseph Smith was neither the author nor the English-language translator of this pervasive element of the dictation language of the Book of Mormon. Cross-verification by means of large database comparisons and matching with one of the finest pseudo-archaic texts confirm these findings.*

- [Stanford Carmack - Personal Relative Pronoun Usage in the Book of Mormon: An Important Authorship Diagnostic](#)

If Joseph Smith was “neither the author nor the English-language translator of this pervasive element of the dictation”, where did the Book of Mormon come from?

See:

- [Stanford Carmack - Personal Relative Pronoun Usage in the Book of Mormon: An Important Authorship Diagnostic](#)

## Would Joseph Smith have noticed a couple of rare usages of the word “require” in the Bible?

In Enos 1:16,18 we read:

*And I had faith, and I did cry unto God that he would preserve the records; and he covenanted with me that he would bring them forth unto the Lamanites in his own due time.*

*And the Lord said unto me: Thy fathers have also required of me this thing; and it shall be done unto them according to their faith; for their faith was like unto thine.*

The word “require” here seems odd, why would Joseph Smith say Enos’ righteous fathers “required” things from the Lord? The meaning of this word in Early Modern English (centuries before Joseph Smith’s day) is to [“ask”](#) which is a much better fit for Enos 1:18 and also obscurely used in the Bible.

How did Joseph Smith know this early meaning of the word “require”? Did he know the Bible so well to have noticed this?

See:

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Biblical Language](#)

## Why would the Book of Mormon use the biblical and archaic meaning of “prolong”?

In Mosiah 21:35 we read:

*They were desirous to be baptized as a witness and a testimony that they were willing to serve God with all their hearts; nevertheless they did prolong the time; and an account of their baptism shall be given hereafter.*

The word “prolong” usually means to “extend”, however the usage of the word in Mosiah 21:35 is more in keeping with a much older meaning to “delay”. This meaning is used in the Bible in several verses such as Ezekiel 12:28:



*Therefore say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; There shall none of my words be prolonged any more, but the word which I have spoken shall be done, saith the Lord God.*

[Stanford Carmack](#) notes how this meaning of the word is Early Modern English which is centrifuges earlier than Joseph Smith's day.

Did Joseph Smith study the Bible so well that he noticed this word? Why do most people not notice this after a lifetime of study?

See:

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Biblical Language](#)

## How would Joseph Smith know about the phrase “for the multitude”?

In 3 Nephi 17:10 we read:

*And they did all, both they who had been healed and they who were whole, bow down at his feet, and did worship him; and as many as could come **for the multitude** did kiss his feet, insomuch that they did bathe his feet with their tears. (emphasis added)*

The word “for” here seems like a curious choice from Joseph Smith but its usage is also found in the Bible and in Early Modern English meaning “in consequence of”.

How would Joseph Smith know the Bible (or Early Modern English) so well to notice this obscure meaning? If Joseph was trying to copy the Bible wouldn't he have said “[for the press](#)”?

See:

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Biblical Language](#)

## Where would Joseph Smith have learned the archaic expression “understood of” if it only appears once in the Bible?

Royal Skousen notes how the original manuscript of the Book of Mormon contains examples of the phrase “understand of” such as Mosiah 1:5

*we might read and understand of his mysteries*

Why wouldn't Joseph Smith just say "understand his mysteries"? This usage of the word "of" is consistent with one usage in the Bible as well as Early Modern English.

Would Joseph Smith have known the Bible so well to notice this phrase in Nehemiah 13:7? Why do most people not know about it?

See:

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Biblical Language](#)

## **How could Joseph Smith manage to avoid creating a name phonoprint, yet J.R.R. Tolkien couldn't?**

Using 183 names from Tolkien's writings and 130 from the Book of Mormon, Brad Wilcox, Wendy Baker-Smemoe, Bruce L. Brown and Sharon Black conducted some exploratory analysis of the sound prints found in both sets of writings.

They summarize their findings:

*[D]o authors use specific sounds more than others — consciously or subconsciously — when selecting or inventing names? Some research suggests they may and that their patterns could create a "sound print" or phonoprint. This constitutes a fresh and unusual path of research that deserves more attention. The purpose of this exploratory study was to see if phonoprints surfaced when examining Dwarf, Elf, Hobbit, Man, and other names created by Tolkien and Jaredite, Nephite, Mulekite, and Lamanite names found in the Book of Mormon. Results suggest that Tolkien had a phonoprint he was unable to entirely escape when creating character names, even when he claimed he based them on distinct languages. In contrast, in Book of Mormon names, a single author's phonoprint did not emerge. Names varied by group in the way one would expect authentic names from different cultures to vary.*

*- [Brad Wilcox, Wendy Baker-Smemoe, Bruce L. Brown and Sharon Black - Comparing Book of Mormon Names with Those Found in J.R.R. Tolkien's Works: An Exploratory Study](#)*

The authors also explain how:

*Even when [Mark] Twain intentionally tried to create words (names) to represent different worlds, he was unable to change his own free-flow noncontextual word patterns successfully enough to simulate wordprints representing other peoples or cultures.*

[- Brad Wilcox, Wendy Baker-Smemoe, Bruce L. Brown and Sharon Black - Comparing Book of Mormon Names with Those Found in J.R.R. Tolkien's Works: An Exploratory Study](#)

If Tolkien and Twain couldn't avoid creating a phonoprint, how would Joseph Smith have managed to?

See:

- [Brad Wilcox, Wendy Baker-Smemoe, Bruce L. Brown and Sharon Black - Comparing Book of Mormon Names with Those Found in J.R.R. Tolkien's Works: An Exploratory Study](#)

## **How come Joseph Smith knew so much about Exodus 21:13 and Biblical law to make the story of Nephi killing Laban legally justifiable?**

The story of Nephi killing Laban is a major stumbling block to many readers, however John Welch note that:

*Nephi may have broken the American law of Joseph Smith's day, but it appears that he committed an excusable homicide under the public law of his own day... if an action had been brought against Nephi, early biblical law appears to have recognized two types of killings-excusable and inexcusable-and the slaying of Laban arguably falls quite specifically into the excusable category.*

[- John W. Welch - Legal Perspectives on the Slaying of Laban](#)

This is based on Exodus 21:12-13 which says:

*He that smiteth a man, so that he die, shall be surely put to death.  
And if a man lie not in wait, but God deliver him into his hand; then I will appoint thee a place whither he shall flee.*

From this it seems there are excusable killings if two criteria are met:

1. the slayer must not have been lying in wait
2. God must deliver the victim into the slayer's hand.

1 Nephi 4:6,11 address both these points quite clearly.

*And I was led by the Spirit, not knowing beforehand the things which I should do*

*And the Spirit said unto me again: Behold the Lord hath delivered him into thy hands.*

How would Joseph know to include both these points, including the exact word “deliver”?

See:

- [John W. Welch - Legal Perspectives on the Slaying of Laban](#)
- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon: Nephi's Slaying of Laban](#)

## **How was Joseph Smith so educated on Israelite law and justice in the case of Seantum's confession?**

The story of Seantum in the Book of Mormon is curious because his confession appears to be enough to convict him even though there were no witnesses. This goes against biblical traditions in which two witnesses are required. If Joseph Smith wrote the Book of Mormon, why would he include a case like this which would seem obviously untrue?

John Welch explains how in the Old Testament there are four episodes that support the idea that self-incriminating confessions could be used under certain circumstances in justifying punishment for unobserved criminal acts:

*The rabbis explained that the four early biblical cases did not violate the two-witness rule, on several possible grounds: because they were confessions outside of court, because they came “after [the] trial and conviction [and were] made for the sole purpose of expiating the sin before God,” or because they were “exceptions to the general rule . . . [since they were] related to proceedings before kings or rulers” instead of before judges.*

*- [John W. Welch - The Trial of Seantum](#)*

Welch continues:

*Thus one can conclude with reasonable confidence that, in the biblical period, the two-witness rule could be overridden in the case of a self-incriminating confession, but not easily, and only if (1) the confession occurred outside the court or the will of God was evidenced in the detection of the offender, and (2) corroborating physical evidence was produced proving who committed the crime. Quite remarkably, Seantum's self-incriminating confession was precisely such a case on all counts, and thus his execution would not have been legally problematic. His confession was spontaneous and occurred outside of court. The evidence of God's will was supplied through Nephi's prophecy. The tangible evidence was present in the blood found on Seantum's cloak. The combination of these circumstances would have overridden*

*the normal concerns in biblical jurisprudence about using self-incriminating confessions to obtain a conviction.*

*- [John W. Welch - The Trial of Seantum](#)*

How would Joseph Smith have known this exception to the two-witness rule in the Bible? Where did he learn these intricacies of biblical law?

See:

- [John W. Welch - The Trial of Seantum](#)
- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: The Case of Seantum](#)

## **How would Joseph Smith have been educated on ancient warfare, including military exemptions?**

In times of war in the Book of Mormon it seems quite odd that a whole group of able-bodied men would be granted exemption from taking up arms. This is contrary to ancient traditions in which all able-bodied men would be considered part of the army.

However there are several points which make the exemption of the Ammonites consistent with Jewish law:

1. *Deuteronomy 20:1–2 only requires a duty of war when fighting enemies, whereas the Ammonites were fighting “their brethren” in Alma 24:6*
2. *Deuteronomy 20:8 allows exemptions for those who are afraid because of the transgressions they had committed. This is applicable to the Ammonites in Alma 27:23*
3. *Those exempt from war ([according to the Talmud](#)) must support and maintain the army. This is shown in Alma 27:24 when the exemption is on the condition that “they will give us a portion of their substance to assist us that we may maintain our armies.”*

How would Joseph Smith know requirements for military exemption and make this part of the storyline consistent with ancient Israelite law?

See:

- [Exemption from Military Duty - John W. Welch](#)
- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon: Military Exemption](#)

## How would Joseph Smith be so well versed in guerrilla warfare?

The Book of Mormon is remarkably accurate on many different topics which Joseph Smith would have likely been unfamiliar with. One example is that of guerilla warfare.

A definition of guerilla warfare is as follows:

*Traditionally, guerrilla warfare has been characterized by small-scale, hit-and-run operations by lightly armed fighters who exploit deception, surprise, and the ability to merge into the local population and terrain.*

- [Encyclopedia of Violence, Peace, & Conflict \(Second Edition\), 2008](#)

Daniel C. Peterson notes how the Book of Mormon is:

*considerably beyond anything Joseph Smith would have been likely to create out of his own imagination. It is not simply the Book of Mormon's precise portrayal of irregular warfare that is foreign to Joseph and his environment. Its realistic and wholly unromantic military narratives do not, it seems clear to me, come from the mind of that Joseph Smith, who, while he abhorred actual battle, loved parades and military pageantry, relished his commission as Lieutenant-General of the Nauvoo Legion, and, uniformed in elegant blue and gold, liked nothing better than to review the troops while mounted on his black stallion, Charlie.*

- [Daniel C. Peterson, "The Gadianton Robbers as Guerrilla Warriors," in Warfare in the Book of Mormon, ed. Stephen D. Ricks and William J. Hamblin \(Salt Lake City and Provo, UT: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1990\), 146–173.](#)

Where was Joseph Smith learning information like this if he was “less inclined to the perusal of books” than others in his family?

See:

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Guerrilla Warfare](#)

## Why would Joseph Smith have taken a chance on including total warfare in the Book of Mormon?

Until fairly recently [Maya warfare has largely been viewed as ritualized and limited in scope.](#) However recent findings show that [the Maya engaged in tactics akin to total warfare earlier and more frequently than previously thought.](#)

Interestingly the Book of Mormon affirms total warfare as in the case of the total destruction of the Nephites in Mormon 8:2,8

*And now it came to pass that after the great and tremendous battle at Cumorah, behold, the Nephites who had escaped into the country southward were hunted by the Lamanites, until they were all destroyed.*

*And behold, it is the hand of the Lord which hath done it. And behold also, the Lamanites are at war one with another; and the whole face of this land is one continual round of murder and bloodshed; and no one knoweth the end of the war.*

When describing war in the Book of Mormon wouldn't Joseph Smith be more likely to follow the best information of the day? Why was he right about total warfare in Mesoamerica?

See:

- [Wahl, D., Anderson, L., Estrada-Belli, F. et al. Palaeoenvironmental, epigraphic and archaeological evidence of total warfare among the Classic Maya](#)
- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Total Warfare](#)

## **Where would Joseph Smith have learned about Mesoamerican watchtowers, fortifications and strongholds?**

Descriptions of war in the Book of Mormon are surprisingly accurate if we assume the most likely location of Mesoamerica. One example is that of watchtowers, fortifications and strongholds.

Fortifications are mentioned [24 times](#) in the Book of Mormon such as in Alma 48:8:

*Yea, he had been strengthening the armies of the Nephites, and erecting small forts, or places of resort; throwing up banks of earth round about to enclose his armies, and also building walls of stone to encircle them about, round about their cities and the borders of their lands; yea, all round about the land.*

These descriptions are consistent with what we now know about pre-Columbian America, but where would Joseph Smith have learned this? How was he able to correctly describe ancient American watchtowers, fortifications and strongholds?

See:

- [John L. Sorenson - Fortifications in the Book of Mormon and in Mesoamerica](#)
- [Book of Mormon Central - What Was the Nature of Nephite Fortifications?](#)
- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Watch Towers and Strong Holds](#)

## Why would Joseph Smith include cimeters in the Book of Mormon if they were thought to be anachronistic?

[Eleven times in the Book of Mormon](#) a “cimeter” is mentioned as a weapon used in times of war, such as in Mosah 9:16:

*And it came to pass that I did arm them with bows, and with arrows, with swords, and with cimeters, and with clubs, and with slings, and with all manner of weapons which we could invent, and I and my people did go forth against the Lamanites to battle.*

A cimeter is a curved sword with a cutting edge on one side and was originally thought to be anachronistic but has now been proven to have existed in the New and Old World. In fact cimeters are mentioned multiple times in the Bible but this was only found out with the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Joseph Smith would have been familiar with common weapons but where did he learn what a cimeter was? Why would he have included weapons that would be rejected as anachronistic?

See:

- [Stephen D. Ricks and William J. Hamblin - Warfare in the Book of Mormon](#)
- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon: Cimeters](#)

## Where would Joseph Smith have learned the difference between arrows and darts?

In Jarom 1:8 we read:

*And we multiplied exceedingly, and spread upon the face of the land, and became exceedingly rich in gold, and in silver, and in precious things, and in fine workmanship of wood, in buildings, and in machinery, and also in iron and copper, and brass and steel, making all manner of tools of every kind to till the ground, and weapons of war—yea, the sharp pointed arrow, and the quiver, and the dart, and the javelin, and all preparations for war.*

Why would Joseph Smith mention both the dart and javelin? What is the difference between the two and how would he know there was a difference?

Bruce E. Dale and Brian Dale explain:



*The Book of Mormon and The Maya specifically contrast fighting with bows and arrows or spears as being different from fighting with “darts.” What experience or knowledge did Joseph Smith have of fighting with darts? How many educated people, even today, would know about fighting with a “dart-thrower” or atlatl? So this correspondence is specific, detailed and unusual.*

*- [Bruce E. Dale and Brian Dale - Joseph Smith: The World’s Greatest Guesser \(A Bayesian Statistical Analysis of Positive and Negative Correspondences between the Book of Mormon and The Maya\)](#)*

Would we expect Joseph with his limited education to include both arrows and darts in his descriptions of weapons?

See:

- [Bruce E. Dale and Brian Dale - Joseph Smith: The World’s Greatest Guesser \(A Bayesian Statistical Analysis of Positive and Negative Correspondences between the Book of Mormon and The Maya\)](#)

## What would make Joseph Smith think of describing armies in 10,000s?

Mormon describes many armies consisting of ten thousand in Mormon 6:12-14:

*12 And we also beheld the **ten thousand** of my people who were led by my son Moroni.*

*13 And behold, the **ten thousand** of Gidgiddonah had fallen, and he also in the midst.*

*14 And Lamah had fallen with his **ten thousand**; and Gilgal had fallen with his **ten thousand**; and Limhah had fallen with his **ten thousand**; and Jeneum had fallen with his **ten thousand**; and Cumenihah, and Moronihah, and Antionum, and Shiblom, and Shem, and Josh, had fallen with their **ten thousand** each.  
(emphasis added)*

Wouldn't we expect Joseph Smith to have mentioned more varied numbers if he was writing the story himself? Why would he mention so many armies of 10,000? Interestingly this description is consistent with what we know about Tlascalan armies:

*Of the followers of the old Xicotenga . . . there were ten thousand; of another great chief named Moseescaci there were another ten thousand; of a third, who was called Chichimecatecle, there were as many more...*

*- [Bernal Diaz del Castillo, The Bernal Diaz Chronicles, trans. and ed. A. Idell \(Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1956\)](#)*

If the Book of Mormon was a product of Joseph Smith, wouldn't he have been more likely to know of Roman armies of 100 rather than 10,000?

See:

- [FAIR Latter-day Saints - Question: Are the large population counts described in the Book of Mormon during the final battle at the Hill Cumorah accurate?](#)

### **Wouldn't it have been easy for Joseph Smith to mistakenly include descriptions of armor consistent with the Bible or Rome (such as helmets)?**

It would likely have been easy for Joseph Smith to mistakenly describe armor in the Book of Mormon the way he might have seen in the Bible.

William J. Hamblin explains:

*warfare in the Book of Mormon consistently sounds like that in Mesoamerica before the European conquerors arrived. It differs from the ancient Near East in those features where Mesoamerican warfare differs from the ancient Near East. Coats of mail, helmets, battle chariots, cavalry, and siege engines—elements prominent in Bible lands—are all absent from both the Book of Mormon and Mesoamerica. If Joseph Smith were copying from information in books available to him, like the Bible, Josephus's histories, or books about the Romans, that described ancient wars, he would have included those features. Instead, the Book of Mormon leaves out those features of armament frequently mentioned in biblical and classical sources but absent from ancient Mesoamerica*

*- William J. Hamblin, "Warfare in the Book of Mormon," in [Rediscovering the Book of Mormon](#)*

How would Joseph Smith manage to avoid such an easy error?

See:

- [William J. Hamblin, "Warfare in the Book of Mormon," in Rediscovering the Book of Mormon](#)

## How could Joseph Smith guess that ancient Mesoamerican warriors wore heavy clothing as armor?

In Alma 43:19 we read

*And when the armies of the Lamanites saw that the people of Nephi, or that Moroni, had prepared his people with breastplates and with arm-shields, yea, and also shields to defend their heads, and also they were dressed with thick clothing—*

Why would Joseph say the armies of the Lamanites wore thick clothing to go to battle? Why would they need that in addition to breast plates and arm shields?

Bruce E. Dale and Brian Dale explain how this corresponds to the Maya:

*In both The Maya and the Book of Mormon, thick clothing was used as armor. It is also unusual. We know of no contemporary model or example that Joseph Smith could have relied upon to correctly “guess” this correspondence. Even today we doubt that one person in a hundred would know that ancient Mesoamerican warriors wore heavy cotton clothing as armor.*

*- [Bruce E. Dale and Brian Dale - Joseph Smith: The World’s Greatest Guesser \(A Bayesian Statistical Analysis of Positive and Negative Correspondences between the Book of Mormon and The Maya\)](#)*

Where was Joseph Smith getting all this information from?

See:

- [Bruce E. Dale and Brian Dale - Joseph Smith: The World’s Greatest Guesser \(A Bayesian Statistical Analysis of Positive and Negative Correspondences between the Book of Mormon and The Maya\)](#)

## How come the accounts of war in the Book of Mormon occur at the exact seasonal times we would expect?

If Joseph Smith had written the Book of Mormon himself, would he have taken time to work out the times of the year that wars would most likely occur?

John L. Sorenson notes how the Nephite year was arranged something like the following:

- *Field preparation and cultivation: months 4-9*
- *Main harvest: months 10-12*
- *Time of warfare: chiefly months 11-3*

He then goes on to explain:

*When we look carefully at what the Book of Mormon says about war, we find that the many military activities reported did not take place just anytime during the calendar year. Rather, they occurred according to a definite pattern. Certain months were war months while others were not. The complete consistency of this pattern reminds us of how many details the writers of this scripture kept straight.*

*Over all, we find remarkable consistency in the handling of these highly technical bits of war and calendars. Most of us would not have been alert enough in writing a book about wars to have kept all this straight in our heads. If Joseph Smith had simply made up a “golden Bible” on the basis of his own experience and the locality where he lived, as some critics believe, then the thirty-two battles at the end and start of the year in the Book of Mormon would have fallen in western New York’s windy, icy winter, a major error! The “heat” suffered by the Nephite and Lamanite soldiers and Amalickiah’s death on new year’s eve (Alma 51:33-52:1) would have been a hilarious blunder. Instead, the timing of wars we find in the scripture is part of a consistent pattern. It all agrees with what the Book of Mormon says about itself—that it is a translation from an authentic ancient American record.*

*- [John L. Sorenson - Seasons of War, Seasons of Peace in the Book of Mormon](#)*

How did Joseph Smith manage to keep this in mind when dictating the Book of Mormon?

See:

- [John L. Sorenson - Seasons of War, Seasons of Peace in the Book of Mormon](#)
- [Jeff Lindsay - Book of Mormon Evidences, Part 2](#)

## **Why are there so many named geographical references in the Book of Mormon (170)?**

The Book of Mormon names 170 geographical locations and there are well over 100 which form part of the storyline. The named places in the Book of Mormon are also of varying types, including lands, cities and areas.

How long would it have taken Joseph Smith to have come up with the names of all these places? Why would he include over 100 places in a storyline of 500 pages? Why include so many places if each one would only add to the complexity of the book?

See:

- [Book of Mormon Online - Places](#)

- [John W. Welch and Greg Welch - Geographical Names Listed by Scripture Reference](#)

## **How could Joseph Smith keep track of at least 151 unique geographical relationships in the Book of Mormon? Wouldn't we expect around 28 mistakes if Joseph tried to go into that much detail?**

Not only does the Book of Mormon contain so many geographical locations, it also contains over 150 geographical relationships. It would be an incredible task for Joseph Smith to maintain such consistency while dictating.

Using the [Plagiarism Memory](#) task, Kyler Rasmussen estimates that Joseph Smith should have made around 28 mistakes while dictating the Book of Mormon when it comes to geographical relationships; however there are only two debatable errors.

*This brought me to the appropriately named [Plagiarism Memory](#) task. In this task, a person is brought into a room with a confederate, and both of them are asked to provide six creative solutions to a particular problem (e.g., an environment-related policy issue). Then, a day later, the participants returned, and were asked to recall their own ideas, as well as the confederate's ideas, and then to generate new ideas listed by neither them nor the confederate. This might seem like a relatively simple task, but it's harder than it sounds. Often people would recall the ideas, but would get the source of the idea wrong, attributing their partners ideas to themselves and vice versa. They also had trouble coming up with genuinely new ideas, and, more often than not, unconsciously stole from their partner (or from themselves!) when trying to generate new solutions.*

*Though it's not a perfect fit for the situation Joseph would have found himself in when maintaining an internal geography, there are some definite similarities —Joseph would've had to recall things he said a day or more prior, and he would have to make sure not to confuse them with yet other things that he'd said. And forgetting who came up a particular item should be pretty comparable to forgetting whether one city is north or south of another, or whether it's near the coast or near the wilderness. In the study, the error rate on the recall task was somewhere between 18.3% and 33%, depending on the experimental condition, and Joseph's error rate should have been somewhat similar. For the sake of [a fortiori](#) reasoning, we'll use the bottom of that range. When applied to the 151 geographic relationships in the text, that means he should have messed up somewhere on the order of 28 times, substantially more than the 2 we've been able to identify.*

- [Kyler Rasmussen - Estimating the Evidence - Episode 17: On Geographical Consistency](#)

How would Joseph Smith have been able to do this without any notes? How can anyone maintain consistency when dictating over 150 geographical relationships?

See:

- [Kyler Rasmussen - Estimating the Evidence - Episode Episode 17: On Geographical Consistency](#)

**Why are the works of Shakespeare, Tolkien, and Rowling used to explain away the Book of Mormon, when none of those authors claimed to dictate their work, use their first draft or that their book was true scripture?**

It is true that:

- Other authors have produced long books
- Other authors have produced complex books
- Other authors have produced books at a young age
- Other authors have produced books with limited education
- Other authors have claimed to write scripture
- Other authors have used their first draft
- Other authors have produced books in a short amount of time
- Other authors have dictated books

But what author meets all the criteria? When viewed all together, Joseph Smith is a clear outlier. No other author can be compared to Joseph on all these points.

What was so special about Joseph that he was unlike anyone else?

See:

- [Brian C. Hales - Curiously Unique: Joseph Smith as Author of the Book of Mormon](#)

**How was Joseph Smith so meticulous in the usage of sacred numbers such as Lehi's seven tribes?**

The number seven is significant in the Bible to signify perfection or wholeness, as explained by Corbin Volluz:

*God rested and sanctified the seventh day after the Creation (Gen. 2:3). The Sabbatical year is every seventh year (Lev. 25:4). Jacob served Laban seven*

*years for Leah, his first wife, whom he thought was Rachel, and then another seven years for Rachel (Gen. 29:18, 30). Joseph prophesied seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine (Gen. 41:26–30). God commanded Moses to displace the seven nations of the land of Canaan (Deut. 7:1). The Israelites took Jericho by circling the walls seven times on the seventh day, the ark being led by seven priests bearing seven ram’s horns (Josh. 6:1–16). Elisha commanded Naaman to wash (or dip) himself seven times in the Jordan River to be cured of his leprosy (2Kgs. 5:10–14). In the New Testament, seven baskets of surplus food were taken up after Jesus’s miraculous multiplication of the loaves (Matt. 15:32–37); and the book of Revelation abounds with sevens, including seven churches (Rev. 1:4), seven golden candlesticks (1:12), seven stars (1:20), seven lamps of fire (4:5), seven seals (5:5), seven angels with seven trumpets (8:6), seven thunders (10:3), seven last plagues (15:1), and seven vials (17:1).*

*- [Corbin T. Volluz - A Study in Seven: Hebrew Numerology in the Book of Mormon](#)*

Volluz goes on to explain how [some scriptural authors go to great lengths to compose textual structures that accord with the number seven](#) even when the number is only artificial.

Similarly in the Book of Mormon, the tribes of Lehi are split into seven tribes, mentioned on three separate occasions, including Jacob 1:13:

*Now the people which were not Lamanites were Nephites; nevertheless, they were called Nephites, Jacobites, Josephites, Zoramites, Lamanites, Lemuelites, and Ishmaelites.*

Why is Sam not included in the seven tribes? 2 Nephi 4:11 explains (using chiasmus) that Sam’s seed will be numbered with Nephi’s. This leaves Lehi’s tribes forming a perfect seven. Volluz notes how this is similar to the 12 tribes of Israel as Levi is not mentioned when the tribe of Joseph is split into Ephraim and Manasseh.

In addition to the seven tribes of Lehi, the Book of Mormon seems to intentionally use seven (or multiples of seven) in other places such as:

- The seven churches among the Lamanites
- The Nephite monetary system
- Those killed at the waters of Sebus
- The prophetic witnesses of Christ
- Number of years of provisions
- Time periods including the mission to the Lamanites
- The structure of the Book of Alma
- Repetition of words

How was Joseph Smith able to work with the number seven like this when dictating the Book of Mormon?

See:

- [Corbin T. Volluz - A Study in Seven: Hebrew Numerology in the Book of Mormon](#)
- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Lehi's Seven Tribes](#)

## How do we explain the Book of Mormon's usage of the number 24 in relation to judgment?

John W. Welch explains important numbers in antiquity:

*Certain numbers were clearly meaningful in antiquity: seven was the number of spiritual perfection (as in the seven seals in the book of Revelation); twelve was a governmental number (as with the twelve tribes, twelve apostles). The number twenty-four, being a multiple of twelve, was associated with heavenly government, especially priestly judgment and temple service.*

*At Qumran, judicial disputes were brought before a court called "the council of the community." This deliberative body was composed of two panels of twelve, twelve priests and twelve laymen, for a quorum of twenty-four judges. These judges "give light by the judgment of the Urim and Thummim."*

*In the New Testament apocalypse, the book of Revelation, twenty-four elders judge the world. These twenty-four elders are mentioned twelve times in the book (Revelation 4:4, 10; 5:5, 6, 8, 11, 14; 7:11, 13; 11:16; 14:3; 19:4).*

*In Rabbinic Judaism, local courts having jurisdiction over most capital cases consisted of twenty-four (or twenty-three) judges. These "small sanhedrins" were composed of two panels, one for the defense and the other for the prosecution (the odd number twenty-three prevented a tie vote and was a minimum quorum requirement). If one of the judges had to leave the trial, "it had to be ascertained if twenty-three . . . would be left, in which case he might go out; if not, he might not depart."*

- [John W. Welch - Number 24](#)

It is interesting how the number 24 (or 23 as shown above) is used in the Book of Mormon in relation to judgment, for example:

- 24 judges in Noah's court
- 24 witnesses to the judgment of God in the destruction of the Nephites
- 24 plates of Ether which were a record of the judgment of God
- 24 apostles and disciples to finally judge the world
- Orihah who executed judgment has 23 sons
- Pahoran fills the judgment seat in the 24th year of the reign of the judges



How would Joseph Smith have known about this symbolism and remembered to use it when dictating the Book of Mormon?

See:

- [John W. Welch - Number 24](#)

## How could Joseph Smith manage to seamlessly use the symbolic number 10 while dictating?

The number 10 is quite significant in scripture and signifies completeness. For example:

- *A tenth part in tithing (Genesis 28:22)*
- *Laban changed Jacob's wages 10 times (Genesis 31:7, 41)*
- *10 plagues of Egypt (Exodus 7-11)*
- *The 10 Commandments (Exodus 20)*
- *Tenfold elements in the construction of the tabernacle (Exodus 26:1)*
- *The Priestly Decalogue (Exodus 34)*
- *Israel rebelled against God 10 times in the wilderness (Numbers 14:22)*
- *Tenfold elements in the construction of Solomon's temple (1 Kings 6:23-25)*
- *Jeremiah prayed for 10 days (Jeremiah 42:7)*
- *10 horns in Daniel's vision (Daniel 7:7)*
- *Parable of the 10 virgins (Matthew 25:1-13)*
- *The woman's 10 pieces of silver (Luke 15:8-10)*
- *10 lepers (Luke 17:11-18)*
- *10 servants and pounds in the parable of the pounds (Luke 19:13-25)*
- *Paul's list of 10 prohibitions (1 Corinthians 6:9-10)*

[John W. Welch points out](#) similar uses of 10 in the Book of Mormon:

- *The number of times Nephi mentions the Lord in his psalm (2 Nephi 4)*
- *The number of times Jacob mentions the Lord in his covenant speech (2 Nephi 9)*
- *Jacob's 10 woes (2 Nephi 9:27-38)*
- *The number of times King Benjamin mentions the Lord in his sermon (Mosiah 3)*
- *Ten terms used for the Son of God in King Benjamin's sermon (Mosiah 3:8 and exactly the same in Helaman 14:12)*
- *The number of times Alma mentions the Lord in his speech (Alma 12-13)*
- *The number of times Alma mentions the Son in his speech (Alma 12-13)*
- *The number of times Alma mentions "O Lord" in his prayer (Alma 31:26-35)*
- *The number of times Zenos mentions hearing (Alma 33:4-11)*
- *The number of times Nephi mentions the Lord in his prayers (Helaman 11:4, 10-16)*
- *Tenfold call to repentance (3 Nephi 20:2)*

Welch comments:

*The number ten seems to have been significant in the ancient world, especially in Israelite religious literature. Ten conveyed a tight cluster of symbolic messages associated with the divine realms, namely, completeness, perfection, worthiness, consecration, testing, justice, reverence, atonement, supplication, and holiness (to mention ten). Regardless of whether all ten of these meanings were overtly intentional or only unconsciously subliminal in any particular text, it seems clear that in-group audiences knew enough to look for these messages in pondering the scriptures. In most cases, these meanings are rooted in very early Israelite texts. Detecting these tenfold occurrences in the Book of Mormon uncovers a previously unnoticed ancient quality of Nephite scripture that was probably more obvious to ancient minds than it is to modern readers.*

- [John W. Welch - Counting to Ten](#)

Wouldn't it have been difficult for Joseph Smith to seamlessly use the number 10 like this while dictating?

See:

- [John W. Welch - Counting to Ten](#)
- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Symbolism of the Number Ten](#)

## **Why are there no complex numeric forms in the Book of Mormon, like biblical Hebrew?**

It would have been easy for Joseph Smith to mistakenly use complex numeric forms which were common in his day but out of place in the Book of Mormon.

FAIR Latter-day Saints notes that:

*Biblical Hebrew uses cardinals (one, two, three), ordinals (first, second, third), multiplicatives (double, sevenfold), and fractions (half, third, tenth) but avoids complex numeric forms using prefixes such as mono-, bi-, di-, uni-, tri-, multi-, and poly-.*

- [FAIR Latter-day Saints - Use of numbers in the Book of Mormon](#)

The Book of Mormon is consistent with Biblical Hebrew in this regard, how did Joseph manage to avoid making a fairly easy mistake during dictation?

See:

- [FAIR Latter-day Saints - Use of numbers in the Book of Mormon](#)

## If Joseph Smith wrote the Book of Mormon himself, wouldn't he have been caught out by Benford's law?

Benford's law was discovered in 1881 (after the publication of the Book of Mormon) and is:

*A phenomenological law also called the first digit law, first digit phenomenon, or leading digit phenomenon. Benford's law states that in listings, tables of statistics, etc., the digit 1 tends to occur with probability ~30%, much greater than the expected 11.1% (i.e., one digit out of 9). Benford's law can be observed, for instance, by examining tables of logarithms and noting that the first pages are much more worn and smudged than later pages (Newcomb 1881). While Benford's law unquestionably applies to many situations in the real world, a satisfactory explanation has been given only recently through the work of Hill (1996).*

- [Eric W. Weisstein - Benford's Law](#)

Benford's law is commonly used to detect fraud so is a useful test for the Book of Mormon which contains many references to real-world numbers.

In a [preliminary assessment](#), Jeff Lindsay found that the Book of Mormon corresponds with Benford's law with regards to leading digits in measures of time, and leading digits in counts of people.

Is this what we would expect if Joseph Smith dictated the Book of Mormon? How did Joseph manage to avoid detection by Benford's law?

See:

- [Jeff Lindsay - Benford's Law and Numbers in the Book of Mormon](#)

## Why would Joseph Smith have thought to repeatedly mention “stretching forth one's hand” before an important speech?

Multiple scriptures in the Book of Mormon reference stretching forth one's hand before an important speech. [David Calabro](#) lists 10 instances as follows:

- *And the Lord said unto me: Stretch forth thy hand and prophesy, saying . . . (Mosiah 12:2)*
- *After Abinadi had spoken these words he stretched forth his hands and said . . . (Mosiah 16:1, printer's manuscript)*
- *But Amulek stretched forth his hand, and cried the mightier unto them, saying . . . (Alma 10:25)*

- *When Alma had said these words unto them, he stretched forth his hand unto them and cried with a mighty voice, saying . . . (Alma 13:21)*
- *And when he saw them he stretched forth his hand, and besought them that they would heal him. (Alma 15:5)*
- *And as he arose, he stretched forth his hand unto the woman, and said . . . (Alma 19:12)*
- *Therefore he did say no more to the other multitude; but he stretched forth his hand, and cried unto those which he beheld, which were truly penitent, and saith unto them . . . (Alma 32:7)*
- *Therefore he went and got upon the wall thereof, and stretched forth his hand and cried with a loud voice, and prophesied unto the people whatsoever things the Lord put into his heart. (Helaman 13:4)*
- *And it came to pass that he stretched forth his hand and spake unto the people, saying . . . (3 Nephi 11:9)*
- *He stretched forth his hand unto the multitude, and cried unto them, saying . . . (3 Nephi 12:1)*

This seems a rather deliberate yet unexpected inclusion by Joseph Smith in the Book of Mormon, but the gesture of stretching forth one's hand before an important speech has deep Mesoamerican and Egyptian roots.

How would Joseph know about this small detail and use it so consistently?

See:

- [David Calabro - "Stretch Forth Thy Hand and Prophecy": Hand Gestures in the Book of Mormon](#)
- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Hand Gestures \(Mesoamerica\)](#)

## **Why would no speech ever be mentioned when stretching forth one's hand to exert supernatural power?**

There are two instances in the Book of Mormon of "outstretched hands" as a sign of exerting supernatural power:

1 Nephi 17:53-54:

*And it came to pass that the Lord said unto me: Stretch forth thine hand again unto thy brethren, and they shall not wither before thee, but I will shock them, saith the Lord, and this will I do, that they may know that I am the Lord their God.*

*And it came to pass that I stretched forth my hand unto my brethren, and they did not wither before me; but the Lord did shake them, even according to the word which he had spoken.*

Alma 14:10-11:

*And when Amulek saw the pains of the women and children who were consuming in the fire, he also was pained; and he said unto Alma: How can we witness this awful scene? Therefore let us stretch forth our hands, and exercise the power of God which is in us, and save them from the flames.*

*But Alma said unto him: The Spirit constraineth me that I must not stretch forth mine hand; for behold the Lord receiveth them up unto himself, in glory; and he doth suffer that they may do this thing, or that the people may do this thing unto them, according to the hardness of their hearts, that the judgments which he shall exercise upon them in his wrath may be just; and the blood of the innocent shall stand as a witness against them, yea, and cry mightily against them at the last day.*

In these scriptures, no speech is involved, which is contrary to the other Book of Mormon uses of “stretching forth hands” accompanied by speech. It is interesting that of the [forty-three biblical instances in which the idiom nātâ yād “extend the hand” is used to exert a supernatural power](#), none of them include a curse or speech.

Wouldn't it have been easy for Joseph to have mentioned a curse or speech when stretching forth hands to exert supernatural power? How did he know they should remain silent?

See:

- [David Calabro - “Stretch Forth Thy Hand and Prophecy“: Hand Gestures in the Book of Mormon](#)
- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Hand Gestures \(Ancient Near East\)](#)

## **How would Joseph Smith manage to only speak of the Lord's "arm(s)" of mercy?**

[David Calabro notes](#) how the Book of Mormon includes multiple references to the Lord extending his arm(s) of mercy:

- *For notwithstanding I shall lengthen out mine arm unto them from day to day, they will deny me; nevertheless, I will be merciful unto them, saith the Lord God, if they will repent and come unto me; for mine arm is lengthened out all the day long, saith the Lord God of Hosts. (2 Nephi 28:32)*
- *And while his arm of mercy is extended towards you in the light of the day, harden not your hearts. (Jacob 6:5)*
- *For I say unto you, that if he had not extended his arm in the preservation of our fathers they must have fallen into the hands of the Lamanites, and become victims to their hatred. (Mosiah 1:14)*

- *Having gone according to their own carnal wills and desires; having never called upon the Lord while the arms of mercy was extended towards them; for the arms of mercy was extended towards them, and they would not. (Mosiah 16:12, printer's manuscript)*
- *And thus doth the Lord work with his power in all cases among the children of men, extending the arm of mercy towards them that put their trust in him. (Mosiah 29:20)*
- *Behold, he sendeth an invitation unto all men, for the arms of mercy is extended towards them, and he saith: Repent, and I will receive you. Yea, he saith, Come unto me and ye shall partake of the fruit of the tree of life. (Alma 5:33–34, printer's manuscript)*
- *And thus the work of the Lord did commence among the Lamanites; thus the Lord did begin to pour out his Spirit upon them; and we see that his arm is extended to all people who will repent and believe on his name. (Alma 19:36)*
- *And behold, when I see many of my brethren truly penitent, and coming to the Lord their God, then is my soul filled with joy; then do I remember what the Lord has done for me, yea, even that he hath heard my prayer; yea, then do I remember his merciful arm which he extended towards me. (Alma 29:10)*
- *Behold, mine arm of mercy is extended towards you, and whosoever will come, him will I receive; and blessed are those who come unto me. (3 Nephi 9:14)*

It is interesting how all the references are consistent in their use of “arms” rather than hands etc. How did Joseph maintain such consistency in this specific expression throughout the Book of Mormon? How did he manage to create such [consistent imagery involving arms, embracing and encircling](#)?

See:

- [David Calabro - “Stretch Forth Thy Hand and Prophecy“: Hand Gestures in the Book of Mormon](#)

## Why do some non-biblical sources agree with the Book of Mormon that Moses "smote" the Red Sea?

In Helaman 8:11, Nephi refers to the story of Moses at the Red Sea:

*Therefore he was constrained to speak more unto them saying: Behold, my brethren, have ye not read that God gave power unto one man, even Moses, **to smite upon the waters of the Red Sea**, and they parted hither and thither, insomuch that the Israelites, who were our fathers, came through upon dry ground, and the waters closed upon the armies of the Egyptians and swallowed them up? (emphasis added)*

It is noteworthy that Nephi says Moses smote the waters, whereas the King James Version of the Bible says that Moses stretched forth his hand to part the Red Sea. This is interesting because:

- *The gesture of stretching forth one's hand (without speech) is exclusively an exertion of supernatural power in the Bible (and the Book of Mormon)*
- *2 Kings 2:8 says that Elijah "smote the waters" to cross the Jordan river*
- *The ancient historian Josephus wrote that Moses "smote" the sea with his staff*
- *The Qur'an also mentions that Moses was commanded to "smite" the Red Sea*

How did Joseph Smith know that "smiting" the Red Sea would be an appropriate term to use? Why didn't he just follow the wording of the Bible?

See:

- [David Calabro - "Stretch Forth Thy Hand and Prophecy": Hand Gestures in the Book of Mormon](#)

## **How could Joseph Smith manage to use biblical content with such sophistication such as Isaiah and Micah in 3 Nephi?**

Jesus delivers a sermon in 3 Nephi 20:10-23:5 which includes not only his own words but also the words of Isaiah and Micah from the Old Testament. There are 14 shifts between his own words and others he is quoting.

While this alone is a difficult task for Joseph Smith to achieve while dictating the Book of Mormon, it is also part of a chiasmus identified by Victor L. Ludlow.

[Evidence Central](#) presents the chiasmus as follows:

- A. *The Father and Son work together (3 Nephi 20:10)*
- B. *Isaiah's words are written, therefore search them (v. 11)*
- C. *Isaiah's words and the Father's covenant with Israel will be fulfilled (v. 12)*
- D. *Scattered Israel to be gathered (v. 13)*
- E. *America an inheritance for the Nephites/Lamanites (v. 14)*
- F. *Gentiles to repent & receive blessings (vv. 15–20; cf. Micah 5:8-9; 4:12–13)*
- G. *A New Jerusalem and the Lord's covenant with Moses, the Gentiles, etc. (v. 21–29)*
- H. *Gospel preached and Zion established; the marred servant (vv. 30–44; cf. Isaiah 52:1–14)*
- I. *Kings shall be speechless (v. 45; cf. Isaiah 52:15)*
- J. *Covenant fulfillment and the work of the Father (v. 46)*
- K. *A key sign to be given when things are "about to take place" (3 Nephi 21:1)*
- L. *Gentiles learn of scattered Israel (v. 2)*

- M. These things in the Book of Mormon to come from Gentiles to you (Lamanites/Nephites) (v. 3)*
- N. Sign of the Father's covenant with the house of Israel (v. 4)*
- M'. These works in the Book of Mormon to come from Gentiles to you (Lamanites/Nephites) (v.5)*
- L'. Some Gentiles to be with Israel (v. 6)*
- K'. Sign as Lamanites begin to know that the work "hath commenced" (v. 7)*
- J'. Work and covenant of the Father (v. 7)*
- I'. Kings shall be speechless (v. 8; cf. Isaiah 52:15)*
- H'. A great and marvelous work; the marred servant (vv. 9–10; cf. Isaiah 52:14)*
- G'. Moses, the Gentiles and covenant Israel (v. 11)*
- F'. Unrepentant Gentiles will be cut down (vv. 12–21; cf. Micah 5:8–15)*
- E'. America an inheritance for the righteous (vv. 22–23)*
- D'. Gentiles to help in the gathering of Israel and a New Jerusalem (vv. 24–25)*
- C'. Father's work with his people (vv. 26–27)*
- A'. The Father and Son work together (vv. 28–29)*
- B'. Isaiah's portrayal of Zion (Isaiah 54); search his words. (3 Nephi 22; 23:1–3)*

How would Joseph Smith have been able to do this while dictating? 14 shifts between Jesus' words and those of Old Testament prophets would be difficult enough, let alone using chiasmus at the same time. How would Joseph (who hadn't read the whole Bible) know the Old Testament well enough to compose this section of the Book of Mormon?

See:

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Isaiah/Micah in 3 Nephi](#)

## **How could Joseph Smith write church administration instructions similar to an early Christian document (Didache)?**

The Didache (or "The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles") is an early Christian document found in 1873 which may date back to the end of the first century. It contains instructions about church administration and is surprisingly similar to the instructions found in Moroni 2-6.

[Evidence Central](#) documents 17 points which are covered in both the Didache and Moroni including baptism, ordinances, meeting together, iniquity, unrepentant sinners and the confession of sins.

While there are also many differences, it is interesting that even the wording is similar on many points.



If Joseph Smith wrote the Book of Mormon on his own, why are the instructions to the church in the New World similar to those given in the Old World? Did Joseph have enough understanding of the administration of the church to be able to include so many relevant points?

See:

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Parallels between the Didache and Moroni 2–6](#)

### **What were the odds that the only bow-wood obtainable in all Arabia only grows in the very region where Nephi's broken bow incident would have occurred?**

In 1 Nephi 16 we read the account of Nephi making a bow out of wood. Hugh Nibley notes how this is a bullseye for Joseph Smith:

*According to the ancient Arab writers, the only bow-wood obtainable in all Arabia was the nab wood that grew only "amid the inaccessible and overhanging crags" of Mount Jasum and Mount Azd, which are situated in the very region where, if we follow the Book of Mormon, the broken bow incident occurred. How many factors must be correctly conceived and correlated to make the apparently simple story of Nephi's bow ring true! The high mountain near the Red Sea at a considerable journey down the coast, the game on the peaks, hunting with bow and sling, the finding of bow-wood viewed as something of a miracle by the party—what are the chances of reproducing such a situation by mere guesswork?*

*- Hugh W. Nibley, [An Approach to the Book of Mormon, 3rd edition](#)*

What are the odds that Joseph would have gotten this right?

See:

- [Hugh W. Nibley, An Approach to the Book of Mormon, 3rd edition](#)

### **Why would Joseph Smith, a patriotic American, frame the American revolution in the Book of Mormon as a story of deliverance rather than of resistance?**

In 1 Nephi 13:17-19 we read Nephi's account of the American revolution:

*And I beheld that their mother Gentiles were gathered together upon the waters, and upon the land also, to battle against them.*

*And I beheld that the power of God was with them, and also that the wrath of God was upon all those that were gathered together against them to battle.*

*And I, Nephi, beheld that the Gentiles that had gone out of captivity were delivered by the power of God out of the hands of all other nations.*

Of this scripture, Richard Bushman writes:

*By American standards, this is a strangely distorted account. There is no indictment of the king or parliament, no talk of American rights or liberty, nothing of the corruptions of the ministry, and most significant, no despots or heroes. In fact, there is no reference to American resistance. The “mother gentiles” are the only warriors. God, not General Washington or the American army, delivers the colonies.*

*The meaning of the narrative opens itself to the reader only after he lays aside his American preconceptions about the Revolution and recognizes that the dramatic structure in Nephi’s account is fundamentally different from the familiar one in Independence Day orations. The point of the narrative is that Americans escaped from captivity. They did not resist, they fled. The British were defeated because the wrath of God was upon them. The virtue of the Americans was that “they did humble themselves before the Lord” (1 Nephi 13:16). The moral is that “the Gentiles that had gone out of captivity were delivered by the power of God out of the hands of all other nations.” The theme is deliverance, not resistance.*

- [Richard Bushman, “The Book of Mormon and the American Revolution](#)

If Joseph Smith wrote the Book of Mormon himself, wouldn’t we expect him to describe the American Revolution (which only happened around 50 years previously) consistent with the political environment he found himself in?

Bushman concludes:

*The Book of Mormon is not a conventional American book. Too much Americana is missing. Understanding the work requires a more complex and sensitive analysis than has been afforded it. Historians will take a long step forward when they free themselves from the compulsion to connect all they find with Joseph Smith’s America and try instead to understand the ancient patterns deep in the grain of the book.*

- [Richard Bushman, “The Book of Mormon and the American Revolution](#)

Why didn’t Joseph write the Book of Mormon like the patriotic American that he was?

See:

- [Richard Bushman, “The Book of Mormon and the American Revolution](#)
- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Divine Deliverance vs. Heroic Resistance](#)

## **Why is the system of government and judges in the Book of Mormon so un-American and so far removed from Joseph Smith’s own experience?**

The Book of Mormon describes complex governmental systems which were very different to what Joseph Smith would have encountered with Indian tribes in his day.

Bruce E. Dale and Brian Dale comment:

*Both the Book of Mormon and The Maya clearly show societies that have large, complex state institutions. For example, the Nephites had (1) some form of elections, (2) armies supported by the state, (3) chief judges and lower judges, and (4) kings (at least part of the time). The Lamanites appear to have had kings at all times. Dr. Coe (p. 63) notes that state institutions were developed among the Maya by the Late Preclassic, consistent with Book of Mormon timing for the references provided. Analysis of correspondence: Both the British and American civil governments had large, complex state institutions, but the Native American societies certainly did not. This comparison is specific, has quite a bit of detail, and probably would have been unusual to Joseph Smith.*

*- [Bruce E. Dale and Brian Dale - Joseph Smith: The World’s Greatest Guesser \(A Bayesian Statistical Analysis of Positive and Negative Correspondences between the Book of Mormon and The Maya\)](#)*

Why would Joseph Smith think that the ancestors of the American Indians were much more advanced than their descendants? How did he know there were [systems of judges in Mesoamerica](#)?

See:

- [Bruce E. Dale and Brian Dale - Joseph Smith: The World’s Greatest Guesser \(A Bayesian Statistical Analysis of Positive and Negative Correspondences between the Book of Mormon and The Maya\)](#)
- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: System of Judges](#)

## **If Joseph Smith wrote the Book of Mormon, wouldn't we expect it to be less favorable to kingship like the political climate in early 19th century America?**

If Joseph Smith wrote the Book of Mormon from his own experiences then we might expect it to be less favorable to kings and more favorable to kings being overthrown. However this is not what we see.

Richard Bushman comments:

*Enlightened people in the Book of Mormon do not rise up to strike down their kings as the Fourth of July scenario would have it. In fact, the opposite is true. The people persistently created kings for themselves, even demanded them.*

*There is nothing in these episodes of an enlightened people rising against their king. The people did not rise nor were they enlightened about the errors of monarchy. Quite the contrary. In every instance, the people were the ones to desire a king, and in three of five cases they got one. The aversion to kingship was at the top. Nephi, Alma, and Mosiah were reluctant, not the people. When monarchy finally came to an end, it was because the king abdicated, not because the enlightened people overthrew him. In the American view, despot kings held their people in bondage through superstition and ignorance until the true principles of government inspired resistance. The Book of Mormon nearly reversed the roles. The people delighted in their subjection to the king, and the rulers were enlightened.*

- [Richard Bushman - The Book of Mormon and the American Revolution](#)

Doesn't the Book of Mormon better fit an ancient Israelite view of monarchy rather than a 19th century American view?

See:

- [Richard Bushman - The Book of Mormon and the American Revolution](#)
- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: The Nephite View of Monarchy](#)

## **Why are Nephite and Jaredite courtships in the Book of Mormon so far removed from 19th century American notions of romantic love?**

Courtships and marriage are mentioned in the Book of Mormon such as in 1 Nephi 7:4-5:

*And it came to pass that we went up unto the house of Ishmael, and we did gain favor in the sight of Ishmael, insomuch that we did speak unto him the words of the Lord.*

*And it came to pass that the Lord did soften the heart of Ishmael, and also his household, insomuch that they took their journey with us down into the wilderness to the tent of our father.*

As well as in 1 Nephi 16:7:

*And it came to pass that I, Nephi, took one of the daughters of Ishmael to wife; and also, my brethren took of the daughters of Ishmael to wife; and also Zoram took the eldest daughter of Ishmael to wife.*

On this subject, John Gee observes:

*Courtship, of a sort, does show up in the Book of Mormon, but not in a recognizable form for the nineteen or even the twentieth century.*

*Nineteen-century-American notions of romantic love are far removed from the patterns of Nephite and Jaredite courtships mentioned in the Book of Mormon, clearly separating the book in that regard from the cultural milieu of Joseph Smith's day.*

*- [John Gee - The Wrong Type Of Book](#)*

Why are Book of Mormon descriptions of courtship and romance so matter-of-fact? Why are they nothing like what we would expect from Joseph Smith if he was influenced by 19th century frontier America?

See:

- [John Gee - The Wrong Type Of Book](#)

## **Why are we finding Ancient Near Eastern books resembling the Book of Mormon (Narrative of Zosimus)?**

The Narrative of Zosimus is an ancient document appearing in the 1870s written in Hebrew that is dated to at least the time of Christ. It narrates the history of a religious group who left Jerusalem around the same time as Lehi in the Book of Mormon, to a new land across the sea.

[John W. Welch summarizes](#) the points in the Narrative of Zosimus which are similar to the Book of Mormon such as:

- *Dwelling in the desert*
- *Being led by prayer and faith*
- *Wandering through a dark and dreary waste*
- *Being caught away to the bank of a river*
- *Crossing to the other side of a river or abyss and passing through great mist*
- *Coming to a tree whose fruit is most sweet above all*
- *Eating and drinking from the tree which was also a fountain of living waters*
- *Being greeted by an escort*
- *Being interrogated as to desires*
- *Beholding a vision of the Son of God*
- *Keeping records on soft metal plates*
- *Recording the history of a group of people who escaped the destruction of Jerusalem at the time of Jeremiah*
- *Being led to a land of promise and of great abundance due to righteousness*
- *Practising constant prayer*
- *Living in chastity*
- *Receiving revelations concerning the wickedness of the people of Jerusalem*
- *And yet obtaining assurances of the mercy to be extended to the inhabitants of Jerusalem*

Why are we finding other ancient documents that tell of God leading religious groups of people to a new land? Doesn't this strengthen the case that the Book of Mormon is what it purports to be?

See:

- [John W. Welch - The Narrative of Zosimus and the Book of Mormon](#)

## **How would Joseph Smith manage to include verbal irony in the Book of Mormon?**

The Book of Mormon contains different examples of literary art, one of which is that of verbal irony. Verbal irony [has to do with levels of ambiguity and discrepancy between what is said on the surface and what is meant below it](#) and has only recently been studied within the Bible.

One example of verbal irony in the Book of Mormon occurs in an exchange between Nephi, Laman and Lemuel.

In 1 Nephi 17 Laman and Lemuel say:

- *“we knew that ye could not construct a ship, for we knew that ye were lacking in judgment” (1 Nephi 17:19).*

- “we know that the people who were in the land of Jerusalem were a righteous people” (2 Nephi 17:22)
- We know that they are a righteous people” (1 Nephi 17:22).

Nephi goes on to use their own words (what they “know”) and shares [what he knows they cannot deny in order to show that what they say they know is false:](#)

- “ye know that the children of Israel were in bondage” (1 Nephi 17:25)
- “ye know that they were laden with tasks” (v. 25)
- “ye know that it must needs be a good thing for them, that they should be brought out of bondage” (v. 25)
- “ye know that Moses was commanded of the Lord to do that great work” (v. 26)
- “ye know that by his word the waters of the Red Sea were divided hither and thither” (v. 26)
- “ye know that the Egyptians were drowned in the Red Sea” (v. 27)
- “ye also know that they were fed with manna in the wilderness” (v. 28)
- “ye also know that Moses ... smote the rock, and there came forth water” (v. 29)
- “ye know that they were led forth by his matchless power” (v. 42)
- “ye also know that ... he can cause the earth that it shall pass away” (v. 46)
- “ye know that by his word he can cause the rough places to be made smooth (v. 46)

After being shocked later in the chapter, Laman and Lemuel then reverse what they “know”:

- “We know of a surety that the Lord is with thee” (1 Nephi 17:55).
- “for we know that it is the power of the Lord that has shaken us” (1 Nephi 17:55).

Using irony, the reader is shown the difference between what Laman and Lemuel claim to “know” versus what they actually “know”. Where would Joseph Smith learn the skills to craft verbal irony like this, all while dictating a complex storyline?

See:

- [Robert A. Rees - Irony in the Book of Mormon](#)
- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Verbal Irony](#)

## **How would Joseph Smith know that writing in Hebrew would take up more space than writing in Egyptian?**

Mormon 9:32-33 points out that the plates were not large enough to be written in Hebrew:

*And now, behold, we have written this record according to our knowledge, in the characters which are called among us the reformed Egyptian, being handed down and altered by us, according to our manner of Speech. And if our plates had been sufficiently large we should have written in Hebrew; but the Hebrew hath been*

*altered by us also; and if we could have written in Hebrew, behold, ye would have had no imperfection in our record*

The Hebrew language, like English, is spelled out letter by letter whereas Egyptian (and shorter versions of Egyptian) can take up much less space as their symbols can convey entire words or phrases.

Joseph Smith did not learn Hebrew until after the publication of the Book of Mormon, and Egyptian was only recently being understood at the time, so how would he know Hebrew would take up more space than Egyptian?

See:

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Compact Egyptian Script](#)

### **What are the odds that there would be numerous examples of modified (or reformed) Egyptian characters being used to write non-Egyptian languages?**

In Mormon 9:32, Moroni explains that the plates are written in reformed Egyptian:

*And now, behold, we have written this record according to our knowledge, in the characters which are called among us the reformed Egyptian, being handed down and altered by us, according to our manner of speech.*

It is important to note that “reformed Egyptian” appears to be a descriptive phrase rather than the name of the language.

Since the publication of the Book of Mormon, scholars have [discovered multiple examples of modified or “reformed” Egyptian](#) and even modified Egyptian mixed with a Semitic language, most of which has been found to be written on copper plates.

Why would Joseph Smith mention this in the Book of Mormon? How would Joseph have known anything about Egyptian or modified versions of it?

See:

- [William J. Hamblin - Reformed Egyptian](#)



## Why do we keep finding evidence that makes the Book of Mormon even more plausible and realistic?

Since the publication of the Book of Mormon, our understanding of the Near East and Mesoamerica have only gone to support the authenticity of the Book of Mormon, such as [figurines of crossings from the Old World](#), [Mesoamerican traditions of crossings from the Old World](#), [Mesopotamian traditions comparable with elements of the Jaredite story](#), [metal money](#), [brass objects](#), [Mesoamerican temples](#), [priestly records](#), [prophecies on metal plates](#), [historical accounts of war on copper plates](#), [genealogies on ancient metal plates](#), [historical information on copper plates](#), [metal plates comparable in length to the Book of Mormon](#), [plates filled with ritual content](#), [religious people burying sacred records](#), [codices in stone boxes](#), [secret records](#), [the use of iron](#), [thrones](#), [the Seal of Mulek](#), [Near Eastern texts beginning similar to "I, Nephi"](#), [descriptions of human sacrifices and cannibalism](#), [mentioning a three-day journey before Lehi's sacrificial offering](#), [reading out long scriptural texts in a public setting](#), [the supporting evidence from the Lachish Letters](#), [records being doubled, sealed and witnessed](#).

Daniel C. Peterson remarks:

*Persons who choose to dismiss the Book of Mormon must find their own ideas for explaining it and the mounting evidence for its authenticity. And while we will never "prove" the Book of Mormon true, the trajectory of the evidence strongly suggests that it is exactly what it claims to be, a book worthy of our deep study, reflection, and serious personal prayer. Thousands of hours of research have produced the current blossoming of Book of Mormon studies that bless the lives of Latter-day Saints. They cannot be lightly brushed aside.*

- [Daniel C. Peterson - Mounting Evidence for the Book of Mormon](#)

Wouldn't we expect the Book of Mormon to look less plausible over time if it were a fraud?

See:

- [Daniel C. Peterson - Mounting Evidence for the Book of Mormon](#)

## Why would Joseph Smith take a chance on mentioning barley in the Book of Mormon?

Barley is mentioned in the Book of Mormon in multiple places including relation to weights and measures. What is interesting is that barley has long been thought not to have existed in America before Columbus.

However in 1983 “little barley” was discovered at a pre-Colombian site in Arizona (and in other places since then) believed to date back to 800 BC.

Why would Joseph have taken such a chance if he was trying to prove the Book of Mormon was true?

See:

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Barley](#)

## **Why would Joseph Smith mention bees in the Book of Mormon if it would only make readers skeptical?**

The Book of Mormon mentions bees in Ether 2:3:

*And they did also carry with them deseret, which, by interpretation, is a honey bee; and thus they did carry with them swarms of bees, and all manner of that which was upon the face of the land, seeds of every kind.*

It has long been thought that bees are an anachronism in the Book of Mormon, however recent discoveries have found that [bees are documented in both the Old World and the New World](#).

Why would Joseph Smith include bees if he knew it would be a stumbling block to the readers?

See:

- [Daniel Peterson: How Recent Findings on Beekeeping in Ancient America Relate to the Book of Mormon](#)
- [Ronan James Head - A Brief Survey of Ancient Near Eastern Beekeeping](#)
- [FAIR Latter-day Saints - Bees in the Book of Mormon](#)

## **Wouldn't mentioning elephants in the Book of Mormon be an unnecessary risk for Joseph Smith?**

Ether 9:19 in the Book of Mormon mentions elephants:

*And they also had horses, and asses, and there were elephants and cureloms and cumoms; all of which were useful unto man, and more especially the elephants and cureloms and cumoms.*

This is curious because it has long been thought that elephants were not found in Mesoamerica. However discoveries after the publication of the Book of Mormon prove otherwise.

Ludwell Johnson wrote in 1952:

*Discoveries of associations of human and proboscidean remains [Elephantine mammals, including, elephants, mammoths, and mastodons] are by no means uncommon. As of 1950, MacCowan listed no less than twenty-seven” including, as noted by Hugo Gross, a “partly burned mastodon skeleton and numerous potsherds at Alangasi, Ecuador...There can no longer be any doubt that man and elephant coexisted in America.... Probably it is safe to say that American Proboscidea have been extinct for a minimum of 3000 years*

[- Ludwell H. Johnson, “Men and Elephants in America.” \*The Scientific Monthly\* 75 \(1952\), 220-221.](#)

How would Joseph Smith have known that elephants would be a perfect fit in the Book of Mormon?

See:

- [FAIR Latter-day Saints - Elephants in the Book of Mormon](#)

**Why is the list of purported anachronisms in the Book of Mormon continually getting smaller? If it was written by Joseph Smith, wouldn't it look clumsier over time rather than being proved stronger?**

Since the publication of the Book of Mormon, it has been criticized for including anachronisms, which are things we would not expect at such a time or place. However the list of anachronisms has been continually getting smaller as we discover more about the Near East and Mesoamerica, such as: horses, elephant, barley, wheat, silk, linen, metallurgy, brass, iron, steel, golden plates, metal plates, warfare, armor, weapons and wheels.

Wouldn't we expect the Book of Mormon to look less plausible over time if Joseph Smith had made it up himself? Why are we seeing the opposite?

See:

- [Michael R. Ash - Anachronisms: The Wrong Things at the Wrong Time](#)

## How come the Book of Mormon doesn't commit a blunder when referring to thieves and robbers?

The Book of Mormon refers to both “thieves” and “robbers”. While most readers would not notice any difference between the two, John W. Welch explains the significance:

*The legal distinctions between theft and robbery, especially under the laws of ancient Israel, have been analyzed thoroughly by Bernard S. Jackson, Professor of Law at the University of Kent-Canterbury and editor of the Jewish Law Annual. He shows, for example, how robbers usually acted in organized groups rivaling local governments and attacking towns and how they swore oaths and extorted ransom, a menace worse than outright war. Thieves, however, were a much less serious threat to society.*

*Recently studies have shown in detail how the ancient legal and linguistic distinctions are also observable in the Book of Mormon. This explains how Laban could call the sons of Lehi “robbers” and threaten to execute them on the spot without a trial, for that is how a military officer like Laban no doubt would have dealt with a robber. It also explains why the Lamanites are always said to “rob” from the Nephites but never from their own brethren—that would be “theft,” not “robbery.” It also explains the rise and fearful menace of the Gadianton society, who are always called “robbers” in the Book of Mormon, never “thieves.”*

[\*- John W. Welch and Kelly Ward - Thieves and Robbers\*](#)

How would Joseph Smith be so consistent in the correct usages of these two terms [even when the Bible wasn't](#)?

See:

- [John W. Welch and Kelly Ward - Thieves and Robbers](#)

## Where would Joseph Smith have learned to dictate chiasmus?

Chiasmus is an ancient literary structure taking many forms but is essentially a passage in which the first half is then reversed in the second half (E.g. A, B, B, A).

Chiasmus is found throughout ancient writing including the Bible and first recognized in the Book of Mormon by John W. Welch in 1967. While chiasmus was known at the time the Book of Mormon was published there is no evidence it was known in America (and Joseph Smith) at the time. Even if it was known, how was Joseph able to create long and complex chiasmus while dictating? It is one thing to compose written chiasmus, but quite another to dictate it.

One fairly simple example of chiasmus in the Book of Mormon is that of 1 Nephi 1:1-3

- A. yea, having had a great knowledge of the goodness and the mysteries of God,  
 B. therefore I make a record of my proceedings in my days.  
 C. Yea, I make a record in the language of my father,  
 D. which consists of the learning of the Jews  
 C. and the language of the Egyptians.  
 B. And I know that the record which I make is true; and I make it with mine own hand;  
 A. and I make it according to my knowledge.*

Other examples are much more complex including some 6 levels deep. How did Joseph know about chiasmus and effectively compose it on the fly?

See:

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Chiasmus Overview](#)

## **How would Joseph Smith manage to use conceptual parallels rather than repeated words in chiasmus?**

One particularly interesting example of chiasmus is found in Mosiah 3:18–19:

- A. but men drink damnation to their own souls except they humble themselves  
 B. and become as little children,  
 C. and believe that salvation was, and is, and is to come, in and through the atoning blood of Christ, the Lord Omnipotent.  
 D. For the natural man  
 E. is an enemy to God,  
 F. and has been from the fall of Adam,  
 F. and will be, forever and ever,  
 E. unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit,  
 D. and putteth off the natural man  
 C. and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord,  
 B. and becometh as a child,  
 A. submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love*

This chiasm makes use of conceptual parallels rather than simply repeating words in a particular order, namely:

- *Rather than repeating specific words, this chiasmus refers to time in terms of “has been” and “will be” in the F lines*
- *Rather than repeating specific words, this chiasmus refers to God and the Holy Spirit in the E lines*

- *The first half of the chiasm is wholly negative, whereas the second half is wholly positive*

If it would have been difficult for Joseph to have dictated chiasmus, how much more difficult would it be to not even repeat the words?

See:

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Chiasmus in Mosiah 3:18–19](#)

## **Why are there examples of parallelism of numbers (a fortiori) in the Book of Mormon?**

The “a fortiori” principle is used to create a “how much more so” effect. Donald Parry explains:

*A fortiori deals with “the peculiar sequence of two numbers, the second number being one unit higher than the first number (x/x+1),” such as the sequence one/two, three/four, or thousand/ten thousand.*

*- Donald W. Parry, [Poetic Parallelisms in the Book of Mormon: The Complete Text Reformatted \(Provo, UT: Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, 2007\), xxix.](#)*

One example from the Bible is found in Genesis 4:24

*If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold,  
truly Lamech seventy and sevenfold.*

A fortiori is also found in the Book of Mormon where two numbers are given in succession to create a “how much more so” effect. One example is in Alma 60:22

*Yea, will ye sit in idleness while ye are surrounded with thousands of those, yea, and tens of thousands, who do also sit in idleness*

Another example is found within a chiasm in Helaman 3:24-26:

*A. insomuch that there were thousands  
B. who did join themselves unto the church  
C. and were baptized unto repentance.  
D. And so great was the prosperity of the church, and so many the blessings which were poured out upon the people,  
E. that even the high priests  
E. and the teachers were themselves astonished beyond measure.*

*D. And it came to pass that the work of the Lord did prosper  
 C. unto the baptizing  
 B. and uniting to the church of God, many souls,  
 A. yea, even tens of thousands.*

Why would Joseph Smith repeat numbers like this? How would he remember the a fortiori principle even within a chiasm?

See:

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Parallelism of Numbers](#)

## **How could Joseph Smith manage to dictate contrasting ideas parallelisms in the Book of Mormon?**

Contrasting ideas is a form of parallelism in which ideas are compared against each other to demonstrate a contrast. This can take the simple form A-B-A-B or can be more complex.

One example among dozens in the Book of Mormon is found in Alma 5:16–17:

*A. can you imagine to yourselves  
 B. that ye hear the voice of the Lord,  
 C. saying unto you, in that day:  
 D. Come unto me ye blessed, for behold, your works have been the works of  
 righteousness  
 E. upon the face of the earth?*

*A. Or do ye imagine to yourselves  
 B. that ye can lie unto the Lord  
 C. in that day, and say Lord  
 D. our works have been righteous works  
 E. upon the face of the earth—and that he will save you?*

Where did Joseph Smith learn so many different types of parallelism?

See:

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Contrasting Ideas](#)

## How did the literary parallelism known as “progression” find its way into the Book of Mormon?

The type of parallelism known as progression involves parallel phrases that build up to a climactic conclusion. There are many examples of progression in the Book of Mormon such as:

2 Nephi 15:29

*They shall roar like young lions;  
yea, they shall roar,  
and lay hold of the prey, and shall carry away safe, and none shall deliver.*

2 Nephi 28:23

*Yea, they are grasped with death, and hell;  
and death, and hell,  
and the devil, and all that have been seized therewith must stand before the throne of God, and be judged according to their works, from whence they must go into the place prepared for them, even a lake of fire and brimstone, which is endless torment.*

Mosiah 21:26

*Nevertheless, they did find a land which had been peopled;  
yea, a land which was covered with dry bones;  
yea, a land which had been peopled and which had been destroyed;  
and they, having supposed it to be the land of Zarahemla, returned to the land of Nephi, having arrived in the borders of the land not many days before the coming of Ammon.*

Why does this not sound like something young Joseph Smith would have dictated?

See:

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Progression](#)

## How could Joseph Smith dictate regular repetition throughout the Book of Mormon?

Regular repetition occurs when a phrase or expression occurs repeatedly in a passage. This technique is found in the Bible and can also be seen in the Book of Mormon.



One example is found in 1 Nephi 18:2

*Now I, Nephi, did not work the timbers **after the manner** which was learned by men, neither did I build the ship **after the manner** of men; but I did build it after the manner which the Lord had shown unto me; wherefore, it was not **after the manner** of men. (emphasis added)*

Another is found in 2 Nephi 4:31–33:

*O Lord, **wilt thou** redeem my soul? **Wilt thou** deliver me out of the hands of mine enemies? **Wilt thou** make me that I may shake at the appearance of sin? May the gates of hell be shut continually before me, because that my heart is broken and my spirit is contrite! O Lord, **wilt thou** not shut the gates of thy righteousness before me, that I may walk in the path of the low valley, that I may be strict in the plain road! O Lord, **wilt thou** encircle me around in the robe of thy righteousness! O Lord, **wilt thou** make a way for mine escape before mine enemies! **Wilt thou** make my path straight before me! **Wilt thou** not place a stumbling block in my way—but that thou wouldst clear my way before me, and hedge not up my way, but the ways of mine enemy. (emphasis added)*

Why does this not sound like what we would expect dictated from Joseph Smith? Wouldn't he have likely avoided repeating himself like this?

See:

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Regular Repetition](#)

## Why would Joseph Smith use beginning and ending repetitions while dictating the Book of Mormon?

One form of parallelism is that of repetitive beginnings or repetitive endings. 3 Nephi 9:3-11 contains an example of this in which a lengthy phrase is repeated at the end of each passage.

*Behold, that great city Zarahemla have I burned with fire, and the inhabitants thereof.*

*And behold, that great city Moroni have I caused to be sunk in the depths of the sea, and the inhabitants thereof to be drowned.*

*And behold, that great city Moronihah have I covered with earth, and the inhabitants thereof, **to hide their iniquities and their abominations from before my face, that the blood of the prophets and the saints shall not come any more unto me against them.***

*And behold, the city of Gilgal have I caused to be sunk, and the inhabitants thereof to be buried up in the depths of the earth;*

*Yea, and the city of Onihah and the inhabitants thereof, and the city of Mocom and the inhabitants thereof, and the city of Jerusalem and the inhabitants thereof; and waters have I caused to come up in the stead thereof, **to hide their wickedness and abominations from before my face, that the blood of the prophets and the saints shall not come up any more unto me against them.***

*And behold, the city of Gadiandi, and the city of Gadiomnah, and the city of Jacob, and the city of Gimgimno, all these have I caused to be sunk, and made hills and valleys in the places thereof; and the inhabitants thereof have I buried up in the depths of the earth, **to hide their wickedness and abominations from before my face, that the blood of the prophets and the saints should not come up any more unto me against them.***

*And behold, that great city Jacobugath, which was inhabited by the people of king Jacob, have I caused to be burned with fire because of their sins and their wickedness, which was above all the wickedness of the whole earth, because of their secret murders and combinations; for it was they that did destroy the peace of my people and the government of the land; therefore I did cause them to be burned, **to destroy them from before my face, that the blood of the prophets and the saints should not come up unto me any more against them.***

*And behold, the city of Laman, and the city of Josh, and the city of Gad, and the city of Kishkumen, have I caused to be burned with fire, and the inhabitants thereof, because of their wickedness in casting out the prophets, and stoning those whom I did send to declare unto them concerning their wickedness and their abominations.*

*And because they did cast them all out, that there were none righteous among them, I did send down fire and **destroy them, that their wickedness and abominations might be hid from before my face, that the blood of the prophets and the saints whom I sent among them might not cry unto me from the ground against them.** (emphasis added)*

How would Joseph Smith have been able to dictate this form of parallelism? How could he remember the same phrase and end each passage the same way?

See:

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Beginning and Ending Repetitions](#)

## Would we expect Joseph Smith to naturally include synonymous parallelisms while dictating the Book of Mormon?

Synonymous parallelisms are formal patterns in which similar meanings are repeated at least two times. One example of an extended synonymous parallelism (more than two lines) is found in Alma 5:18:

*having a remembrance of all your guilt,  
yea, a perfect remembrance of all your wickedness,  
yea, a remembrance that ye have set at defiance the commandments of God?*

Another is found in 3 Nephi 8:13:

*And the highways were broken up,  
and the level roads were spoiled,  
and many smooth places became rough.*

Wouldn't we expect Joseph Smith when dictating the Book of Mormon to struggle to find such synonyms? With Joseph's limited education, how did he manage to dictate such synonymous parallelisms? Would we expect to see over [100 examples](#) of this throughout the Book of Mormon?

See:

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Synonymous Parallelisms](#)

## Wouldn't Joseph Smith struggle to use synonymous words throughout the Book of Mormon?

Slightly different to synonymous parallelisms, the Bible and Book of Mormon contain many examples of repetition of synonymous words.

One example from the Book of Mormon is found in Alma 30:28:

*and have brought them to believe,  
by their traditions  
and their dreams  
and their whims  
and their visions  
and their pretended mysteries*

Another example is found in Alma 63:2:

*And he was a just man,  
and he did walk uprightly before God;  
and he did observe to do good continually,  
to keep the commandments of the Lord his God*

Wouldn't we expect Joseph Smith to have struggled to find such synonymous words to describe the same things?

See:

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Synonymous Words](#)

## **Wouldn't it have been difficult for Joseph Smith to use antithetical parallelisms while dictating the Book of Mormon?**

Antithetical parallelisms contain an opposition of words or meanings and can be found throughout the Bible. The Book of Mormon also contains many examples of antithetical parallelisms such as in Alma 60:36:

*I seek not for power,  
but to pull it down.  
I seek not for honor of the world,  
but for the glory of my God*

How would Joseph Smith manage to include so many different types of parallelisms in the Book of Mormon?

See:

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Antithetical Parallelisms](#)

## **How would Joseph Smith know about alternate parallelisms?**

Alternate parallelisms contain words or phrases which are repeated in the same order (A-B-C-A-B-C). Some examples of this form of parallelism contain many elements such as 1 Nephi 9:3-4:

*A. I should make these plates,  
B. for the special purpose that there should be an account engraven of the ministry of my people.  
C. Upon the other plates*

*D. should be engraven an account of the reign of the kings,  
E. and the wars  
F. and contentions  
G. of my people;*

*A. wherefore these plates  
B. are for the more part of the ministry;  
C. and the other plates  
D. are for the more part of the reign of the kings  
E. and the wars  
F. and contentions  
G. of my people.*

[Nearly 400 examples](#) of alternate parallelisms are found in the Book of Mormon. How would Joseph Smith manage to dictate such literary techniques like this?

See:

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Alternate Parallelisms](#)

## How could Joseph Smith manage to dictate chiasmus as part of a historical summary?

One unique example of chiasmus in the Book of Mormon is found in Helaman 6:7-13. In this example, the chiasm is not found in a discourse but in a historical summary.

*A. And behold, there was **peace** in all the land,  
B. insomuch that the Nephites did go into whatsoever part of the land they would, whether among the Nephites or the Lamanites. And it came to pass that the Lamanites did also go whithersoever they would, whether it were among the Lamanites or among the Nephites; and thus they did have free intercourse one with another, to buy and to sell, and to get gain, according to their desire.  
C. And it came to pass that they became **exceedingly rich**, both the Lamanites and the Nephites;  
D. and they did have an exceeding plenty of **gold, and of silver, and of all manner of precious metals**, both in the land south and in the land north.  
E1. Now the **land south**  
E2. was called **Lehi**,  
E3. and the **land north**  
E4. was called **Mulek**,  
E5. which was after the son of **Zedekiah**;  
E5. for the **Lord**  
E4. did bring **Mulek**  
E3. into the **land north**,*

*E2. and **Lehi***

*E1. into the **land south**.*

*D. And behold, there was all manner of **gold in both these lands, and of silver, and of precious ore of every kind**; and there were also curious workmen, who did work all kinds of ore and did refine it;*

*C. and thus they did **become rich**.*

*B. They did raise grain in abundance, both in the north and in the south; and they did flourish exceedingly, both in the north and in the south. And they did multiply and wax exceedingly strong in the land. And they did raise many flocks and herds, yea, many fatlings. Behold their women did toil and spin, and did make all manner of cloth, of fine-twined linen and cloth of every kind, to clothe their nakedness.*

*A. And thus the sixty and fourth year did pass away in **peace**. (emphasis added)*

John W. Welch explains how this chiasm is more effective and obvious in Hebrew:

*Just as divine names often appear at the center of biblical chiasms, at the very apex of this passage in Helaman 6, the words Zedekiah and Lord stand parallel to each other. The parallelism between these two names is intriguing not only because Zedekiah was the king and adoptive royal son of Yahweh, the Lord, but also because the Hebrew word for Lord (YHWH) constitutes the final syllable, or theophoric suffix, –yah, at the end of the name Zedekiah. Thus the central chiastic structure in Helaman 6:10 actually would have worked better and would have been more obvious in Hebrew (or its related Nephite dialect) than in the English translation. Joseph Smith would have had no way of consciously concocting this parallelism on his own.*

*[- John Welch, "A Steady Stream of Significant Recognitions," 347.](#)*

Isn't this one of the most difficult types of chiasmus to dictate? How could Joseph Smith dictate chiasmus while maintaining the integrity of the storyline?

See:

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Chiasmus in Helaman 6:7–13](#)

## **If Joseph Smith took the time to deliberately include potentially over 430 instances of chiasmus in the Book of Mormon (30 of which are at least 6 levels deep), why wouldn't he ensure that someone noticed them?**

Scholar Donald W. Parry has reformatted the entire Book of Mormon to display each instance of chiasmus. There are over 430 instances of chiasmus identified with 30 being at least 6 levels deep.

[Parry lists](#) the various ways or configurations in which words or sentences are found to be parallel in the Book of Mormon:

*Synonymous or near-synonymous terms or phrases, Identical words or phrases, Antithetical words or opposites, Complements, Metaphors, Double similes, Resultative relationship, Gender-matched parallelism, Rhetorical questions, Numbers, Lists, Grammatical parallelisms, Opening a prophecy, and Domain and subcategory*

He also lists the types of parallelisms:

*Chiasmus and Inverted Parallelism, Simple Synonymous, Extended Synonymous, Simple Alternate, Repeated Alternate, Extended Alternate, Synthetic Parallelism, Extended Synthetic Parallelism, Gradation Parallelism, Progression Parallelism, Parallelism of Numbers, Antithetical Parallelism or Opposites, Detailing, Working Out, and Contrasting Ideas*

And the types of repetition:

*Like Sentence Beginnings, Many Ands, "Nor" and "Or", Random Repetition, Regular Repetition, Like Sentence Endings, Like Paragraph Endings, Repetition of Words, Duplication and Synonymous Words*

If Joseph Smith took the time and effort to include all these when dictating, why did he never mention it? Why did he never draw attention to any of the Hebraisms?

See:

- [Donald W. Parry - Poetic Parallelisms in the Book of Mormon](#)

## **Why would Joseph Smith take a chance on saying that Shiz could walk around beheaded?**

Ether 15:30 records the death of Shiz as follows:

*And it came to pass that when Coriantumr had leaned upon his sword, that he rested a little, he smote off the head of Shiz.*

*And it came to pass that after he had smitten off the head of Shiz, that Shiz raised up on his hands and fell; and after that he had struggled for breath, he died.*

It seems curious that Joseph Smith would have described Shiz being so animated after being decapitated. If Joseph had written the Book of Mormon, wouldn't we expect him to simply say that Shiz fell to the ground?

The actions of Shiz after being beheaded are [consistent with neural phenomena discovered at the end of the 19th century](#), which Joseph would not have known about.

Why would Joseph Smith take a chance on saying something that would seem so odd to his readers?

See:

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: The Beheading of Shiz](#)

## **What were the odds that Joseph Smith would pick the right time length for the Jaredites to cross the ocean?**

In Ether 6:11 we read how long it took the Jaredites to reach the promised land:

*And thus they were driven forth, three hundred and forty and four days upon the water.*

While this may sound like a random number, John Welch notes:

*Certain things that might at first have appeared outrageous, on closer inspection have turned out to be right on target. The ancient Jaredite transoceanic migration that lasted 344 days (see Ether 6:11) ceases to seem so fantastic when that turns out to be exactly the length of time it takes the Pacific current to go from Asia to Mexico.*

*- [John W. Welch - "The Power of Evidence in the Nurturing of Faith," in Echoes and Evidences of the Book of Mormon](#)*

If Joseph Smith was guessing, wouldn't he have likely been wrong by quite a large margin?

See:



- [John W. Welch - "The Power of Evidence in the Nurturing of Faith," in Echoes and Evidences of the Book of Mormon](#)

## **Why would Joseph Smith go to such effort to make realistic ancient items such as the Sword of Laban and the Liahona?**

Joseph Smith was not only in possession of the gold plates, but other items too. David Whitmer wrote:

*Joseph, Oliver Cowdery and myself were together, and the angel showed them [the plates] to us. ... [We were] sitting on a log when we were overshadowed by a light more glorious than that of the sun. In the midst of this light, but a few feet from us, appeared a table upon which were many golden plates, also the sword of Laban and the directors. I saw them as plain as I see you now, and distinctly heard the voice of the Lord declaring that the records of the plates of the Book of Mormon were translated by the gift and power of God.*

*- Cook, David Whitmer Interviews. 63.*

How would Joseph Smith have been so skilled in crafting gold plates, swords and directors?

See:

- [Jannalee Sandau - The Sword of Laban and Liahona: Where Are They Now?](#)
- [Book of Mormon Central - Why Were the Three Witnesses Shown the Liahona?](#)

## **How would Joseph Smith have been so consistent in using the word “nation” for the Jaredites but not for the Lamanites or Nephites?**

The Book of Mormon is consistent in its use of the word “nation”, as Bruce E. Dale and Brian Dale explain:

*Throughout the Book of Mormon itself there is never a reference to “Nephite nation” or to a “Lamanite nation.” Interestingly, the word nation is used in reference to the Jaredites (Ether 1:43), a very different people culturally than the Lehites. The Book of Mormon uses this phrase: “nations, kindreds, tongues and people.” The Nephites and Lamanites were clearly kindreds. In contrast, the word nation is used frequently in terms of the “nations of the Gentiles.” The noncanonical Guide to the Scriptures has eight references to “Nephite nation,” showing how deeply engrained*

*this idea of nationhood is in modern readers. But the Book of Mormon never puts those two words together for Nephite/Lamanite societies. The nation-state is not a political structure found anywhere in the Book of Mormon. Instead, the Book of Mormon peoples were organized politically in city-states. Often one city-state would dominate a group of other city-states. This dominance is the subject of the next correspondence*

*The correspondence is specific and detailed. There is not a single reference in the text of the Book of Mormon to “Nephite nation” or “Lamanite nation.” It is also unusual. Joseph Smith was growing up in the new nation of America, with a great deal of pride and self-identity as an independent nation. How did he avoid identifying the Lamanite or Nephite peoples as “nations”? But he did avoid it. What a lucky “guess” – over and over again during the course of the Book of Mormon history.*

*- [Bruce E. Dale and Brian Dale - Joseph Smith: The World’s Greatest Guesses \(A Bayesian Statistical Analysis of Positive and Negative Correspondences between the Book of Mormon and The Maya\)](#)*

How did Joseph Smith manage to avoid making such an easy mistake?

See:

- [Bruce E. Dale and Brian Dale - Joseph Smith: The World’s Greatest Guesses \(A Bayesian Statistical Analysis of Positive and Negative Correspondences between the Book of Mormon and The Maya\)](#)

## **How could Joseph Smith manage to hit the bullseye with the city of "Lamanai"?**

In 3 Nephi 9:10 we learn of the city of “Laman”. Bruce E. Dale and Brian Dale explain the significance of this city as it relates to the [important site of “Lamanai, ... occupied from earliest times right into the post-Conquest period.”](#)

*The strong tendency is for consonants to be preserved in pronouncing words and names. For example, Beirut (Lebanon) is one of the oldest cities in the world, settled 5,000 years ago. The name derives from Canaanite-Phoenician be’erot and has been known as “Biruta,” “Berytus” and now “Beirut,” while always retaining those three consonants “BRT” in the correct order, and with no intervening consonants.*

*In the case of the city Lamanai (Laman), all three consonants, and only these three consonants, namely LMN, are found in the correct order and are the same consonants as given for the city of Laman mentioned in the Book of Mormon. This seems to be a “bullseye” for the Book of Mormon. How did Joseph Smith correctly*

*“guess” the correct consonants, and only the correct consonants in the correct order for the name of an important city “occupied from earliest times?”*

*- [Bruce E. Dale and Brian Dale - Joseph Smith: The World’s Greatest Guesser \(A Bayesian Statistical Analysis of Positive and Negative Correspondences between the Book of Mormon and The Maya\)](#)*

What are the odds of this “bullseye” in the Book of Mormon?

See:

- [Jeff Lindsay - Mormon Trivia from Lamanai in Belize: “One of the Very Few Maya Sites for which the Ancient Name Is Recorded”](#)
- [Bruce E. Dale and Brian Dale - Joseph Smith: The World’s Greatest Guesser \(A Bayesian Statistical Analysis of Positive and Negative Correspondences between the Book of Mormon and The Maya\)](#)

## **How would Joseph Smith have guessed about native leaders being incorporated in power structure after subjugation?**

The Book of Mormon mentions instances of native leaders being incorporated in power structure after subjugation, such as in Mosiah 19:26-27:

*And also Limhi, being the son of the king, having the kingdom conferred upon him by the people, made oath unto the king of the Lamanites that his people should pay tribute unto him, even one half of all they possessed.*

*And it came to pass that Limhi began to establish the kingdom and to establish peace among his people.*

In an analysis of 131 positive correspondences between the Book of Mormon and Dr Michael Coe’s book “The Maya”, Bruce E. Dale and Brian Dale remark:

*“Mesoamerican ‘empires’ such as Teotihuacan’s were probably not organized along Roman lines; ... rather, they were ‘hegemonic,’ in the sense that conquered bureaucracies were largely in place” (p. 100). “it seems obvious that many of the native princes were incorporated into the new power structure” (p. 206). “Or perhaps Calakmul found it easier ... to rule through local authorities” (p. 276).*

*The Book of Mormon and The Maya are both specific and detailed about this practice. As Dr. Coe suggests, the only model Joseph Smith might conceivably have heard about for control of subjugated peoples was the Roman one, which was the opposite of the system used among the Maya, and also the opposite of the system*

*used in the Book of Mormon. How did Joseph Smith “guess” that one correctly? Specific, detailed and unusual.*

*- [Bruce E. Dale and Brian Dale - Joseph Smith: The World’s Greatest Guesser \(A Bayesian Statistical Analysis of Positive and Negative Correspondences between the Book of Mormon and The Maya\)](#)*

Where would Joseph Smith have learned about this practice?

See:

- [Bruce E. Dale and Brian Dale - Joseph Smith: The World’s Greatest Guesser \(A Bayesian Statistical Analysis of Positive and Negative Correspondences between the Book of Mormon and The Maya\)](#)

## **Where would Joseph Smith have gotten the idea about hereditary priests (which were the opposite of frontier priests)?**

In Dr Michael Coe’s book “The Maya” we read:

*“Far more is known of later Maya priests. In contrast to their Aztec counterparts, they were not celibate. Sons acquired their fathers’ offices, although some were second sons of lords” (p. 243). “During the prosperity of Mayapan, a hereditary Chief Priest resided in that city” (p. 243).*

*- [Bruce E. Dale and Brian Dale - Joseph Smith: The World’s Greatest Guesser \(A Bayesian Statistical Analysis of Positive and Negative Correspondences between the Book of Mormon and The Maya\)](#)*

Bruce E. Dale and Brian Dale comment:

*Both the Book of Mormon and The Maya teach clearly of hereditary priests and chief priests. This correspondence is detailed and specific. It is also unusual. Joseph Smith’s experience of frontier priests would have been of the Protestant variety, who were not celibate, but who instead were “trained for the ministry” and did not inherit their offices; or of the Catholic variety, who were celibate and therefore could not pass on their priestly office to a son. How did Joseph Smith correctly “guess” that among some of the distant ancestors of the Indians, priests were not celibate and that priestly office could descend from father to son?*

*- [Bruce E. Dale and Brian Dale - Joseph Smith: The World’s Greatest Guesser \(A Bayesian Statistical Analysis of Positive and Negative Correspondences between the Book of Mormon and The Maya\)](#)*

Where would Joseph Smith have gotten this idea from?

See:

- [Bruce E. Dale and Brian Dale - Joseph Smith: The World's Greatest Guesser \(A Bayesian Statistical Analysis of Positive and Negative Correspondences between the Book of Mormon and The Maya\)](#)

## **How likely is it that Joseph Smith would know the importance of belonging to a leading patrilineage, purely from reading the Bible?**

In Dr Michael Coe's book "The Maya" we read:

*"There were 24 'principal' lineages in Utatlan" (p. 225). "There were approximately 250 patrilineages in Yucatan at the time of the Conquest, and we know from Landa how important they were".*

- [Bruce E. Dale and Brian Dale - Joseph Smith: The World's Greatest Guesser \(A Bayesian Statistical Analysis of Positive and Negative Correspondences between the Book of Mormon and The Maya\)](#)

Bruce E. Dale and Brian Dale comment:

*Both the Book of Mormon and The Maya are very specific and detailed about how important it was to belong to a leading patrilineage. While Joseph Smith might have picked up this idea from reading the Bible (that is, the tribes of Israel) we think this is very unlikely. So we regard this correspondence as specific, detailed and unusual.*

- [Bruce E. Dale and Brian Dale - Joseph Smith: The World's Greatest Guesser \(A Bayesian Statistical Analysis of Positive and Negative Correspondences between the Book of Mormon and The Maya\)](#)

Did Joseph Smith really know the Bible well enough to notice this?

See:

- [Bruce E. Dale and Brian Dale - Joseph Smith: The World's Greatest Guesser \(A Bayesian Statistical Analysis of Positive and Negative Correspondences between the Book of Mormon and The Maya\)](#)

## How would Joseph Smith have guessed the importance of tracing one's genealogy to a prominent ancestor (in democratic frontier America in the early 1800s)?

Dr Michael Coe in his book "The Maya" remarks:

*to be able to trace one's genealogy in both lines to an ancient ancestry was an important matter, for there were strongly demarcated classes (p. 235).*

- [Bruce E. Dale and Brian Dale - Joseph Smith: The World's Greatest Guesser \(A Bayesian Statistical Analysis of Positive and Negative Correspondences between the Book of Mormon and The Maya\)](#)

Bruce E. Dale and Brian Dale comment:

*Coe describes this practice clearly and in some detail. The Book of Mormon also describes it clearly and in great detail. Why would this idea occur to Joseph Smith in democratic frontier America in the early 1800s? America had recently thrown off the rule of a class-based society, the British. So the correspondence also seems unusual. Specific, detailed and unusual.*

- [Bruce E. Dale and Brian Dale - Joseph Smith: The World's Greatest Guesser \(A Bayesian Statistical Analysis of Positive and Negative Correspondences between the Book of Mormon and The Maya\)](#)

Echoing the question, why would this idea occur to Joseph Smith in democratic frontier America in the early 1800s?

See:

- [Bruce E. Dale and Brian Dale - Joseph Smith: The World's Greatest Guesser \(A Bayesian Statistical Analysis of Positive and Negative Correspondences between the Book of Mormon and The Maya\)](#)

## Would we expect the Book of Mormon to use the word "seating" to mean accession to political power?

In an analysis of 131 positive correspondences between the Book of Mormon and Dr Michael Coe's book "The Maya", Bruce E. Dale and Brian Dale observe:

*Coe's standard: "Epigraphers conclude that pectoral reverse records the 'seating' or accession to power, of the ruler in question" (p. 91). "Important glyphs now known to relate to dynastic affairs include ... inauguration or 'seating' in office" (p. 274).*

*Analysis of correspondence: On three separate occasions, the Book of Mormon uses exactly this word seating or seat to describe the holding of or accession to political power. So the correspondence is specific, detailed and unusual. It seems very unlikely that Joseph Smith would have correctly “guessed” this particular word.*

*- [Bruce E. Dale and Brian Dale - Joseph Smith: The World’s Greatest Guesser \(A Bayesian Statistical Analysis of Positive and Negative Correspondences between the Book of Mormon and The Maya\)](#)*

Where would Joseph Smith have learned such a unique usage of this word?

See:

- [Bruce E. Dale and Brian Dale - Joseph Smith: The World’s Greatest Guesser \(A Bayesian Statistical Analysis of Positive and Negative Correspondences between the Book of Mormon and The Maya\)](#)

## **Why would Joseph Smith say that subservient peoples “possess” the land while ruled by a dominant power?**

Dr Michael Coe in his book “The Maya” explains:

*“The kings of some lesser states were said to be ‘possessed’ by the rulers of more powerful ones” (p. 275).*

*- [Bruce E. Dale and Brian Dale - Joseph Smith: The World’s Greatest Guesser \(A Bayesian Statistical Analysis of Positive and Negative Correspondences between the Book of Mormon and The Maya\)](#)*

Bruce E. Dale and Brian Dale comment:

*It is interesting that this specific word possess is the one used by the Maya to describe subservient rulership. Likewise the Lehites (for example, 2 Nephi 1:9) and the Jaredites (for example, Ether 2:8) were instructed that theirs was a “promised land” and that they would “possess” it as long as they kept their covenants with their heavenly king. That same word possess was the relationship the Israelites were to have with their lands of promise, under God’s rule (for example, Deuteronomy 11:8, 2 Nephi 24:2). How would Joseph Smith have guessed how appropriate that particular word was to describe this relationship between a more powerful king and his subservient kings among the Maya?*

[- Bruce E. Dale and Brian Dale - Joseph Smith: The World's Greatest Guesser \(A Bayesian Statistical Analysis of Positive and Negative Correspondences between the Book of Mormon and The Maya\)](#)

Why think Joseph Smith guessed this?

See:

- [Bruce E. Dale and Brian Dale - Joseph Smith: The World's Greatest Guesser \(A Bayesian Statistical Analysis of Positive and Negative Correspondences between the Book of Mormon and The Maya\)](#)

**Do we know of any contemporary practice or model in Joseph's Smith's world that put such emphasis on priests keeping a careful, written, long-term record of one's ancestors, a record handed down over centuries?**

Dr Michael Coe in his book "The Maya", says:

*"According to the early sources, the Maya books contained histories, prophecies, maps, tribute accounts, songs, 'sciences,' and genealogies" (p. 239). "Far more is known of later Maya priests. ... [They] kept the all-important genealogies" (p. 243).*

[- Bruce E. Dale and Brian Dale - Joseph Smith: The World's Greatest Guesser \(A Bayesian Statistical Analysis of Positive and Negative Correspondences between the Book of Mormon and The Maya\)](#)

Bruce E. Dale and Brian Dale observe:

*This practice of the priests (religious leaders) carefully keeping genealogies is specific and detailed in both The Maya and in the Book of Mormon. It is also unusual. We know of no contemporary practice or model in Joseph's Smith's world that put such emphasis on priests keeping a careful, written, long-term record of one's ancestors, a record handed down over centuries. Specific, detailed and unusual.*

[- Bruce E. Dale and Brian Dale - Joseph Smith: The World's Greatest Guesser \(A Bayesian Statistical Analysis of Positive and Negative Correspondences between the Book of Mormon and The Maya\)](#)

Where did Joseph Smith get this idea from?

See:



- [Bruce E. Dale and Brian Dale - Joseph Smith: The World's Greatest Guesser \(A Bayesian Statistical Analysis of Positive and Negative Correspondences between the Book of Mormon and The Maya\)](#)

## **How would Joseph Smith have guessed that the ancient Mesoamericans had strong elements of Christianity in their religious practices?**

In Dr Michael Coe's book "The Maya" we read:

*"Many Colonial-period Maya identified the risen Christ with the Maize God" (p. 71). "The raised wooden standard shall come! ... Our lord comes, Itza! Our elder brother comes. ... Receive your guests, the bearded men, the men of the east, the bearers of the sign of God, lord!" (p. 227). "There was ... a great deal of ... blending between Spanish and Maya religious institutions and beliefs, since in many respects they were so similar" (p. 289).*

- [Bruce E. Dale and Brian Dale - Joseph Smith: The World's Greatest Guesser \(A Bayesian Statistical Analysis of Positive and Negative Correspondences between the Book of Mormon and The Maya\)](#)

Bruce E. Dale and Brian Dale respond:

*In both books, the correspondence is specific, detailed and very unusual. Why would Joseph Smith have "guessed" that the ancient Mesoamericans had strong elements of Christianity in their religious practices? View of the Hebrews claims to find ancient Hebrew elements among American Indian tribes, but not Christian elements. So this is specific, detailed and unusual.*

- [Bruce E. Dale and Brian Dale - Joseph Smith: The World's Greatest Guesser \(A Bayesian Statistical Analysis of Positive and Negative Correspondences between the Book of Mormon and The Maya\)](#)

Where would Joseph have found out about Christian elements in Mesoamerican religion?

See:

- [Bruce E. Dale and Brian Dale - Joseph Smith: The World's Greatest Guesser \(A Bayesian Statistical Analysis of Positive and Negative Correspondences between the Book of Mormon and The Maya\)](#)

**How could Joseph Smith guess that covenants between God and man existed among ancient Mesoamerican Indians when in the conventional Christianity of Joseph's day, the importance of covenants was very much downplayed if not absent altogether?**

In Dr Michael Coe's book "The Maya" we read:

*"Ultimately, humans were obligated to abide by covenants. A covenant, as defined by the ethnographer John Monaghan, is a binding contract that explains how one should behave. Gods were usually involved, as in the case of maize production" (p. 242).*

*- [Bruce E. Dale and Brian Dale - Joseph Smith: The World's Greatest Guesser \(A Bayesian Statistical Analysis of Positive and Negative Correspondences between the Book of Mormon and The Maya\)](#)*

Bruce E. Dale and Brian Dale remark:

*The Maya and the Book of Mormon share a common understanding of covenants as a binding contract or agreement between God and man. This is specific and detailed. It is also unusual. What existing model or pattern did Joseph Smith rely on to correctly "guess" that covenants between God and man existed among ancient Mesoamerican Indians? In the conventional Christianity of Smith's day, the importance of covenants was very much downplayed if not absent altogether.*

*- [Bruce E. Dale and Brian Dale - Joseph Smith: The World's Greatest Guesser \(A Bayesian Statistical Analysis of Positive and Negative Correspondences between the Book of Mormon and The Maya\)](#)*

Where would Joseph Smith have found out about the importance of covenants in Mesoamerica?

See:

- [Bruce E. Dale and Brian Dale - Joseph Smith: The World's Greatest Guesser \(A Bayesian Statistical Analysis of Positive and Negative Correspondences between the Book of Mormon and The Maya\)](#)

## **Why would Joseph Smith say that the ancient inhabitants of Mesoamerica had fine fabrics, textiles and elaborate clothing when the Indians of Joseph Smith’s time and place wore clothing made primarily of animal skins?**

In Dr Michael Coe’s book “The Maya” we read:

*“Besides jade, the corpse was ornamented with ... rich textiles which have long since rotted away” (p. 106). “Sadly, nothing remains of all the perishable products which must have traveled the same routes — textiles” (p. 113). “The royal corpse had been virtually swaddled, wrapped in layers of lime, palm, and fine cotton textiles” (p. 144). “Every temple, every palace room was surely festooned with curtains and wall hangings” (p. 171).*

*- [Bruce E. Dale and Brian Dale - Joseph Smith: The World’s Greatest Guesser \(A Bayesian Statistical Analysis of Positive and Negative Correspondences between the Book of Mormon and The Maya\)](#)*

Bruce E. Dale and Brian Dale comment;

*The correspondence is both specific and detailed. Both the Book of Mormon and The Maya describe people who had available to them very fine, rich and elaborate textiles and clothing. The correspondence also seems unusual. The Indians of Joseph Smith’s time and place wore clothing made primarily of animal skins and did not have access to the cotton worn by Indians in warmer climates*

*- [Bruce E. Dale and Brian Dale - Joseph Smith: The World’s Greatest Guesser \(A Bayesian Statistical Analysis of Positive and Negative Correspondences between the Book of Mormon and The Maya\)](#)*

Why would Joseph Smith think the ancestors of the Indians had access to more fabrics than their descendants?

See:

- [Bruce E. Dale and Brian Dale - Joseph Smith: The World’s Greatest Guesser \(A Bayesian Statistical Analysis of Positive and Negative Correspondences between the Book of Mormon and The Maya\)](#)

## **Why does the Book of Mormon pay attention to small details such as descriptions of highways being “cast up”?**

In 3 Nephi 6:8 we read:

*And there were many highways cast up, and many roads made, which led from city to city, and from land to land, and from place to place.*

This fits what we know about Mesoamerican highways which were “cast up”. Mark Wright explains:

*Although they varied in height and width, their construction was generally composed of rubble lined with large stones at the edges and large cobblestones in the interior, progressively getting smaller from bottom to top, finally gradating to fine gravel near the surface and topped with fine powdered limestone (called sascab), which was pressed smooth with stone rollers*

- [Mark Alan Wright, “The Cultural Tapestry of Mesoamerica,” \*Journal of the Book of Mormon and Other Restoration Scripture\* 22, no. 2 \(2013\): 14.](#)

How would Joseph Smith have remembered small details like this when dictating?

See:

- [Mark Alan Wright, “The Cultural Tapestry of Mesoamerica,”](#)

## **Why would Joseph Smith think to say Nephi had a tower in his garden?**

Helaman 7:10 describes quite specifically the location of Nephi’s garden tower:

*And behold, now it came to pass that it was upon a tower, which was in the garden of Nephi, which was by the highway which led to the chief market, which was in the city of Zarahemla; therefore, Nephi had bowed himself upon the tower which was in his garden, which tower was also near unto the garden gate by which led the highway.*

Why would Joseph Smith say Nephi had a “tower” in his garden? Brant A. Gardner explains:

*Nephi’s tower was almost certainly one of the many low pyramidal structures that archaeologists have found in the majority of Mesoamerican sites from Book of Mormon times on. Those attached to private compounds were lower than the stepped pyramids in public squares used for public rituals, but they were nevertheless similarly constructed, if not nearly so high. Nephi’s tower was low enough to allow easy conversation with the crowd (Hel. 7:12–13). In a family compound, such towers would have been suitable for prayer and communion with God.*

[- Brant A. Gardner, Second Witness: Analytic and Contextual Commentary on the Book of Mormon, 6 vols. \(Salt Lake City, UT: Greg Kofford Books, 2007\) 5:121](#)

Wouldn't Joseph Smith have thought it odd to include a "tower" in Nephi's garden?

See:

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Nephi's Garden and Tower](#)

## **Where would Joseph Smith have gotten the idea of writing histories on large stones?**

In Omni 1:20 we read:

*And it came to pass in the days of Mosiah, there was a large stone brought unto him with engravings on it; and he did interpret the engravings by the gift and power of God.*

Where would Joseph Smith get the idea of writing histories on large stones? The large stone in Omni is entirely consistent with [ancient stone monuments called stelae](#) discovered throughout Mesoamerica.

Evidence Central notes how the large stone in Omni shares characteristics with stelae:

- *Stone monument with engravings*
- *Called a "large stone"*
- *Recounts the stories of kings*
- *Historical and ancestral information*
- *Kings depicted as warriors*
- *Time and place*

Is this simply a coincidence?

See:

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Large Engraved Stones](#)

## **Why are there myths of gods visiting ancient America?**

The focal point in the Book of Mormon is the visitation of Jesus Christ among the inhabitants of America. If this was a true account we would reasonably expect legends and myths of gods visiting America.

From Scott Hoyt:

*Viracocha was the principal deity of ancient Peru, and according to the cronistas (Catholic historians, mostly priests, arriving in Peru shortly after Francisco Pizarro and the conquistadors in the 1500s) he was called the “creating God of the Andes.”*

*...Given the general similarities between the cronistas’ Viracocha and Jesus Christ as described in the Book of Mormon, some might wonder if Mormonism’s founder, Joseph Smith, somehow gained access to the cronistas’ accounts and used their descriptions of ancient Inca legends in producing the Book of Mormon. This would have been unlikely if not impossible, however, because the cronistas’ writings generally were not published until well after the Book of Mormon was published in 1830. At the time Joseph Smith was translating the Book of Mormon in Pennsylvania and New York, the cronistas’ writings were securely ensconced in Catholic archives in Spain.*

- [Scott Hoyt - Viracocha - Christ among the Ancient Peruvians?](#)

Why are there so many similarities between myths of gods in America and the Book of Mormon?

See:

- [Scott Hoyt - Viracocha - Christ among the Ancient Peruvians?](#)

## **How would Joseph Smith know even the basic facts about the exotic modes of social and economic organization that prevailed in Mesoamerican civilization?**

The Book of Mormon contains political and economic features of ancient civilizations (including Mesoamerica) that were unknown in Joseph Smith’s time.

John W. Sorenson explains:

*Virtually every institution or event involving government and wealth among the Nephites and Lamanites can be matched with parallels from descriptions of the political economy of societies in Mesoamerica. For example, the following occur in Mesoamerican history: (1) a seemingly autocratic ruler like King Noah ended up being overthrown and slain by his own people, who tolerated his excesses only up to a certain point; (2) disagreements and dissensions sapped the unity of political communities so that rivals could seize power; (3) alliances among the ruling elites in rival societies were forged, often by marriage (as in King Lamoni's offer of a bride to Ammon and Amalickiah's taking the widowed Lamanite queen as his wife),*

*as a means to bolster local power and prestige and promote wealth-generating trade relations; and (4) when rebels made trouble, the only sure way for rulers to respond was for the upstarts to be "hewn down" with the sword (see Alma 51:19; compare Moroni's dire threat in Alma 60:27–30). Practically every facet of political life (with its entwined economic, religious, and military connections) described in the Book of Mormon account has close parallels in ancient Mesoamerican life.*

*Nothing Joseph Smith could have known in his day about "the Indians" or the biblical Israelites would have prepared him to dictate such a consistent picture of Nephite and Lamanite government and society as he actually did. Only in recent decades have scholars learned enough to describe these ancient Mesoamerican power mechanisms that prove to have been so much like what the Book of Mormon portrays.*

*- [John W. Sorenson, "How Could Joseph Smith Write So Accurately about Ancient American Civilization?," in \*Echoes and Evidences of the Book of Mormon\*](#)*

How did Joseph Smith manage to accurately portray an ancient civilization like this? Where would he have got all his information from?

See:

- [John W. Sorenson, "How Could Joseph Smith Write So Accurately about Ancient American Civilization?"](#)

## **How come the Book of Mormon speaks of a written “language of the fathers” which was not the common language?**

Multiple times in the Book of Mormon we are told that there is a “language of the fathers” which is different from the common language. Such as in Mosiah 1:2:

*And it came to pass that he had three sons; and he called their names Mosiah, and Helorum, and Helaman. And he caused that they should be taught in all the language of his fathers, that thereby they might become men of understanding; and that they might know concerning the prophecies which had been spoken by the mouths of their fathers, which were delivered them by the hand of the Lord.*

Bruce E. Dale and Brian Dale note how the Maya had particular languages which were only known by the elite and required to be learned by candidates for high office:

*King Benjamin “caused that [his sons] should be taught in the language of his fathers, that thereby they might become men of understanding.” Later, his son Mosiah became the ruler of the people. Likewise, Enos (a prince of sorts) was also*

*taught in the “language” of his father. One is led to ask: “Was the regular course of education not sufficient for these young men; was their common language not enough to qualify them to lead?” Apparently not.*

*- [Bruce E. Dale and Brian Dale - Joseph Smith: The World’s Greatest Guesser \(A Bayesian Statistical Analysis of Positive and Negative Correspondences between the Book of Mormon and The Maya\)](#)*

Where would Joseph Smith have got this idea? How would he know that some languages would fade out like this but be kept by the elite?

See:

- [Bruce E. Dale and Brian Dale - Joseph Smith: The World’s Greatest Guesser \(A Bayesian Statistical Analysis of Positive and Negative Correspondences between the Book of Mormon and The Maya\)](#)

## **Why would Joseph Smith think that Mesoamerican Indians had writing at all, when none of the Indian tribes known to Joseph Smith had it?**

One obviously important aspect of the Book of Mormon is that the people had writing. This is curious because the Indian tribes Joseph Smith would be familiar with had no writing.

Bruce E. Dale and Brian Dale explain:

*The Mesoamerican Indians (not just the Maya) had a rare or absent trait: they had writing. And so did the Book of Mormon peoples. Furthermore, the genealogy of their writing is complex. It is not clear how Mesoamerican writing arose, and the sacred written language of the Book of Mormon authors was known to them alone (Mormon 9:34). The correspondence is also unusual. None of the Indian tribes known to Joseph Smith had writing. Thus it was an extremely lucky (or foolhardy) “guess” on his part to have claimed in his “fictional” book that some American Indians did have writing. But he did claim it, and he was right. This correspondence also deserves a much smaller likelihood than a 1 in 50 chance, more like 1 in a million.*

*- [Bruce E. Dale and Brian Dale - Joseph Smith: The World’s Greatest Guesser \(A Bayesian Statistical Analysis of Positive and Negative Correspondences between the Book of Mormon and The Maya\)](#)*

Why would Joseph think the ancestors of the Indians were more advanced than their descendants?



See:

- [Bruce E. Dale and Brian Dale - Joseph Smith: The World's Greatest Guesser \(A Bayesian Statistical Analysis of Positive and Negative Correspondences between the Book of Mormon and The Maya\)](#)

## **Why would Joseph Smith think Mesoamerican Indians had entire repositories of books?**

The Book of Mormon mentions many books being kept, such as in Helaman 3:15

*But behold, there are many books and many records of every kind, and they have been kept chiefly by the Nephites.*

Bruce E. Dale and Brian Dale explain the significance:

*Many books, not just a few, were kept (by the Maya). And in at least some instances, the books were kept together in repositories, essentially in libraries (the "coffers" cited above). The practice is also unusual. What American Indian tribes that Joseph Smith knew of kept even one book, let alone libraries? How did he correctly "guess" this fact about the Maya and the Book of Mormon peoples?*

*- [Bruce E. Dale and Brian Dale - Joseph Smith: The World's Greatest Guesser \(A Bayesian Statistical Analysis of Positive and Negative Correspondences between the Book of Mormon and The Maya\)](#)*

Why would Joseph describe ancient America as being so advanced?

See:

- [Bruce E. Dale and Brian Dale - Joseph Smith: The World's Greatest Guesser \(A Bayesian Statistical Analysis of Positive and Negative Correspondences between the Book of Mormon and The Maya\)](#)

## **Wouldn't Joseph Smith mistakenly mention diamonds, rubies, and pearls when referring to "precious stones"?**

There are many opportunities for Joseph Smith to have slipped up if he had written the Book of Mormon by himself. For example in Alma 17:14 we read:

*And assuredly it was great, for they had undertaken to preach the word of God to a wild and a hardened and a ferocious people; a people who delighted in murdering*

*the Nephites, and robbing and plundering them; and their hearts were set upon riches, or upon gold and silver, and precious stones; yet they sought to obtain these things by murdering and plundering, that they might not labor for them with their own hands.*

Bruce E. Dale and Brian Dale note how this was an easy opportunity for Joseph Smith to slip up if he wrote the Book of Mormon:

*If Joseph Smith “guessed” the Book of Mormon, he would very probably have guessed “precious stones” to be the only precious stones he knew of, namely diamonds, rubies, and perhaps pearls. But Mesoamerica has no rubies at all, nor does it have any significant diamond resources. (Mexico has a few small, inferior diamonds, but no diamond mines.) Joseph Smith would not have “guessed” the precious stones to be jade, obsidian, turquoise or calcite. Nor would the names of those stones have meant anything to all but a very small fraction of those who read the Book of Mormon. (Cureloms and cumoms, anyone?) But Joseph Smith made neither mistake. He (or rather the Book of Mormon authors) simply called them, quite accurately, “precious stones.”*

[- Bruce E. Dale and Brian Dale - Joseph Smith: The World’s Greatest Guesser \(A Bayesian Statistical Analysis of Positive and Negative Correspondences between the Book of Mormon and The Maya\)](#)

How did Joseph Smith avoid making such an easy mistake?

See:

- [Bruce E. Dale and Brian Dale - Joseph Smith: The World’s Greatest Guesser \(A Bayesian Statistical Analysis of Positive and Negative Correspondences between the Book of Mormon and The Maya\)](#)

## **Why would Joseph Smith say that the ancient inhabitants of America had chief marketplaces when the Indians of his day didn’t have marketplaces at all?**

Helaman 7:10 mentions “chief” marketplaces which would have been an odd choice for Joseph Smith seeing that the Native Americans he would have been familiar with had no marketplaces at all.

From Michael R. Ash:

*In Helaman 7:10 we read that Nephi went to pray on a tower in a garden by “the highway which led to the chief market”. This is the only use of the word “market” in the entire Book of Mormon and is mentioned only in passing. Turning to*

*Mesoamerica we find that a marketplace did indeed exist in ancient Mesoamerican times. Not only did large Mesoamerican cities have markets, but they typically had a main or chief market, according to recent discoveries by non-LDS scholars and archaeologists.*

*- [Michael R. Ash - Faith and Reason 53: The Marketplace](#)*

What are the chances that Joseph Smith would be proved right?

See:

- [Michael R. Ash - Faith and Reason 53: The Marketplace](#)
- [Wallace E. Hunt, Jr - The Marketplace](#)

## **Where would Joseph Smith have learned about infant baptism in Mesoamerica?**

In Moroni 8:5,6 we read Mormon's concern about infant baptism:

*For, if I have learned the truth, there have been disputations among you concerning the baptism of your little children.*

*And now, my son, I desire that ye should labor diligently, that this gross error should be removed from among you; for, for this intent I have written this epistle.*

Here Mormon condemns the practice of infant baptism but what would make Joseph Smith think this was an issue in ancient America? Matthew P. Roper explains that this was indeed practiced in Mesoamerica:

*According to Friar Diego do Landa, the Maya of Yucatán practiced a pre-Columbian water purification ritual known as caput sihil, meaning “to be born anew or again.” No one could marry or become a Maya priest without having been thus purified. Children may have been baptized in this manner as early as three years of age. Of the ancient Maya community once located in present-day Mérida, Mexico, Landa recorded, “[I]f anyone died without baptism they believed he would have to suffer more torments in hell than a baptized person.”*

*- [Matthew P. Roper - The Baptism of Little Children in Pre-Columbian Mesoamerica](#)*

How did Joseph Smith correctly guess this was a relevant issue?

See:

- [Matthew P. Roper - The Baptism of Little Children in Pre-Columbian Mesoamerica](#)

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Infant Baptism](#)

## **Why are there Mesoamerican traditions of darkness and seismic events when Christ died?**

In 3 Nephi 8 we read about the destruction that occurred when Jesus died which included earthquakes, broken cities and darkness.

Interestingly, there are traditions recorded by Mariano Veytia (only recently translated into English) from native Mexicans which fit this description in the exact same year as Christ dying:

*These natives indicate another singular event in their histories with great exactness, which later served them as a fixed era for their chronological calculations. They say that 166 years after the correction of their calendar, at the beginning of the year that was indicated with the hieroglyph of the House in the number ten, being a full moon, the sun was eclipsed at midday, the solar body being totally covered, such that the earth became darkened so much that the stars appeared and it seemed like night, and at the same time an earthquake was felt as horrible as they had ever experienced, because the stones crashing against one another were broken into pieces, and the earth opened up in many parts. Confused and bewildered, they believed that the end of the third age of the world had already arrived, which, according to the predictions of their wise men in Huehuetlapallan, should end in strong earthquakes, in whose violence many living people would perish, and mankind would suffer the third calamity; but the earthquake ceasing entirely and the sun once again being uncovered perfectly, everyone was found to be whole, without any living persons having perished, and this caused them such great wonder that they noted it in their histories with singular care.*

*Following these calculations, and adjusted to the comparison of the tables, this event should be placed in the year 4066 of the world, which was indicated with this character as can be seen in the tables, and precisely 166 years after the adjustment of the calendar; and because of the circumstances surrounding this eclipse and earthquake, it was impossible for it to be any other than that which was observed at the death of Jesus Christ Our Lord, having suffered it in the thirty-third year of his age, and so it seems that the incarnation of the Word should be placed in the year 4034 of the world, which the Indians indicated with the same hieroglyph of the House in the number 4, and I have noted it that way in the tables, and with this calculation following the chronological order that they observed, counting the years from one memorable event to another with the assignment of the hieroglyph of the year in which they fell, I have been able to coordinate it perfectly with our years in the year 1519, in which Cortez landed at Veracruz, as will be seen in the discourse of this history*

[- Ancient America Rediscovered, translated by Ronda Cunningham, compiled by Donald W. Hemingway and W. David Hemingway \(Springville, Utah: Bonneville Books, 2000\).](#)

What are the odds there would be traditions of such destruction in the year Jesus died?

See:

- [Jeff Lindsay - Nugget #14: - Mesoamerican Traditions of Darkness and Seismic Events when Christ Died: Consistent with the Book of Mormon](#)

## **Why would Joseph Smith risk saying there were millions of people living in Mesoamerica?**

The Book of Mormon describes high numbers of people which were thought to be unreasonable based on our previous understanding of Mesoamerica.

However recent discoveries show that areas of Mesoamerica had much higher numbers than originally thought. National Geographic reports:

*Using a revolutionary technology known as LiDAR (short for “Light Detection And Ranging”), scholars digitally removed the tree canopy from aerial images of the now-unpopulated landscape, revealing the ruins of a sprawling pre-Columbian civilization that was far more complex and interconnected than most Maya specialists had supposed.*

*The results suggest that Central America supported an advanced civilization that was, at its peak some 1,200 years ago, more comparable to sophisticated cultures such as ancient Greece or China than to the scattered and sparsely populated city states that ground-based research had long suggested.*

*Most people had been comfortable with population estimates of around 5 million,” said Estrada-Belli, who directs a multi-disciplinary archaeological project at Holmul, Guatemala. “With this new data it’s no longer unreasonable to think that there were 10 to 15 million people there—including many living in low-lying, swampy areas that many of us had thought uninhabitable.*

[- Tom Clynes - Laser Scans Reveal Maya "Megalopolis" Below Guatemalan Jungle](#)

Why would Joseph Smith write about populations thought at the time to be unrealistic?

See:

- [Tom Clynes - Laser Scans Reveal Maya "Megalopolis" Below Guatemalan Jungle](#)

## Is it a coincidence that the imagery of planting a tree in your heart has deep Mesoamerican roots?

Alma compares God's word to a seed in Alma 32:

*Now, we will compare the word unto a seed. Now, if ye give place, that a seed may be planted in your heart, behold, if it be a true seed, or a good seed, if ye do not cast it out by your unbelief, that ye will resist the Spirit of the Lord, behold, it will begin to swell within your breasts; and when you feel these swelling motions, ye will begin to say within yourselves—It must needs be that this is a good seed, or that the word is good, for it beginneth to enlarge my soul; yea, it beginneth to enlighten my understanding, yea, it beginneth to be delicious to me.*

The poetic nature of this chapter is something we would not reasonably expect from Joseph Smith's limited education, furthermore, the analogy of planting a seed in your heart and growing a tree has deep roots in Mesoamerican traditions. This is attested in different [inscriptions and illustrations](#).

What are the odds that an analogy which would be unfamiliar to Joseph Smith would be right at home in Mesoamerica?

See:

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Tree Planted in Heart](#)

## Where would Joseph Smith have found out about execution practices of North and Central American cultures going back to pre-Columbian times?

The torture and execution of Abinadi is recorded in Mosiah 17:13-14

*And it came to pass that they took him and bound him, and scourged his skin with faggots, yea, even unto death.  
And now when the flames began to scorch him, he cried unto them, saying:*

It seems a rather odd way for Joseph Smith to describe Abinadi's death. Wouldn't we expect him to simply say Abinadi was burned at the stake rather than being scourged unto death?

The Book of Mormon description of Abinadi's death [echoes perfectly what we find in these ancient traditions](#) in Mesoamerica and in Maya iconography.

How would Joseph Smith know this? Where did he find out about this specific form of torture and execution?

See:

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Scourged with Faggots](#)

## **Why would Joseph Smith take a chance on mentioning the “great spirit” if it was believed to be anachronistic?**

It is widely known that Maya civilizations worshipped many gods so why would Joseph Smith have referred to the “great spirit” in Alma 18:24-28?

*And Ammon began to speak unto him with boldness, and said unto him: Believest thou that there is a God?*

*And he answered, and said unto him: I do not know what that meaneth.*

*And then Ammon said: Believest thou that there is a Great Spirit?*

*And he said, Yea.*

*And Ammon said: This is God. And Ammon said unto him again: Believest thou that this Great Spirit, who is God, created all things which are in heaven and in the earth?*

While it may have seemed anachronistic at the time of the Book of Mormon’s publication, the “great spirit” [fits well with the chief god U K’ux Kaj \(Jurakan\) who was believed by the Maya to be the great creator](#).

Wouldn’t Joseph Smith have spoken of many gods if he had written the Book of Mormon himself?

See:

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: A Great Spirit](#)

## **If Joseph Smith wrote the Book of Mormon, would we expect the four Mayan functions of "and it came to pass" to all appear in the text?**

The phrase “and it came to pass” is used frequently in the Old Testament but rarely found in poetry or prophecy. The phrase also occurs frequently in the Book of Mormon and similarly is not found in poetry or prophecy.

Wouldn’t it have been easy for Joseph Smith to slip up and use the phrase at the wrong time?

Translators of the Old Testament also used many different English expressions when translating the Hebrew word “wayehi” whereas the Book of Mormon is more consistent in translating the phrase exactly. Wouldn't we expect a literal translation to be so repetitive?

The phrase “and it came to pass” also appears in Mayan texts in four ways which are all found in the Book of Mormon. From Paul Hoskisson:

*For several years, researchers have been aware that the phrase and it came to pass is a good translation of a common Hebrew element.[4] Bruce Warren also reports the confirmation by Mayan experts that an element translated "and it came to pass" functioned in at least four ways in Mayan texts: (1) As a posterior date indicator in a text that meant "to count forward to the next date," and (2) as an anterior date indicator that signified "to count backward to the given date." Additionally it could function (3) as a posterior or (4) anterior event indicator, meaning "counting forward or backward to a certain event."5 Warren finds instances of all four functions of and it came to pass in the Book of Mormon, as well as combined date and event indications in both posterior and anterior expressions. For example, "And it came to pass that the people began . . ." is a posterior event indicator (3 Nephi 2:3), whereas "And it had come to pass . . ." is an anterior event indicator (3 Nephi 1:20)*

*- [Paul Y. Hoskisson, John W. Welch, Robert F. Smith, Bruce W. Warren, Roger R. Keller, David Fox, and Deloy Pack, "Words and Phrases," in Reexploring the Book of Mormon, edited by John W. Welch \(Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1992\).](#)*

What are the odds Joseph Smith would use such a common phrase in the Book of Mormon in all the correct ways?

See:

- [FAIR Latter-day Saints - Question: Why does "and it came to pass" appear so often in the Book of Mormon?](#)

**If Joseph Smith wrote the Book of Mormon himself, then would we expect even mundane details such as volcanic eruptions to be so detailed and accurate?**

Bruce E. Dale and Brian Dale argue:

*The account in 3 Nephi is an obvious eye-witness account of a volcanic eruption, with associated earthquakes, terrible storms and lightning, and thick, choking, nearly unbreathable air. This account is highly detailed as well as unusual. Joseph Smith and his contemporaries knew nothing of what it was like to experience a volcanic eruption, nor did they have any published accounts to draw upon. View of*



*the Hebrews mentions volcanoes in Mesoamerica, but says nothing at all about what an eruption is like.*

*- [Bruce E. Dale and Brian Dale - Joseph Smith: The World's Greatest Guesses \(A Bayesian Statistical Analysis of Positive and Negative Correspondences between the Book of Mormon and The Maya\)](#)*

Where would Joseph Smith have learned the details of volcanic eruptions? How could he describe them so well?

See:

- [Bruce E. Dale and Brian Dale - Joseph Smith: The World's Greatest Guesses \(A Bayesian Statistical Analysis of Positive and Negative Correspondences between the Book of Mormon and The Maya\)](#)

## **How would Joseph Smith have guessed those in the Book of Mormon would have such detailed astronomical knowledge?**

Those in the Book of Mormon claimed to know that planets move in a regular form. Alma 30:44 says:

*But Alma said unto him: Thou hast had signs enough; will ye tempt your God? Will ye say, Show unto me a sign, when ye have the testimony of all these thy brethren, and also all the holy prophets? The scriptures are laid before thee, yea, and all things denote there is a God; yea, even the earth, and all things that are upon the face of it, yea, and its motion, yea, and also all the planets which move in their regular form do witness that there is a Supreme Creator.*

Bruce E. Dale and Brian Dale explain why this is of interest:

*Alma asserts that planets (not just one planet) “move in their regular form,” agreeing with Coe’s statement that the Maya knew the movements of Venus and Mars. For the Book of Mormon people to know that “a new star did appear,” they would have to know when and where the old stars would appear. So the correspondence is specific and detailed. It is also unusual. What Indian tribe of the American Northeast had any such detailed astronomical knowledge as that reported in The Maya?*

*- [Bruce E. Dale and Brian Dale - Joseph Smith: The World's Greatest Guesses \(A Bayesian Statistical Analysis of Positive and Negative Correspondences between the Book of Mormon and The Maya\)](#)*

Why would Joseph Smith claim the ancestors of the Indians would know more about astronomy than their descendants?

See:

- [Bruce E. Dale and Brian Dale - Joseph Smith: The World's Greatest Guesser \(A Bayesian Statistical Analysis of Positive and Negative Correspondences between the Book of Mormon and The Maya\)](#)

## **How was Joseph Smith able to be specific and detailed as to the ornamentation and costly excess for the thrones, palaces, etc., without going overboard?**

Mosiah 11:8-11 describes in detail King Noah's extravagant lifestyle:

*And it came to pass that king Noah built many elegant and spacious buildings; and he ornamented them with fine work of wood, and of all manner of precious things, of gold, and of silver, and of iron, and of brass, and of ziff, and of copper;*

*And he also built him a spacious palace, and a throne in the midst thereof, all of which was of fine wood and was ornamented with gold and silver and with precious things.*

*And he also caused that his workmen should work all manner of fine work within the walls of the temple, of fine wood, and of copper, and of brass.*

*And the seats which were set apart for the high priests, which were above all the other seats, he did ornament with pure gold; and he caused a breastwork to be built before them, that they might rest their bodies and their arms upon while they should speak lying and vain words to his people.*

Bruce E. Dale and Brian Dale comment:

*Joseph Smith was an unsophisticated young man who had lived his life as a member of the working poor. How would he know about such extravagance? How would he know how to describe such ornate things without going overboard? Where would he have seen such things?*

*- [Bruce E. Dale and Brian Dale - Joseph Smith: The World's Greatest Guesser \(A Bayesian Statistical Analysis of Positive and Negative Correspondences between the Book of Mormon and The Maya\)](#)*

It would have been easy for Joseph, who was unfamiliar with extravagant lifestyles, to get this kind of description wrong, however it corresponds with what we know about ancient Mesoamerican Indian cultures. How did Joseph manage to get this just right?

See:

- [Bruce E. Dale and Brian Dale - Joseph Smith: The World's Greatest Guesser \(A Bayesian Statistical Analysis of Positive and Negative Correspondences between the Book of Mormon and The Maya\)](#)

## **Why do many of Friar Diego de Landa's observations of the Yucatan resemble the Book of Mormon?**

An early account of life in Mesoamerica is that of the Catholic Friar Diego de Landa recorded in 1566. No translation of his record was available to Joseph Smith but we see striking resemblances with the Book of Mormon.

One resemblance was that of baptism. From Jeff Lindsay:

*A major Mayan ritual was associated with being born again, purification, cleansing from sin, confession of sins to a priest, changing one's nature to be a better person, and gaining salvation in the afterlife - all very LDS and Christian concepts (at least early Christianity - some of these concepts have been lost in some parts of modern Christianity).*

*- [Jeff Lindsay - Friar Diego de Landa's Observations on the Yucatan - Possible Echoes from the Book of Mormon?](#)*

Is it just a coincidence that the Mayans would have a ritual so close to Christian baptism?

See:

- [Jeff Lindsay - Friar Diego de Landa's Observations on the Yucatan - Possible Echoes from the Book of Mormon?](#)

## **Why is there evidence of a great destruction in the land northward at the time of Christ's death?**

3 Nephi 8:5-18 we read of a great destruction at the time of Christ's death.

Evidence Central describes evidence from Mexican archaeologists of a major volcanic disaster in Central Mexico during the Spring of the early First Century A.D:

*Patricia Plunket and Gabriela Urunuela documented a significant eruption of the Popocatepetl volcano. During that event the site of Tetimpa was covered under a massive layer of volcanic ash. The cataclysm created a column of tephra 20 to 30 km high and is believed to have caused “an ecological disaster of unprecedented proportions.”*

*Plunket and Urunuela argue that this massive eruption was a leading cause of significant demographic changes in the Basin of Mexico resulting in the abandonment of most of the settlements in the southern region of the valley in which between 80–90% of the population became concentrated around the site of Teotihuacan. They estimate that as many as 20,000 people in the Basin of Mexico may have perished in the disaster, while as many as 50,000 relocated further north to the city.*

*The fires, smoke, lava flows, and other phenomena during the eruption had a similar calamitous effect on the eastern side of the mountains, where populations were reduced by “as much as 30%” and “became concentrated at Cholula and a few other settlements.” This disaster and the relocation and incorporation of as many as one-hundred thousand refugees into major centers like Cholula and Teotihuacan would likely have “accelerated social and ideological processes already underway” in Central Mexico significantly impacting the development of these Mesoamerican cultures.*

*The archaeologists characterize this Popocatepetl eruption as “one of the largest human catastrophes of the prehispanic period” and think that the trauma of the event may have even left distant echoes in Mesoamerican tales such as the Aztec “Legend of the Suns.”*

*- [Book of Mormon Central - Is there evidence for great destruction in the land northward at the death of Christ?](#)*

While it is not compelling proof of the Book of Mormon, what are the odds that we find a great destruction in the right time, and the place which fits the Book of Mormon location?

See:

- [Book of Mormon Central - Is there evidence for great destruction in the land northward at the death of Christ?](#)
- [Book of Mormon Central - What Caused the Darkness and Destruction in the 34th Year?](#)

## Why would Joseph Smith say there were swine in ancient America?

In Ether 9:17-18 we read about the house of Emer becoming exceedingly rich:

*Having all manner of fruit, and of grain, and of silks, and of fine linen, and of gold, and of silver, and of precious things;*

*And also all manner of cattle, of oxen, and cows, and of sheep, and of swine, and of goats, and also many other kinds of animals which were useful for the food of man.*

Wouldn't it have been risky for Joseph Smith to include swine if they have always been thought to be anachronistic?

However Wade E. Miller explains that it is quite fitting to include swine:

*Presently two distinct species of peccary live in Mesoamerica. These include the Collared Peccary (*Pecari tajacu*) and the White-lipped Peccary (*Tayassu pecari*), both of which can be found in the tropical regions near the Tuxtla Mountains of the Yucatan. The Jaredites as they presumably established settlements in Mesoamerica no doubt would have encountered them. They were hunted and eaten as early as Olmec times. Remains of these animals have been found associated with man for several thousands of years. There is a paleo-Indian carving of an extinct camel sacrum in the shape of a peccary. A Picture of this bone is shown by Evans. The bone of this extinct camel came from deposits in central Mexico, and shows ancient interaction between this extinct animal and Pre-columbian natives. Remains of Pre-Columbian peccary have been found finds in Loltún Cave in the Yucatan and in several other caves in the region associated with human artifacts. There is no question that peccaries ("wild pigs") and man shared this area since prehistoric times.*

[- Wade E. Miller - Animals in the Book of Mormon: Challenges and Perspectives](#)

How was Joseph Smith so knowledgeable about animals in ancient America?

See:

- [Wade E. Miller - Animals in the Book of Mormon: Challenges and Perspectives](#)

## Why would Joseph Smith take a chance on mentioning wine in the Book of Mormon?

The Book of Mormon mentions wine and grapes multiple times such as in Mosiah 11:15:

*And it came to pass that he planted vineyards round about in the land; and he built wine-presses, and made wine in abundance; and therefore he became a wine-bibber, and also his people.*

It has long been thought that wine did not exist in America until much later however John L. Sorenson notes:

*[The Spaniards] spoke of "vineyards," not planted in grapevines but in maguey plants, from which pulque, which they termed "wine," was manufactured. Half a dozen different types of "wine" made from fruits other than grapes were identified by the Spanish explorers...[another researcher also] reports the Opata of northern Mexico used a drink made from native grapes.*

*- [John L. Sorenson, "Zaputo," 335-336.](#)*

How would Joseph have known that? Why would he include this if it was thought to be anachronistic?

See:

- [FAIR Latter-day Saints - Wine and grapes in the Book of Mormon](#)
- [Book of Mormon Central - How Could the Book of Mormon Mention Wine?](#)

## **Is it coincidence that population size and fluctuations in the Book of Mormon resemble patterns of known historical populations?**

Noel B. Reynolds explains how the population sizes in the Book of Mormon are realistic:

*Thoughtful students of the Book of Mormon have sometimes questioned the seemingly large number of Nephites who descended from Lehi's original group. Critics have suggested on this basis that the Book of Mormon is demographically implausible.<sup>5</sup> But it has now been shown that the size and fluctuations in Nephite numbers resemble the patterns of known historical populations. James E. Smith, one of the chief architects of the widely used Cambridge model for estimating historical populations, refutes the critics' claim by comparing the Book of Mormon account with other ancient civilizations and by utilizing the Cambridge demographic model to demonstrate possible numbers of Nephites.<sup>6</sup> He notes in passing that "if there is any hallmark of ancient historical records, it is their strong tendency to present [what might intuitively seem to be] puzzling, unrealistic, and inconsistent population figures." Also, historical populations have generally experienced significant fluctuation and change similar to that depicted in the Book of Mormon.*

*Applying the Cambridge model with conservative assumptions about the growth of Nephite population, Smith calculated that the numbers in the text are on the high end of what would be predicted scientifically, but they remain plausible. For example, we know that "most of today's six million French Canadians descend from about five thousand immigrant pioneers of the seventeenth century," reflecting a much higher actual fertility rate than Smith assumes for his reconstruction of Nephite demographics. Relaxing any of Smith's perhaps unduly conservative assumptions would move the numbers closer to the middle of the expected range. Additionally, if the Nephites or Lamanites absorbed any unmentioned populations, the numbers cease to be at all problematic. Because the demographic data in the Book of Mormon is incomplete, a precise picture of population sizes is impossible; however, as Smith concludes, "some plausible demographic inferences can be made, and the picture of Nephite population history that emerges is a realistic one."*

*Joseph Smith went out on a limb when he included specific dates and population data in his translation of the Book of Mormon. Only in light of sophisticated analysis using tools far beyond the primitive Malthusian population projections of the early nineteenth century can modern readers appreciate how true to actual human experience such details in the Book of Mormon are*

*[- Noel B. Reynolds, "By Objective Measures: Old Wine in New Bottles," in Echoes and Evidences of the Book of Mormon](#)*

What are the odds that Joseph Smith would have created plausible population sizes like this?

See:

- [Noel B. Reynolds, "By Objective Measures: Old Wine in New Bottles,"](#)

## **How would Joseph Smith have found out about sheum?**

In Mosiah 9:9 we read:

*And we began to till the ground, yea, even with all manner of seeds, with seeds of corn, and of wheat, and of barley, and with neas, and with sheum, and with seeds of all manner of fruits; and we did begin to multiply and prosper in the land.*

What is sheum and where would Joseph Smith have learned this word? Matthew Roper answers:

*As it turns out sheum is a perfectly good Akkadian (ancient northern Mesopotamian) name for a grain dating to the third millennium B.C. This term, se um, (the s is pronounced sh in semitic languages) was a term by which these ancient*

*Near Eastern peoples referred to barley, although it could also be applied to other kinds of grains. Book of Mormon peoples seem to have applied this Old World name to some New World crop. Could Joseph Smith have derived this name from some nineteenth century book? Impossible. Akkadian could not be read until 1857, twenty-seven years after the Book of Mormon was published and thirteen years after the Prophet was dead. This raises an interesting question. If Joseph Smith was really the author of the Book of Mormon, how did he come up with the word sheum? How did he just happen to choose this particular name and just happen to use it in an agricultural context?*

[- Matthew Roper - Right on Target: Boomerang Hits and the Book of Mormon](#)

How would Joseph Smith be so knowledgeable about plants?

See:

- [Matthew Roper - Right on Target: Boomerang Hits and the Book of Mormon](#)

**Why would Joseph Smith include the use of cement in ancient America? If he was trying to win over a 19th century audience, wouldn't he have maintained the status quo?**

The Book of Mormon mentions the use of cement in Helaman 3 even though this was long thought to be anachronistic.

However this is perfectly fitting, as John W. Welch notes:

*No one in the nineteenth century could have known that cement, in fact, was extensively used in Mesoamerica beginning largely at this time, the middle of the first century B.C.*

*One of the most notable uses of cement is in the temple complex at Teotihuacan, north of present-day Mexico City. According to David S. Hyman, the structural use of cement appears suddenly in the archaeological record. And yet its earliest sample "is a fully developed product." The cement floor slabs at this site "were remarkably high in structural quality." Although exposed to the elements for nearly two thousand years, they still "exceed many present-day building code requirements." This is consistent with the Book of Mormon record, which treats this invention as an important new development involving great skill and becoming something of a sensation.*

*After this important technological breakthrough, cement was used at many sites in the Valley of Mexico and in the Maya regions of southern Mexico, Guatemala, and Honduras, which very well may have been close to the Nephite heartlands. Cement*



*was used in the later construction of buildings at such sites as Cerro de Texcotzingo, Tula, Palenque, Tikal, Copan, Uxmal, and Chichen Itza. Further, the use of cement is "a Maya habit, absent from non-Maya examples of corbelled vaulting from the southeastern United States to southern South America."*

*- [John Welch "A Steady Stream of Significant Recognitions" in Echoes and Evidences of the Book of Mormon](#)*

Why would Joseph Smith unnecessarily risk alienating his readers by mentioning cement?

See:

- [Jeff Lindsay - The Use of Cement in Ancient America](#)

## **Why would Joseph Smith go even further to say they were “exceedingly expert” in working cement?**

It is one thing for Joseph Smith to know that cement would be used by those in the Book of Mormon, but quite another to know they would also be exceedingly expert in it.

Bruce E. Dale and Brian Dale explain:

*Not only were the Maya able to build with cement/stucco, they were “exceedingly expert” in working it, as explicitly described in both the Book of Mormon and The Maya (“astonishing,” “elaborate,” “magnificent” are the words used by Coe). This is certainly specific and detailed. It also is clearly unusual. The dominant view of the white settlers regarding the Indians in the early 1800s was that they were savages. How did the author of the Book of Mormon correctly “guess” that these “savages” could work so expertly in cement?*

*- [Bruce E. Dale and Brian Dale - Joseph Smith: The World’s Greatest Guesser \(A Bayesian Statistical Analysis of Positive and Negative Correspondences between the Book of Mormon and The Maya\)](#)*

Why would Joseph Smith say this? How did he know so much about the ancestors of American Indians?

See:

- [Bruce E. Dale and Brian Dale - Joseph Smith: The World’s Greatest Guesser \(A Bayesian Statistical Analysis of Positive and Negative Correspondences between the Book of Mormon and The Maya\)](#)

## Why would Joseph Smith include silk in the Book of Mormon?

Silk is mentioned several times in the Book of Mormon such as in Alma 1:29:

*And now, because of the steadiness of the church they began to be exceedingly rich, having abundance of all things whatsoever they stood in need—an abundance of flocks and herds, and fatlings of every kind, and also abundance of grain, and of gold, and of silver, and of precious things, and abundance of silk and fine-twined linen, and all manner of good homely cloth.*

This was always seen as problematic as it [has long been held that silk was unknown outside of China until the late second century BC](#).

However recent discoveries have shown that silk was indeed available in Mesoamerica:

*Wild silk was used until recently in some areas of Oaxaca. The species that produced it appear to be *Gloveria psidii*, a moth, and *Eucheira socialis*, a butterfly, both of which are found in midaltitude, relatively dry forests. In Santa Catarina Estetla, a Mixtec community in the mountains west of the Valley of Oaxaca, a wild silk called, in Mixtec, *doko tachi* was gathered from oak trees and spun and woven into very durable sashes. Wild silk was also used to weave sashes in Santo Tomás Ouíeri and other communities in the Zapotec area of Yautepec; two types of wild silk were known in this area—one found on oaks, the other on madrona trees (*Arbutus*). A silk gathered from oaks is also remembered in San Miguel Cajonos, a Zapotec community in the Villa Alta district.*

*- Alejandro de Avila B., “Threads of Diversity: Oaxacan Textiles in Context,” 125.*

Not only was silk available in Mesoamerica but other materials which could also be described as silk were also available too. Why would Joseph Smith take such a chance on using a material thought to be anachronistic?

See:

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: Silk](#)

## Do descriptions of the gold plates just coincidentally match materials used in ancient America?

If Joseph Smith had created the gold plates by himself it might have been easy for him to have created them using materials which are out of place in ancient America. It also could have been easy for him to have created them using materials which would not be conducive to lasting for centuries or being engraved on.

However Joseph seems to have avoided these issues based on the witness statements which suggest the plates were made of the alloy tumbaga. This fits well all the criteria that the plates would need:

- Native to Mesoamerica
- Would last long enough if created centuries earlier
- Conducive to being engraven on

If the plates were made of tumbaga it would explain why witness statements said they were:

- of the appearance of gold
- a mixture of gold and copper
- resembled a stone of a greenish caste

What are the odds that Joseph would not make any of these easy errors when creating the plates?

See:

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidence: The Composition of the Gold Plates](#)

## **If it was a fraud, would we expect the work of Joseph Smith to be one of the most translated and published books ever written?**

As of October 2020 the church has published 192 million copies of the Book of Mormon in 112 languages. This makes it the most published work from the western hemisphere. It is the [6th most distributed book of all time and 9th most translated.](#)

What was so special about Joseph Smith that he could write such a popular book?

See:

- [Curtis Newbold - The World's 18 Most Widely Read Books](#)
- [The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints - Book of Mormon Reaches 150 Million Copies](#)

## **How could Joseph Smith manage to write the fourth most influential book in America?**

As reported by LDS Living:

*The Book of Mormon was highlighted Wednesday as one of America's treasured tomes at the Library of Congress, which displayed several rare editions as well as the 1829 copyright record filed by church founder Joseph Smith. . . .*

*The Book of Mormon was chosen by the public as the fourth most influential piece of American literature in an online vote earlier this year.*

*"It's been a book that's been extremely influential in my life. It's interesting to hear it referred to as the fourth most influential book in American literature," said Elder D. Todd Christofferson, a member of the LDS Church's Quorum of the Twelve Apostles who earlier Wednesday became the first of the faith's apostles to open a Senate session with a prayer.*

*- [LDS Living - Public Selects Book of Mormon as Fourth Most Influential Book in America](#)*

Why would a book by a 23-year old farm boy be so influential?

See:

- [LDS Living - Public Selects Book of Mormon as Fourth Most Influential Book in America](#)

## **If Joseph Smith wrote the Book of Mormon himself, would we expect it to be so spiritually impactful for millions of people?**

What are the odds that a 23-year-old farm boy with limited education would create a book that would then be studied by millions of people for hundreds of years afterwards? How could Joseph create a book that is the basis of people's faith all around the world?

We would reasonably expect that if Joseph Smith wrote the Book of Mormon himself he probably wouldn't have contributed much to faith and Christianity yet we see the complete opposite.

Doctrine and Covenants 135 summarizes this point:

*Joseph Smith, the Prophet and Seer of the Lord, has done more, save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived in it. In the short space of twenty years, he has brought forth the Book of Mormon, which he translated by the gift and power of God, and has been the means of publishing it on two continents; has sent the fulness of the everlasting gospel, which it contained, to the four quarters of the earth; has brought forth the revelations and commandments which compose this book of Doctrine and Covenants, and many*

*other wise documents and instructions for the benefit of the children of men; gathered many thousands of the Latter-day Saints, founded a great city, and left a fame and name that cannot be slain. He lived great, and he died great in the eyes of God and his people; and like most of the Lord's anointed in ancient times, has sealed his mission and his works with his own blood;*

Why was Joseph Smith unique in this respect? What was so special about Joseph?

See:

- [Witnesses of the Book of Mormon](#)

## **What are we to make of all the people who sincerely claim a witness from the Holy Ghost that the Book of Mormon is true?**

At the end of the Book of Mormon, Moroni invites the reader to pray and ask God if the book is true. Moroni 10:3-5 reads:

*Behold, I would exhort you that when ye shall read these things, if it be wisdom in God that ye should read them, that ye would remember how merciful the Lord hath been unto the children of men, from the creation of Adam even down until the time that ye shall receive these things, and ponder it in your hearts.*

*And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost.*

*And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things.*

Since the restoration of the church, millions of Latter-day Saints have claimed to pray and feel a witness of the truth by the power of the Holy Ghost. Why think they are all mistaken?

See:

- [The Book of Mormon - Moroni 10](#)

## How do we explain the fulfilled prophecies written in the Old Testament? Were they all just lucky despite the outrageous odds?

The Old Testament contains many prophecies regarding the promised Messiah. The actual number of prophecies is debatable and is [argued to be in the hundreds](#):

*Regarding the specific number of promises about the Messiah, there is a wide divergence of opinion. Rabbinical writings refer to 456 separate Old Testament passages used to refer to the Messiah and messianic times (Edersheim, 710-41). One Christian scholar lists 127 personal messianic prophecies (Payne, 667-68). The differences are due to the way in which the New Testament refers to the Old Testament promises. There are direct messianic prophecies (e.g., Micah 5:2; Zech. 9:9); typical messianic prophecies, utilizing an immediate referent in the prophet's day which pointed to the ultimate referent (e.g., the sacrificial levitical system); and applications of Old Testament concepts to the Messiah (e.g., the reference Matthew 2:23 makes to the prophets saying: "He will be called a Nazarene.") If we limit ourselves to the direct messianic prophecies just mentioned, a conservative number would be around 65*

*- [William Varner, The Messiah: Revealed, Rejected, Received \(Bloomington, Ind.: Author House, 2004\)](#).*

Example prophecies are:

He would be preceded by a messenger ([Malachi 3:1](#))

*Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts.*

He would ride into Jerusalem on a donkey ([Zechariah 9:9](#))

*Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.*

How did Jesus fulfill these prophecies when the [odds are outrageous](#)?

See:

- [Mary Fairchild - Old Testament Prophecies of Jesus](#)

## **Weren't the New Testament accounts recorded much sooner than many other ancient historical events (which are assumed to be accurate)?**

The earliest manuscripts of the New Testament were recorded [within the century](#) and much sooner than many other works believed to be historically accurate. For example:

- Aristotle - 1,400 years after the fact
- Plato - 1,200 years after the fact
- Pliny the younger - 750 years after the fact

Why are these works believed to be accurate but not the New Testament? For example, why believe the accounts of Alexander the Great who lived in the 1st century AD when the [earliest surviving manuscript comes from the 9th century AD?](#)

See:

- [JP Moreland - The Historicity of the New Testament](#)

## **Why hasn't Dr Habermas found any good responses to the minimal facts argument after 35 years?**

Dr Gary Habermas has been a defender of the minimal facts argument for decades. He comments:

*My Minimal Facts Argument in favor of Jesus' resurrection was developed many years ago while writing my PhD dissertation. It has two requirements for the historical facts that are used: each must be confirmed by several strong and independent arguments, plus the vast majority of even critical scholars must recognize the occurrence's historical nature. The critical scholars can be liberal, skeptical, agnostic, or even atheist, as long as they are specialists in a relevant field of study, such as New Testament. Of these two requirements, it is important to recognize that the initial standard concerning strong evidential back-up is by far the most crucial.*

*So why do even critical scholars admit or allow these individual historical facts? The answer is that each one is virtually undeniable. Most of the half-dozen Minimal Facts typically used are confirmed by ten or more historical considerations each. That is simply an amazing foundation, especially for events that occurred in the First Century AD!*

*- [Gary Habermas - Minimal Facts on the Resurrection that Even Skeptics Accept](#)*

Dr Habermas lists the following as minimal facts:

1. *that Jesus died by crucifixion;*
2. *that very soon afterwards, his followers had real experiences that they thought were actual appearances of the risen Jesus;*
3. *that their lives were transformed as a result, even to the point of being willing to die specifically for their faith in the resurrection message;*
4. *that these things were taught very early, soon after the crucifixion;*
5. *that James, Jesus' unbelieving brother, became a Christian due to his own experience that he thought was the resurrected Christ; and*
6. *that the Christian persecutor Paul (formerly Saul of Tarsus) also became a believer after a similar experience.*

What is the best explanation for these minimal facts? Why has Dr Habermas not found any response to this argument [after 35 years?](#)

See:

- [Gary Habermas - Minimal Facts on the Resurrection that Even Skeptics Accept](#)

## **Isn't the New Testament too embarrassing (for the disciples) to be false?**

The criterion of embarrassment is a form of analysis in which an account embarrassing to the author is presumed to be true because the author would have no reason to create an embarrassing account about themselves.

Norman L. Geisler and Frank Turek explain how this relates to the New Testament:

*One of the ways historians can tell whether an author is telling the truth is to test what he says by "the principle of embarrassment." This principle assumes that any details embarrassing to the author are probably true. Why? Because the tendency of most authors is to leave out anything that makes them look bad. How does the New Testament measure up to the principle of embarrassment? Let's put it this way: If you and your friends were concocting a story that you wanted to pass off as the truth, would you make yourselves look like dim-witted, uncaring, rebuked, doubting cowards? Of course not. But that's exactly what we find in the New Testament.*

*If you were a New Testament writer, would you include these embarrassing details if you were making up a story? Would you write that one of your primary leaders was called "Satan" by Jesus, denied the Lord three times, hid during the crucifixion, and was later corrected on a theological issue? Would you depict yourselves as uncaring, bumbling cowards, and the women—whose testimony was not even admissible in court—as the brave ones who stood by Jesus and later discovered the*



*empty tomb? Would you admit that some of you (the eleven remaining disciples) doubted the very Son of God after he had proven himself risen to all of you? Of course not.*

*In short, we don't have enough faith to believe that the New Testament writers included all of those embarrassing details in a made-up story. The best explanation is that they were really telling the truth—warts and all.*

*- [Norman L. Geisler and Frank Turek - 10 Things You Should Know about the Reliability of the New Testament Writers](#)*

Why would the disciples write things that would only embarrass them?

See:

- [Norman L. Geisler and Frank Turek - 10 Things You Should Know about the Reliability of the New Testament Writers](#)

## **Why would the disciples write embarrassing things about Jesus?**

Norman L. Geisler and Frank Turek explain:

*The New Testament writers are also honest about Jesus. Not only do they record self-incriminating details about themselves, they also record embarrassing details about their leader, Jesus, that seem to place him in a bad light. Jesus is not believed by his own brothers (John 7:5), is thought to be a deceiver (John 7:12), is deserted by many of his followers (John 6:66), turns off “Jews who had believed in him” (John 8:30-31) to the point that they want to stone him (v. 59), and is called a “drunkard” (Matt. 11:19), a “madman” (John 10:20), and “demon-possessed” (Mark 3:22; John 7:20, 8:48).*

*This is certainly not a list of events and qualities the New Testament writers would choose if they were trying to depict Jesus as the perfect, sinless God-man. Nor are these qualities congruent with the Jewish expectation that the Messiah would come to free them from political oppression.*

*In addition to embarrassing details, there are several difficult sayings attributed to Jesus that the New Testament writers would not have included if they were making up a story about Jesus being God. Again, the best explanation is that the New Testament writers were not playing fast and loose with the facts but were extremely accurate in recording exactly what Jesus said and did.*

*- [Norman L. Geisler and Frank Turek - 10 Things You Should Know about the Reliability of the New Testament Writers](#)*

Wouldn't the disciples want to show Jesus in the best light? Doesn't this count as evidence for the New Testament?

See:

- [Norman L. Geisler and Frank Turek - 10 Things You Should Know about the Reliability of the New Testament Writers](#)

## **What reason do we have to disbelieve the 30+ miracles that Jesus performed?**

The New Testament records 37 miracles which Jesus performed throughout his ministry such as healing a leper in Matthew 8:1-4

*When he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him.*

*And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.*

*And Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.*

*And Jesus saith unto him, See thou tell no man; but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.*

Why would there have been such a huge growth in the early Christian church if the stories of Jesus were untrue?

See:

- [Book of Mormon Central - Why Did Christ Perform Miracles?](#)

## **Isn't it true that "One of the most certain facts of history is that Jesus was crucified on orders of the Roman prefect of Judea, Pontius Pilate"?**

The crucifixion of Jesus at the order of Pontius Pilate has been described as the most sure fact in history by notable atheists and skeptics:

Gerd Lüdemann (atheistic NT professor at Göttingen):

*“Jesus’ death as a consequence of crucifixion is indisputable.”*

- Gerd Lüdemann, *The Resurrection of Jesus: History, Experience, Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), p. 50.

John-Dominic Crossan (scholar in the skeptic Jesus Seminar):

*“That [Jesus] was crucified is as sure as anything historical can ever be, since both Josephus and Tacitus... agree with the Christian accounts on at least that basic fact.”*

- John-Dominic Crossan, *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography* (Harper One, 1995), 145.

Bart Ehrman (atheistic NT scholar):

*“One of the most certain facts of history is that Jesus was crucified on orders of the Roman prefect of Judea, Pontius Pilate.”*

- Bart Ehrman, *The Historical Jesus: Lecture Transcript and Course Guidebook, Part 2 of 2* (Chantilly, VA: The Teaching Company, 2000), 162.

If these facts are so sure, what other facts related to Jesus are equally as sure?

See:

- [Evidence Unseen - Execution of Jesus](#)

## **Why would Joseph Smith claim to have been visited by so many angels?**

Joseph Smith claimed to have been visited by over 20 angels. Why so many? Who else has made such a claim?

[God the Father and Jesus in the grove](#), [Moroni’s first visit at Joseph’s home](#), [Moroni’s second visit at Joseph’s home](#), [Moroni’s third visit at Joseph’s home](#), [Moroni’s fourth visit outside in the field](#), [yearly visits from Moroni](#), [Moroni giving back the Urim and Thummim](#), [Adam, Abraham, Seth, Enoch, Isaac, Jacob, Raphael, Gabriel \(Noah\), Nephi, Mormon, Alma, the Three Nephites, John the Beloved](#), and [a heavenly messenger](#).

Isn’t each claimed visitation just one more opportunity to be exposed?

See:

- [LDS Living - 24 Angels Who Visited Joseph Smith](#)

## Why would Joseph Smith claim to have heard so many voices of angels?

Not only did Joseph Smith claim to be visited by angels but he also claimed to have heard the voices of angels.

Doctrine and Covenants 128:20-21 reads:

*And again, what do we hear? Glad tidings from Cumorah! Moroni, an angel from heaven, declaring the fulfilment of the prophets—the book to be revealed. A voice of the Lord in the wilderness of Fayette, Seneca county, declaring the three witnesses to bear record of the book! The voice of Michael on the banks of the Susquehanna, detecting the devil when he appeared as an angel of light! The voice of Peter, James, and John in the wilderness between Harmony, Susquehanna county, and Colesville, Broome county, on the Susquehanna river, declaring themselves as possessing the keys of the kingdom, and of the dispensation of the fulness of times!*

*And again, the voice of God in the chamber of old Father Whitmer, in Fayette, Seneca county, and at sundry times, and in divers places through all the travels and tribulations of this Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints! And the voice of Michael, the archangel; the voice of Gabriel, and of Raphael, and of divers angels, from Michael or Adam down to the present time, all declaring their dispensation, their rights, their keys, their honors, their majesty and glory, and the power of their priesthood; giving line upon line, precept upon precept; here a little, and there a little; giving us consolation by holding forth that which is to come, confirming our hope!*

What would give Joseph Smith the confidence to claim this if it wasn't true?

See:

- [The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints - Doctrine and Covenants 128](#)

## How about Joseph Smith's visions experienced with other people?

It is one thing to claim to have seen angels alone, but quite another to claim to have seen angels with others.

Joseph Smith and others claimed to experience visions together which massively increases the risk of being exposed as a fraud. These visions include: [the angel with the Book of Mormon – with Oliver Cowdery, Martin Harris and David Whitmer](#), [John the Baptist – with Oliver Cowdery](#), [Peter, James and John – with Oliver Cowdery](#), [Jesus at the Kirtland Temple – with Oliver Cowdery](#), [Moses at the Kirtland Temple – with Oliver Cowdery](#), [Elias at the Kirtland Temple – with Oliver Cowdery](#), [Elijah at the Kirtland Temple – with Oliver Cowdery](#), [Adam and Eve – with Oliver Cowdery and Zebedee Coltrin](#), [the vision of the degrees of glory – with Sidney Rigdon](#), [the plans for the Kirtland temple – with Sidney Rigdon and Frederick G. Williams](#), [John the Beloved – with Oliver Cowdery and others](#), [a heavenly vision of the Savior - with the School of the Prophets](#), and [Jesus – with Zebedee Coltrin and others](#).

Joseph Fielding McConkie remarks:

*Many a pretender to the prophetic office has claimed to entertain angels or to have spoken with God, but who other than Joseph Smith introduced his angels to others? Joseph Smith introduced Moroni to Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris (Testimony of the 3 Witnesses) He was never alone when priesthood or keys were restored.... He and Sydney Rigdon received the revelation on the degrees of glory together. Together they saw legions of angels, along with the Father and the Son (see D&C 76:21-23). Oliver Cowdery was with Joseph Smith when John the Baptist came to restore the Aaronic Priesthood, and when Peter, James, and John came to restore the Melchizedek Priesthood. Oliver was also with Joseph Smith when Christ came to accept the dedication of the Kirtland Temple, and Moses, Elias, and Elijah restored their keys, powers, and authorities (D&C 110).*

*- [Joseph Fielding McConkie, Sons and Daughters of God: The Loss and Restoration of Our Divine Inheritance \(Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, 1994\), 194–195. ISBN 0884949362](#)*

How do you fool people into thinking they saw a vision with you? Why did none of these witnesses to the visions ever deny their testimony?

See:

- [Daniel Peterson - Joseph Smith's account of the Restoration is difficult to counter](#)

## How do we account for the visions experienced by others, such as Heber C. Kimball and Orson Hyde's vision of the infernal world?

Not only did Joseph Smith claim to have visions but other Latter-day Saints reported having them too such as [Newel Knight's vision of the Savior](#), and Heber C. Kimball and Orson Hyde's 1837 Vision of the Infernal World.

Christopher James Blythe reports:

*Most Latter-day Saints who are familiar with this experience will know the latest account published in Orson F. Whitney's Life of Heber C. Kimball in 1888. According to that account, on June 30, 1837, Apostles Heber C. Kimball and Orson Hyde were awakened when Isaac Russell charged into their room shouting, "I want you should get up and pray for me that I may be delivered from the evil spirits that are tormenting me to such a degree that I feel I cannot live long, unless I obtain relief." The two laid their hands on his head to give him a blessing, when Heber C. Kimball himself was "struck with great force by some invisible power; and fell senseless on the floor." Hyde and Willard Richards then laid their hands on Heber's head, and he was revived enough to kneel for a prayer and then moved to the bed. It was then that both Kimball and Hyde began to witness that "a vision was opened to our minds, and we could distinctly see the evil spirits, who foamed and gnashed their teeth at us." The experience was timed by Willard Richards, who noted that they were in vision for ninety minutes*

*- [Christopher James Blythe - Heber C. Kimball and Orson Hyde's 1837 Vision of the Infernal World](#)*

Why would anyone fake a vision for ninety minutes?

See:

- [Christopher James Blythe - Heber C. Kimball and Orson Hyde's 1837 Vision of the Infernal World](#)

## **Why did witnesses remark that Sidney Rigdon was exhausted after seeing the vision of D&C 76 whereas Joseph Smith wasn't? Was it just to make the experience sound more believable?**

By the time Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon received the vision of D&C 76, Joseph had already seen and experienced multiple visions and experiences (and in many of these cases he reported being exhausted).

Philo Dibble recorded the following:

*Joseph sat firmly and calmly all the time in the midst of a magnificent glory, but Sidney sat limp and pale, apparently as limber as a rag, observing which, Joseph remarked, smilingly, 'Sidney is not used to it as I am.'*

[- Elder Philo Dibble, "Recollections of the Prophet Joseph Smith," Juvenile Instructor 27, no. 10 \(1892\): 304](#)

Why was Sidney limp and pale but Joseph sat firmly? Why would Philo Dibble say this if the vision was fake?

See:

- [Book of Mormon Central - Why Are People Exhausted by Powerful Spiritual Experiences?](#)

## **How do we explain visions seen by hundreds of people?**

The Kirtland Temple dedication on 27th of March, 1836 was witnessed by nearly 1,000 people in attendance.

Joseph Smith recorded:

*George A. Smith arose and began to prophesy, when a noise was heard like the sound of a rushing mighty wind, which filled the Temple, and all the congregation simultaneously arose, being moved upon by an invisible power; many began to speak in tongues and prophesy; others saw glorious visions; and I beheld the Temple was filled with angels, which fact I declared to the congregation. The people of the neighborhood came running together (hearing an unusual sound within, and seeing a bright light like a pillar of fire resting upon the Temple), and were astonished at what was taking place"*

[- History of the Church, 2:428](#)

Why did potentially 1,000 people all experience visions? Why is Joseph's record of the event [characteristically straightforward, lacking hyperbole, affirming matter-of-factly that the promised blessings were obtained?](#)

See:

- [FAIR Latter-day Saints - Witnesses of Angels](#)
- [Book of Mormon Central - Why Is the “Pentecostal” Season in Kirtland Believable?](#)

## **Why think that none of the experiences of the three Nephites are genuine?**

In 3 Nephi 28 we read:

*And when he had spoken unto them, he turned himself unto the three, and said unto them: What will ye that I should do unto you, when I am gone unto the Father?*

*And they sorrowed in their hearts, for they durst not speak unto him the thing which they desired.*

*And he said unto them: Behold, I know your thoughts, and ye have desired the thing which John, my beloved, who was with me in my ministry, before that I was lifted up by the Jews, desired of me.*

*Therefore, more blessed are ye, for ye shall never taste of death; but ye shall live to behold all the doings of the Father unto the children of men, even until all things shall be fulfilled according to the will of the Father, when I shall come in my glory with the powers of heaven.*

If this is a true account then we might expect many reported experiences of the three Nephites. [D. L. Ashliman](#) reports multiple stories from people who have claimed to experience them.

Are each of these stories fabricated or mistaken?

See:

- [D. L. Ashliman - The Three Nephites](#)



## How did Joseph Smith cast out devils?

B. H. Roberts records the first miracle by Joseph Smith:

*In the month of April, 1830, Joseph Smith was visiting at the house of a Mr. Joseph Knight, at Colesville, Broome County, New York. This gentleman had rendered the prophet some timely assistance while translating the Book of Mormon, and he was anxious that Mr. Knight and his family should receive the truth. While in Mr. Knight's neighborhood the prophet held a number of meetings. Among those who attended regularly was Newel Knight, son of Joseph Knight. He and the prophet had many serious conversations on the subject of man's salvation. In the meetings held the people prayed much, and in one of the aforesaid conversations with the prophet, Newel Knight promised that he would pray publicly. When the time came, however, his heart failed him, and he refused, saying that he would wait until he got into the woods by himself. The next morning when he attempted to pray in the woods, he was over-whelmed with a sense of having neglected his duty the evening before, in not praying in the presence of others. He began to feel uneasy and continued to grow worse both in body and mind, until upon reaching home his appearance was such as to alarm his wife. He sent for the prophet, who, when he came found Newel in a sad condition and suffering greatly. His visage and limbs were distorted and twisted in every shape imaginable. At last he was caught up off the floor and tossed about most fearfully. The neighbors hearing of his condition came running in. After he had suffered for a time the prophet succeeded in getting him by the hand, when Newel immediately spoke to him, saying he knew he was possessed of the devil, and that the prophet had power to cast him out. "If you know I can, it shall be, done," replied the prophet; and then almost unconsciously he rebuked Satan and commanded him to depart from the man. Immediately Newel's contortions stopped, and he spoke out and said he saw the devil leave him and vanish from sight.*

- [B.H. Roberts - The Testimony of Miracles - The Evidence of Fulfilled Promises](#)

Why did Newel Knight [defend this story even in court?](#)

See:

- [B.H. Roberts - The Testimony of Miracles - The Evidence of Fulfilled Promises](#)
- [FAIR Latter-day Saints - Joseph Smith healings and miracles](#)

## Why did the early Saints believe Joseph Smith was a seer?

How do we account for Joseph Smith [knowing his parents were coming \(when within three-quarters of a mile from his house\), having an impression to come out of the well and meet Emma not far from his house, knowing the exact time David Whitmer would arrive,](#)

[knowing the Whitneys prayed for Joseph to come to Kirtland](#), [being able to see the safety of the plates using the Urim and Thummim](#), [knowing Bishop Whitney's travel the next day](#), [seeing those who died in Zion's Camp](#), [knowing the Lord would send him deliverance from debt](#), [knowing a sermon would be preached in Jackson county before the close of 1838](#), [knowing a Quaker man was an adulterer](#), [seeing the plot of the city of Kirtland in a vision](#), [having the plan of the Kirtland temple given by the Lord](#), [seeing in vision the pattern of the Nauvoo temple](#), and [knowing the Lord would put it into the heart of somebody to send Joseph money for Zion's camp](#)?

Keith Perkins reports one experience of David Whitmer:

*David was to witness even more miracles that would convince him of the divinity of the work of Joseph Smith. Driving to Harmony—a three-day trip—he was astonished to find the Prophet and Oliver Cowdery walking out to meet him as though they knew his travel schedule. David asked how they had known the exact time of his arrival. David recalled, “Oliver told me that Joseph had informed him when I started from home, where I stopped the first night, how I read the sign at the tavern, where I stopped the second night, etc., and that I would be there that day before dinner.” This was only one of many such incidents when the Prophet demonstrated to the Saints that he truly was a seer.*

- [Keith W. Perkins - True to the Book of Mormon - The Whitmers](#)

How would Joseph have been able to convince so many that he was a seer?

See:

- [Keith W. Perkins - True to the Book of Mormon - The Whitmers](#)

## How did Joseph Smith manage to heal the sick?

Joseph Smith performed many miracles of healing throughout his life such as [healing the sick in Nauvoo](#), [healing Joseph Smith's father](#), [healing Angeline Works](#) and [the miracle reported by Fanny Stenhouse after her apostasy from the Church](#)

Keith Perkins reports another miracle healing experienced in 1831:

*In that year John and Elsa also went to Kirtland to see the Prophet and to find out more about the new religion. During the visit a healing occurred which caused a great stir in the area. Elsa Johnson had been afflicted for many years with a rheumatic arm. She experienced so much pain and difficulty in movement that for two years she hadn't been able to raise her hand to her head. As the Johnsons and others from the Hiram area visited with Joseph Smith in the Newel K. Whitney home, they discussed the gifts of the Spirit as held in the early Church. Someone*

*asked whether God had given power to men today to heal people like Elsa Johnson. After the conversation had turned to another subject, the Prophet walked up to Elsa and said, “Woman, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ I command thee to be whole,” and then he walked out of the room. Elsa was instantly healed, and the next day she did her washing “without difficulty or pain.” (See History of the Church, 1:215–16.) This experience was instrumental in the conversion of a number of people, including Father and Mother Johnson (as they were affectionately called by the Saints), and their children John, Jr., and Marinda.*

*- [Keith Perkins - A House Divided: The John Johnson Family](#)*

Was this experience just a coincidence? Why would Elsa [immediately stretch out her arm straight, remarking it's as well as the other?](#) How was Joseph able to do these things if it were not by Christ's priesthood?

See:

- [Keith Perkins - A House Divided: The John Johnson Family](#)
- [FAIR Latter-day Saints - Joseph Smith healings and miracles](#)

## **How do we account for the miracles experienced or performed by the early Saints?**

In addition to the miracles of Joseph Smith, the early Latter-day Saints also experienced many miracles such as [Sidney Gilbert not being shot](#), [David Whitmer's fields being plowed](#), [J. and Margaret Shamp's deaf daughter being healed](#), [Amanda Barnes saving her son](#), [Mary Fielding Smith's ox being healed](#), [Don Carlos and George A. Smith healing the sick](#), [Elizabeth Crook and the dried meat](#), [Ephraim Hanks's miracles](#), [Ella Jensen called back from the dead](#), [Henry Ballard and the Newbury Weekly News](#), [Louisa Mellor Clark's pie](#), [the miracle of the quail](#), [Sophronia Stoddard healing](#), [Lucy Mack Smith being cured of blindness](#), [Newel K. Whitney healing Joseph after being poisoned](#), [Joseph Smith's most bitter enemies not recognizing him or his companions in Colesville](#) and [Wilford Woodruff healing twin children](#).

FAIR Latter-day Saints notes:

*If turning water to blood could not convince Pharaoh to let the Israelites leave, a few miraculous events could not be enough to change anyone's beliefs, especially the beliefs of modern-day skeptics.*

*Nevertheless, the plagues of Egypt bear a strong witness, even today, of Moses' calling as a prophet. And in the same way, miracles of the early period of the Church serve as a testimony to the divine calling of Joseph Smith, and his mission to bring about a restoration of many of the sacred truths and doctrines lost from the early Christian church.*

- [FAIR Latter-day Saints - Miraculous Events in Early Church History](#)

Are all of these claimed miracles just coincidences?

See:

- [FAIR Latter-day Saints - Miraculous Events in Early Church History](#)

**Was it luck that Dr. Smith (who saved Joseph Smith's leg and potentially his life) was likely the only physician in the United States in 1813 who had the expertise to successfully deal with Joseph's bone disease?**

In 1813, Joseph Smith underwent a medical procedure on his leg after contracting typhoid. Vivian M. Adams summarizes:

*When the 1812–13 typhoid epidemic swept through New England, the Joseph Smith Sr. family, then living in Lebanon, New Hampshire, was seriously affected. The disease, which took some 6,000 lives, struck each of their seven children. The fever left young Joseph with osteomyelitis, an infection of the bone in his left leg between the knee and ankle—a condition that threatened his life.<sup>1</sup> According to the medical practice of the time, amputation was the only recourse. However, the faith and determination of Joseph's parents, the skill of Dr. Nathan Smith, and the courage and faith of the boy Joseph combined to not only save his leg but also preserve his physical ability to fulfill his appointed mission.*

- [Vivian M. Adams - Joseph Smith's Boyhood Surgery](#)

While this story may not seem unique, Michael R. Ash explains one important fact:

*According to the research of Dr. LeRoy Wirthlin, a Dr. Nathan Smith (no relation to Joseph) was the surgeon who performed Joseph's operation. Dr. Smith was the only physician in the United States in 1813 who had the expertise to successfully deal with osteomyelitis, a disorder that causes long segments of the bony shaft to die and then become encased by new bone growing over the dead layer. If Joseph Smith had lived anywhere else or perhaps a few decades earlier or later, he would have lost his leg and possibly his life.*

- [Michael R. Ash - Faith and Reason 4: A Miracle Operation](#)

What were the odds that Joseph Smith was able to get the medication attention from the only person in America who could help him?

See:

- [Michael R. Ash - Faith and Reason 4: A Miracle Operation](#)

## **Why would someone try to assassinate Joseph Smith shortly before the first vision?**

Lucy Mack Smith recounted an experience shortly before Joseph Smith's first vision:

*At the age of fourteen an incident occurred which alarmed us much, as we knew not the cause of it. Joseph being a remarkably quiet, well-disposed child, we did not suspect that anyone had aught against him. He was out on an errand one evening about twilight. When he was returning through the dooryard, a gun was fired across his pathway with evident intention of killing him. He sprang to the door, threw it open, and fell upon the floor with fright. We went in search of the person who fired the gun, but found no trace of him until the next morning when we found his tracks under a wagon where he lay when he fired. We found the balls that were discharged from his piece the next day in the head and neck of a cow that stood opposite the wagon in a dark corner, but we never found out the man, nor ever suspected the cause of the act.*

- [The Joseph Smith Papers - Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1845](#)

If Joseph Smith was “remarkably quiet and a well-disposed child”, why would someone try to shoot him at such an early age?

See:

- [The Joseph Smith Papers - Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1845](#)

## **If Joseph Smith knew the Book of Mormon was a fraud, why did he and Hyrum in their greatest (and last) hour of need find solace in a book which would brand them as imposters and charlatans until the end of time?**

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland questions Joseph and Hyrum's motive in reading from the Book of Mormon in Carthage jail:

*When Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum started for Carthage to face what they knew would be an imminent martyrdom, Hyrum read these words to comfort the heart of his brother:*

*“Thou hast been faithful; wherefore ... thou shalt be made strong, even unto the sitting down in the place which I have prepared in the mansions of my Father.*

*“And now I, Moroni, bid farewell ... until we shall meet before the judgment-seat of Christ.”*

*A few short verses from the 12th chapter of Ether in the Book of Mormon. Before closing the book, Hyrum turned down the corner of the page from which he had read, marking it as part of the everlasting testimony for which these two brothers were about to die. I hold in my hand that book, the very copy from which Hyrum read, the same corner of the page turned down, still visible. Later, when actually incarcerated in the jail, Joseph the Prophet turned to the guards who held him captive and bore a powerful testimony of the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon. Shortly thereafter pistol and ball would take the lives of these two testators.*

*As one of a thousand elements of my own testimony of the divinity of the Book of Mormon, I submit this as yet one more evidence of its truthfulness. In this their greatest—and last—hour of need, I ask you: would these men blaspheme before God by continuing to fix their lives, their honor, and their own search for eternal salvation on a book (and by implication a church and a ministry) they had fictitiously created out of whole cloth?*

*Never mind that their wives are about to be widows and their children fatherless. Never mind that their little band of followers will yet be “houseless, friendless and homeless” and that their children will leave footprints of blood across frozen rivers and an untamed prairie floor. Never mind that legions will die and other legions live declaring in the four quarters of this earth that they know the Book of Mormon and the Church which espouses it to be true. Disregard all of that, and tell me whether in this hour of death these two men would enter the presence of their Eternal Judge quoting from and finding solace in a book which, if not the very word of God, would brand them as imposters and charlatans until the end of time? They would not do that! They were willing to die rather than deny the divine origin and the eternal truthfulness of the Book of Mormon.*

*- [Elder Jeffrey R. Holland - Safety for the Soul](#)*

Wouldn't it have been odd for Joseph and Hyrum to find solace by reading the Book of Mormon in their last hours if they knew it was a fraud?

See:

- [Elder Jeffrey R. Holland - Safety for the Soul](#)

## **What were the odds that Joseph Smith's name would be had for good and evil among all nations, kindreds, and tongues, and that it should be both good and evil spoken of among all people?**

What was so special about Joseph Smith that his name is had for good and evil around the world today?

Michael R. Ash comments:

*On the twenty-first of September, 1823, after retiring to bed, Joseph Smith prayed that he might know his standing before God. While praying, a light appeared in his room, followed by a personage clothed in white. The messenger identified himself as Moroni and said that God had a work for Joseph, that his name would be had for good and evil among all nations, kindreds, and tongues, and that it should be both good and evil spoken of among all people (Joseph Smith History 1:32-33).*

*This prophecy was delivered seven years before the Book of Mormon was published and the Church was organized. Since that time, church membership has doubled every fifteen years and now has over fifteen million members. It is the fourth largest Christian religion in the United States, with over 80,000 missionaries. This is quite an achievement for a religion which the critics of Joseph Smith's day predicted would fizzle out after the Prophet's death.*

- [Michael R. Ash - Faith and Reason 5: Joseph Smith's Name Known Worldwide](#)

Why would Joseph Smith take a chance on mentioning this prophecy? What were the odds it would be fulfilled?

See:

- [Michael R. Ash - Faith and Reason 5: Joseph Smith's Name Known Worldwide](#)

## **What were the odds that the church would fill the earth?**

Wilford Woodruff recounted when Joseph Smith prophesied during a priesthood meeting at Kirtland, Ohio, in April 1834:

*Brethren, I have been very much edified and instructed in your testimonies here tonight, but I want to say to you before the Lord, that you know no more concerning the destinies of this Church and kingdom than a babe upon its mother's lap. You don't comprehend it.' I was rather surprised. He said, 'It is only a little handful of*

*Priesthood you see here tonight, but this Church will fill North and South America—it will fill the world.*

*- Wilford Woodruff, in Conference Report, Apr. 1898, p. 57*

At a time when there were about 4,000 members of the church, what were the odds this prophecy would turn out to be true?

See:

- [Carrie A. Moore - LDS fulfilling prophecy to 'fill the whole Earth' Historian cites prophet's gifts to religious world](#)

## **How was Joseph Smith so specific in predicting the American Civil War nearly 30 years before it happened?**

Arguably Joseph Smith's most famous prophecy relates to the American Civil War. Paul H. Peterson comments:

*Joseph Smith's Civil War prophecy is contained in sections 87 and 130 of the Doctrine and Covenants. He prophesied on December 25, 1832, that a war would begin in South Carolina; that the southern states would divide against the northern states; that the South would seek support from other nations, including Great Britain; and that the war would lead to the death and misery of many souls. These items in the prophecy were all fulfilled in the Civil War (1860-1865). In 1843 the Prophet noted (D&C 130:12-13) that he had also learned by revelation in 1832 that slavery would be the probable cause of the upcoming crisis. These matters are all history now, but certain verses in the Civil War prophecy have broader applications and it appears that portions of the revelation are yet to be fulfilled.*

*Section 87 was not published by the Church until 1851 and was not canonized until 1876. It was, however, copied and circulated by some Church leaders and missionaries in the 1830s. The Civil War prophecy became one of the most widely published revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants. Not surprisingly, it received greatest attention during the Civil War, as many viewed the conflict as a vindication of the prophetic powers of Joseph Smith.*

*- Paul H. Peterson - Civil war prophecy*

How did Joseph Smith know in advance about the civil war? How did he know such specific details about it?

See:



- [Paul H. Peterson - Civil war prophecy](#)
- [Scott C. Esplin - “Have We Not Had a Prophet Among Us?”: Joseph Smith’s Civil War Prophecy](#)

## Why believe it was a lucky guess when Joseph Smith said the Saints would be driven to the Rocky Mountains and become a mighty people?

On August 6, 1842, Joseph Smith recorded a prophecy about the Saints:

*“Saturday, Aug. 6, 1842.—Passed over the river to Montrose, Iowa, in company with General Adams, Colonel Brewer, and others, and witnessed the installation of the officers of the Rising Sun Lodge Ancient York Masons, at Montrose by General James Adams, Deputy Grand-Master of Illinois. While the Deputy Grand-Master was engaged in giving the requisite instructions to the Master-elect, I had a conversation with a number of brethren in the shade of the building on the subject of our persecutions in Missouri and the constant annoyance which has followed us since we were driven from that state. I prophesied that the Saints would continue to suffer much affliction and would be driven to the Rocky Mountains, many would apostatize, others would be put to death by our persecutors or lose their lives in consequence of exposure to disease, and some of you will live to go and assist in making settlements and build cities and see the Saints become a mighty people in the midst of the Rocky Mountains.”*

*- Joseph Smith Papers, History, 1838-1856, Vol. D-1, p. 1362; Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, 1938, 255.)*

Joseph was right, but where would he have gotten this idea from?

See:

- [Nephi Lowell Morris - Prophecies of Joseph Smith and their Fulfillment](#)

## How do we account for the Stephen A. Douglas prophecy?

In the October General Conference of 1981, Ezra Taft Benson recounted the following:

*In another prophecy, one of the most remarkable pronounced on the head of one man, Joseph Smith said to a young judge named Stephen A. Douglas, in the presence of several others: “Judge, you will aspire to the presidency of the United States; and if ever you turn your hand against me or the Latter-day Saints, you will feel the weight of the hand of Almighty upon you; and you will live to see and know*

*that I have testified the truth to you; for the conversation of this day will stick to you through life.” (History of the Church, 5:394.)*

*Stephen A. Douglas did aspire to the presidency of the United States. He did have opportunity to defend the Church. But in a political speech in 1857, he viciously attacked the Church as “a loathsome, disgusting ulcer in the body politic” and recommended that Congress cut it out.*

*Some have asserted that no one had better prospects for the presidency than did Douglas, but when the results of the election were tallied, he received only twelve electoral votes. The election victory went to an obscure backwoodsman by the name of Abraham Lincoln.*

*A few months after the election, Mr. Douglas died a broken man in the prime of life.*

[- Ezra Taft Benson - Joseph Smith: Prophet to Our Generation](#)

How did Joseph know this was going to happen?

See:

- [Ezra Taft Benson - Joseph Smith: Prophet to Our Generation](#)
- [Jeff Lindsay - Mormon Answers: Fulfilled Prophecies of Joseph Smith](#)

## **How did Joseph Smith correctly prophecy the saints would escape their enemies in 5 years?**

Joseph Smith seemed confident in his prophecies. From Jeff Lindsay:

*In February 1844, when persecution in Illinois had become severe once again, Joseph "prophesied that within five years we should be out of the power of our old enemies, whether they were apostates or of the world; and told the brethren to record it, that when it comes to pass they need not say they had forgotten the saying." This is recorded in History of the Church , Vol. 6, p. 225. By 1849, the Saints were gathered in Utah (the first wave entered the Salt Lake area in July of 1847) and had indeed escaped the power of their old enemies.*

[- Jeff Lindsay - Mormon Answers: Fulfilled Prophecies of Joseph Smith](#)

Why would Joseph Smith have specified the number of years? Why not just say they would escape their enemies?

See:

- [Jeff Lindsay - Mormon Answers: Fulfilled Prophecies of Joseph Smith](#)

## How would Joseph Smith know about the destruction in Jackson county?

B. H. Roberts reports another prophecy of Joseph Smith:

*The following prophetic incident is given upon the authority of Mr. Leonidas M. Lawson, now of New York City, formerly a resident of Clay county, Missouri, and a brother-in-law of General Doniphan. "In the year 1863," says Mr. Lawson, "I visited General A. W. Doniphan at his home in Liberty, Clay county, Missouri. This was soon after the [Civil War] devastation of Jackson county, Missouri under what is known as 'Order No. 11.' This devastation was complete. Farms were everywhere destroyed, and the farm houses were burned. During this visit General Doniphan related the following historical facts and personal incidents." Then follows in Mr. Lawson's account a recital of the treatment meted out to the Saints in Missouri from the time of their first arrival in 1831, to their expulsion, including recitals of the personal relations of General Doniphan and Joseph Smith, including the following incident which occurred during the Prophet's imprisonment in Liberty jail:*

*"On one occasion General Doniphan caused the sheriff of the county to bring Joseph Smith from the prison to his law office, for the purpose of consultation about his defense. During Smith's presence in the office, a resident of Jackson county, Missouri, came in for the purpose of paying a fee which was due by him to the firm of Doniphan & Baldwin, and offered in payment a tract of land in Jackson county.*

*"Doniphan told him that his partner, Mr. Baldwin, was absent at the moment, but as soon as he had an opportunity he would consult him and decide about the matter. When the Jackson county man retired, Joseph Smith, who had overheard the conversation, addressed General Doniphan about as follows:*

*"Doniphan, I advise you not to take that Jackson county land in payment of the debt. God's wrath hangs over Jackson county. God's people have been ruthlessly driven from it, and you will live to see the day when it will be visited by fire and sword. The Lord of Hosts will sweep it with the besom of destruction. The fields and farms and houses will be destroyed, and only the chimneys will be left to mark the desolation.'*

*"General Doniphan said to me that the devastation of Jackson county forcibly reminded him of this remarkable prediction of the Mormon Prophet. . . .*

*In a letter from Mr. A. Saxey of Spanish Fork, Utah to Mr. Junius Wells treating further of the fulfillment of this prophecy, so well attested, Mr. Saxey under date of August 25, 1902 says:*

*"In the spring of 1862 my regiment went south, and it was during that time that "Order No. 11" was issued, but I was back there again in 1864, during the Price raid, and saw the condition of the country. The duty of executing the order was committed to Colossians W. R. Penick's regiment, and there is no doubt but that he carried it into effect, from the howl the copperhead papers made at the time. I went down the Blue river, we found houses, barns, outbuildings, nearly all burned down, and nothing left standing but the chimneys which had, according to the fashion of the time, been built on the outside of the buildings. I remember very well that the country looked a veritable desolation."*

*[- B. H. Roberts, New Witnesses for God , Vol. 1, p. 298](#)*

How did Joseph Smith manage to prophecy so specifically?

See:

- [Jeff Lindsay - Mormon Answers: Fulfilled Prophecies of Joseph Smith](#)

## **How did Joseph Smith correctly predict the 1833 Meteor Storm?**

Philo Dibble recorded the following prophecy by Joseph Smith:

*On one occasion Joseph was preaching in Kirtland, sometime in the fall of 1833. Quite a number of persons were present who did not belong to the Church, and one man, more bitter and skeptical than others, made note with pencil and paper of a prophecy uttered on that occasion, wherein Joseph said that 'Forty days shall not pass, and the stars shall fall from heaven.'*

*[- John P. Pratt, "Spectacular Meteor Shower Might Repeat," Meridian Magazine, October 15, 1999.](#)*

He then reports how the prophecy was fulfilled:

*On the thirty-ninth day after the utterance of that prophecy, a man and brother in the Church, by the name of Joseph Hancock,... and another brother were out hunting game and got lost. They wandered about until night, when they found themselves at the house of this unbeliever, who exultingly produced this note of Joseph Smith's prophecy and asked Brother Hancock what he thought of his prophet now that thirty-nine days had passed and the prophecy was not fulfilled.*

*"Brother Hancock was unmoved and quietly remarked, "There is one night left of the time, and if Joseph said so, the stars will certainly fall tonight. The prophecy will all be fulfilled."*

*“The matter weighed upon the mind of Brother Hancock, who watched that night, and it proved to be the historical one, known in all the world as ‘the night of the falling of the stars.’*

*“He stayed that night at the house of the skeptical unbeliever, as it was too far from home to return by night, and in the midst of the falling of the stars, he went to the door of his host and called him out to witness what he had thought impossible and the most improbable thing that could happen, especially as that was the last night in which Joseph Smith could be saved from the condemnation of a ‘false prophet.’*

*“The whole heavens were lit up with the falling meteors, and the countenance of the new spectator was plainly seen and closely watched by Brother Hancock, who said that he turned pale as death and spoke not a word.”*

*[- John P. Pratt, “Spectacular Meteor Shower Might Repeat,” Meridian Magazine, October 15, 1999.](#)*

Why did Brother Hancock turn pale as death? Doesn't this show how unexpected the fulfillment of this prophecy was?

See:

- [Ronald P. Millett - 1833 Meteor Storm: A Precisely Synchronized Sign and Wonder](#)

## **What are we to make of Joseph Smith's other fulfilled prophecies?**

Joseph Smith also made many other prophecies which were fulfilled such as the [Liberty jail prophecies](#), [Word of wisdom prophecy](#), [genealogy prophecy](#), [stakes in Boston prophecy](#), [prophesying his own death](#), [prophesying Dan Jones's mission to Wales](#), [Steven Markham prophecy](#), [Olmstead Johnson prophecy](#), [prophesying that Brigham Young would preside over the church](#), [prophesying that the Bishopric would never be taken away from Newel K. Whitney](#), [prophesying that Anson Call would go and assist in building up cities from one end of the country to the other](#), [prophesying that Judge Douglas and no other judge of the Circuit Court would ever set aside a law of the city council](#), [prophesying that Governor Boggs would die a violent death](#), [prophesying that sickness would enter into the houses of the mob and vex them until they repent](#), [prophesying that the devil would handle Sidney Rigdon as one man handles another](#), and [prophesying that he would not live to see forty more years](#).

Of prophecies, Nephi Lowell Morris rightly points out

*Time is the supreme test of a prophecy. He who undertakes to foretell events must know that Time in its merciless pursuit will find him out. Of all the pretenses of the*

*false prophet, prophesying is the most hazardous. Religious impostors often display qualities of leadership in controlling the affairs of their followers. The more modest their pretenses, however, the more likely are they to escape detection and exposure. But when spiritual leaders assume to exercise the exalted function of prophecy, and have the courage to publish their prophecies, they place their reputations before the bar of the world, and as the weight of Time presses out the vintage of the centuries they must sink to a deserving oblivion or be exalted to a place in the skies. Time is a foe of Fraud, but the never-failing friend of Truth.*

- [Nephi Lowell Morris - Prophecies of Joseph Smith and their Fulfillment](#)

Why was Joseph Smith so confident to prophesy like this?

See:

- [Jeff Lindsay - Mormon Answers: Fulfilled Prophecies of Joseph Smith](#)

## **Would we expect the man responsible for the biggest fraud in history to preach a sermon on forgiveness after being tarred and feathered?**

Jerry C. Roundy recounts one example of Joseph Smith's character:

*When the twins were 11 months old, they became very ill with measles, causing many sleepless nights in the Smith household. One night the Prophet told his wife to go into the back bedroom and try to get some rest while he sat up in the living room with the sicker of the two children. As the night passed, Joseph lay down upon a trundle bed and dozed off. The next thing he knew, he was being carried bodily through the front door by an angry mob who were shouting among themselves, "Don't let his feet touch the floor, or he will take us all." They realized what a tremendously powerful man he was physically as well as spiritually.*

*They carried him out through the orchard, and as they did so, he saw Sidney Rigdon lying on the ground, presumably dead. The mob had also dragged Brother Rigdon from his house by the heels, bumping his head on the frozen ground until it had knocked him insensible.*

*After coming to a halt, the mob deliberated as to whether or not they should kill the Prophet but decided against it. Finally one of them said, "Let's tar up his mouth." With that they tried to force the tar paddle into his mouth. Next they tried to force a phial of poison between his teeth, but he kept them clenched so tightly that the bottle broke, along with the corner of one of his front teeth. Failing to tar up his mouth or poison him, one of the members of the mob fell on him, and after the others had torn off all Joseph's clothes except his shirt collar, began scratching him like a mad cat,*

*muttering: "... that's the way the Holy Ghost falls on folks." They then poured hot tar on his body, rolled him in a feather tick and left him for dead.*

*After regaining consciousness the Prophet made his way to the house. When his wife, Emma, saw him coming to the door with his body covered with tar and feathers, she fainted. The rest of the night was spent removing the tar from his body. The tender hands of Dr. Frederick G. Williams, a physician and also a counselor to the Prophet in the First Presidency, performed the heartbreaking task. Sometimes large pieces of skin came off with the tar. The next day was the Sabbath, and the Prophet, in great discomfort, was at the service where he spoke.*

*- [Jerry C. Roundy - The Greatness of Joseph Smith and His Remarkable Visions](#)*

Why does this not sound like someone who knew his life's work was a fraud?

See:

- [Jerry C. Roundy - The Greatness of Joseph Smith and His Remarkable Visions](#)
- [Trent Toone - When a Mob Failed to Murder the Prophet Joseph Smith—Twice](#)

## **How do we account for the testimony of the twelve apostles relating to the Doctrine and Covenants?**

In the introduction to the Doctrine and Covenants we find the testimony of the twelve apostles:

*The Testimony of the Witnesses to the Book of the Lord's Commandments, which commandments He gave to His Church through Joseph Smith, Jun., who was appointed by the voice of the Church for this purpose:*

*We, therefore, feel willing to bear testimony to all the world of mankind, to every creature upon the face of the earth, that the Lord has borne record to our souls, through the Holy Ghost shed forth upon us, that these commandments were given by inspiration of God, and are profitable for all men and are verily true.*

*We give this testimony unto the world, the Lord being our helper; and it is through the grace of God the Father, and His Son, Jesus Christ, that we are permitted to have this privilege of bearing this testimony unto the world, in the which we rejoice exceedingly, praying the Lord always that the children of men may be profited thereby.*

*- [Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints - Testimony of the Twelve Apostles to the Truth of the Book of Doctrine and Covenants](#)*

Why did none of the twelve apostles ever recant this testimony even when some left the church or were excommunicated?

See:

- [Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints - Testimony of the Twelve Apostles to the Truth of the Book of Doctrine and Covenants](#)

## How would 26 year old Joseph Smith know to use the word “unjust” rather than “damnation” in D&C 76:17?

In Doctrine and Covenants 76:17, Joseph Smith refers to John 5:29:

*And shall come forth; they who have done good, in the resurrection of the just; and they who have done evil, in the resurrection of the **unjust**. (emphasis added)*

The King James Version of this scripture reads:

*And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of **damnation**. (emphasis added)*

Why the difference between the two? Elder Quentin L. Cook spoke in general conference of this inspired translation:

*In the 17th verse of section 76, he was inspired to use the word unjust instead of damnation that was used in the Gospel of John.*

*It is interesting that 45 years later an Anglican church leader and academically credentialed classical scholar, Frederic W. Farrar, who wrote *The Life of Christ*, asserted that the definition of damnation in the King James Version of the Bible was the result of translation errors from Hebrew and Greek to English.*

- [Elder Quentin L. Cook - Conversion to the Will of God](#)

How would Joseph Smith have known of this translation error?

See:

- [Elder Quentin L. Cook - Conversion to the Will of God](#)



## Where would Joseph Smith have learned the meaning of “Lord of Sabaoth”?

In Doctrine and Covenants 95:7 we read:

*And for this cause I gave unto you a commandment that you should call your solemn assembly, that your fastings and your mourning might come up into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth, which is by interpretation, the creator of the first day, the beginning and the end.*

Matthew L. Bowen notes how this is a direct hit for Joseph Smith:

*When considered in its entirety, this revealed gloss is right on target. The creation/begetting of the heavenly hosts was associated with “the first day” or “Day One” in ancient Israelite thought. They are described as “finished” or fully prepared by the end of the six creative periods (“days” in Genesis 2:1). Additionally, “Lord of Sabaoth” or Yhwh šēbā`ōt is to be understood in connection with the similarly constructed name-title Yhwh `ēlōhîm (“He creates gods,” “he causes gods to be,” or “he brings to pass gods”). The meristic appositive title “the beginning and the end” implies that Yhwh is not only the “author”/“creator” of Israel and its salvation but the “finisher” thereof. Far from evidence of Joseph Smith’s lack of knowledge of Hebrew, the interpretive gloss in D&C 95:7 constitutes evidence of Joseph’s ability to obtain correct translations and interpretations through revelation.*

*- [Matthew L. Bowen - “Creator of the First Day”: The Glossing of Lord of Sabaoth in D&C 95:7](#)*

Where would Joseph Smith have learned this meaning?

See:

- [Matthew L. Bowen - “Creator of the First Day”: The Glossing of Lord of Sabaoth in D&C 95:7](#)

## Why could no-one else write a revelation for the Doctrine and Covenants like Joseph Smith?

Doctrine and Covenants 67:7-9 contains the following challenge:

*Now, seek ye out of the Book of Commandments, even the least that is among them, and appoint him that is the most wise among you;  
Or, if there be any among you that shall make one like unto it, then ye are justified in saying that ye do not know that they are true;*

*But if ye cannot make one like unto it, ye are under condemnation if ye do not bear record that they are true.*

Of this revelation William E. Berrett recorded:

*McLellin, perhaps under the urging of others, accepted the challenge. He retired from the conference and, in the solitude of his room, attempted to write that which might sound like a revelation from the Lord. On November 2nd he appeared again in the conference and with tears in his eyes begged the forgiveness of the Prophet, of his brethren, and of the Lord. He could not write a revelation. Try as he might, he could not write that which would sound as if it were a revelation from the Lord. Everyone who puts the matter to the test must come to the same conclusion."*

[- William E. Berrett, Teachings of the Doctrine and Covenants \[Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1956\], 6.](#)

Joseph Smith similarly wrote as follows:

*After the foregoing was received (D&C 67), William E. M'Lellin, as the wisest man, in his own estimation, having more learning than sense, endeavored to write a commandment like unto one of the least of the Lord's, but failed; it was an awful responsibility to write in the name of the Lord. The Elders and all present that witnessed this vain attempt of a man to imitate the language of Jesus Christ, renewed their faith in the fulness of the Gospel, and in the truth of the commandments and revelations which the Lord had given to the Church through my instrumentality; and the Elders signified a willingness to bear testimony of their truth to all the world.*

[- History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 7 vols., introduction and notes by B. H. Roberts \[Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1932-1951\], 1: 226.\)](#)

What was so special about Joseph Smith that the wisest of others could not copy what he did?

See:

- [Gospel Doctrine - Section 67](#)

## **Why did Joseph Smith's family believe his story? Wouldn't they be the first to see through the lies?**

Wouldn't the faith of his family count as strong evidence for the truthfulness of the restoration? In speaking of Joseph's father, M. Russell Ballard said:

*Joseph Smith, Sr., was in tune with the Spirit of the Lord. He knew that his young son spoke the truth. He not only believed the boy's words but encouraged him in the work he had been called to do.*

*Joseph, Sr., endured ridicule and persecution because of his prophet son's experiences and claims. Yet, he was unwavering in his loving support and defended his son.*

*He saw and handled the plates of gold from which the Book of Mormon was translated and testified throughout his life to the truthfulness of that sacred book. His name remains firmly affixed, with those of the other witnesses to the Book of Mormon, in the front pages of that second witness of Jesus Christ. On one occasion he was imprisoned and told he would be released if he would deny the Book of Mormon. Not only did he not deny it, but he converted two persons during his thirty-day confinement.*

- [M. Russell Ballard - The Family of the Prophet Joseph Smith](#)

And of Joseph's brother Hyrum it was said:

*"I thank God that I felt a determination to die, rather than deny the things which my eyes had seen, which my hands had handled [the plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated], and which I had borne testimony to, wherever my lot had been cast; and I can assure my beloved brethren that I was enabled to bear as strong a testimony, when nothing but death presented itself, as ever I did in my life."*

- [Times and Seasons, Dec. 1839, p. 23.](#)

Wouldn't Joseph's family be in a great position to know if it all was a fraud?

See:

- [M. Russell Ballard - The Family of the Prophet Joseph Smith](#)

## **How come we also find chiasmus in the Book of Moses?**

No-one noticed any instances of chiasmus in the Book of Mormon until fairly recently so why would Joseph Smith also include chiasmus in the Book of Moses?

Moses 1:1-2:1 contains an example of chiasmus:

*A. The word of God, which he spoke unto Moses upon an exceeding high mountain  
(1)*

- B. Endless is God's name (3)*  
*C. God's work and his glory (4)*  
*D. The Lord has a work for Moses*  
*E. Moses is in the similitude of the Only Begotten (6)*  
*F. Moses beholds the world and the ends thereof (7-8)*  
*G. The presence of God withdraws from Moses (9)*  
*H. Man, in his natural strength, is nothing (10)*  
*I. Moses beheld God with his spiritual eyes (11)*  
*J. Satan came tempting him (12)*  
*K. Moses' response to Satan (13-15)*  
*L. Moses commands Satan to depart (16-18)*  
*M. Satan ranted upon the earth (19)*  
*N. Moses began to fear*  
*O. Moses called upon God*  
*N'. Moses received strength (20)*  
*M'. Satan began to tremble and the earth shook*  
*L'. Moses cast Satan out in the name of the Only Begotten (21)*  
*K'. Satan cried with weeping and wailing*  
*J'. Satan departs from Moses (22)*  
*I'. Moses lifted up his eyes unto heaven (23-24)*  
*H'. Moses is made stronger than many waters*  
*G'. Moses beheld God's glory again (25)*  
*F'. Moses is shown the heavens and the earth (27-31)*  
*E'. Creation by the Only Begotten (32-33)*  
*B'. God's works and words are endless (38)*  
*C'. God's work and his glory (39)*  
*D'. Moses to write the words of God (40-41)*  
*A'. The Lord spoke unto Moses concerning the heaven and earth (Moses 2:1)*

Why would Joseph Smith go to the effort of including chiasmus if it would go unnoticed?

See:

- [Book of Mormon Central and Mark J. Johnson - Book of Moses Essays #45: Moses 1: A Literary Masterpiece. Chiasmus in Moses 1 \(Moses 1\)](#)

## **Why would Joseph Smith include synonymous parallelism in the Book of Moses?**

The Book of Moses contains different examples of parallelism including synonymous parallelism, in which similar meanings are repeated at least two times. One example is in Moses 1:4 which, in part, reads:

*for my works*

*are without end,  
and also my words,  
for they never cease.*

Why did Joseph include this (or any) form of parallelism if no one was noticing it in the Book of Mormon?

See:

- [Book of Mormon Central and Mark J. Johnson - Book of Moses Essays #44: Moses 1: A Literary Masterpiece. Hebrew Literary Features of Moses 1 \(Moses 1\)](#)

## **Why would Joseph Smith take the time to include synthetic parallelism in the Book of Moses?**

D. W. Parry explains synthetic parallelism as follows:

*Synthetic parallelism, as a rule, is composed of two lines, neither of which are synonymous or antithetical. Rather, in this form, line one presents a declaration and line two gives the explanation or adds some thing new or instructive to the first line. It is called synthetic because a synthesis, or coordination between the two elements takes place. First the idea or event of line one is introduced, then follows the realization, the completion, or finish of the thought. Ridderbos has identified synthetic parallelism as being a form, “in which the second line develops or completes the thought in a way that could not be determined from the first line. The parallelism is looser and the corresponding terms do not line up as neatly.”*

*- Donald W. Parry - Poetic Parallelisms in the Book of Mormon*

An example of synthetic parallelism in the Book of Moses is in chapter 1 verse 39:

*For behold, this is my work and my glory—  
to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.*

Why would Joseph Smith include different types of parallelism in the Book of Moses if it wouldn't be noticed by anyone at the time?

See:

- [Book of Mormon Central and Mark J. Johnson - Book of Moses Essays #44: Moses 1: A Literary Masterpiece. Hebrew Literary Features of Moses 1 \(Moses 1\)](#)

## If Joseph Smith wrote the Book of Moses himself would we expect to see relative clauses like in Hebrew?

In Moses 1:33 we read:

*And worlds without number have I created; and I also created them for mine own purpose; and by the Son I created them, **which** is mine Only Begotten. (emphasis added)*

It seems odd to use the word “which” in this instance, however this is similar to the Book of Mormon’s usage of relative clauses, as explained by John A. Tvedtnes:

*In Hebrew, the word that marks the beginning of a relative clause (generally translated which or who in English) does not always closely follow the word it refers back to, as it usually does in English.*

*- [John A. Tvedtnes - The Hebrew Background of the Book of Mormon](#)*

Why would Joseph Smith continue to use relative clauses like this if no-one noticed in the Book of Mormon?

See:

- [John A. Tvedtnes - The Hebrew Background of the Book of Mormon](#)
- [Book of Mormon Central and Mark J. Johnson - Book of Moses Essays #44: Moses 1: A Literary Masterpiece. Hebrew Literary Features of Moses 1 \(Moses 1\)](#)

## Why does the Book of Moses contain a repetition of possessive pronouns?

Similar to the Book of Mormon, in the Book of Moses we see a repetition of the possessive pronoun such as in 1:38-39:

*And as one earth shall pass away, and the heavens thereof even so shall another come; and there is no end to **my** works, neither to **my** words.  
For behold, this is **my** work and **my** glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man. (emphasis added)*

This would not be expected in English but is a classic trait of Hebrew. Why would Joseph Smith include this if no-one noticed in the Book of Mormon?

See:

- [Book of Mormon Central and Mark J. Johnson - Book of Moses Essays #44: Moses 1: A Literary Masterpiece. Hebrew Literary Features of Moses 1 \(Moses 1\)](#)

## **Like the Book of Mormon, would we expect to see resumptive repetition in the Book of Moses?**

The Bible contains many examples of resumptive repetition, in which the author repeats a thought or phrase to interject commentary. Whereas English speakers would use parentheses or commas, biblical authors would simply repeat the phrase.

The Book of Moses contains a similar technique in 1:4-7:

***And, behold, thou art my son; wherefore look, and I will show thee the workmanship of mine hands; but not all, for my works are without end, and also my words, for they never cease.***

*Wherefore, no man can behold all my works, except he behold all my glory; and no man can behold all my glory, and afterwards remain in the flesh on the earth.*

*And I have a work for thee, Moses, my son; and thou art in the similitude of mine Only Begotten; and mine Only Begotten is and shall be the Savior, for he is full of grace and truth; but there is no God beside me, and all things are present with me, for I know them all.*

***And now, behold, this one thing I show unto thee, Moses, my son, for thou art in the world, and now I show it unto thee.*** (emphasis added)

What would have motivated Joseph Smith to include this technique if it was not known until long after the book's publication?

See:

- [Book of Mormon Central and Mark J. Johnson - Book of Moses Essays #44: Moses 1: A Literary Masterpiece. Hebrew Literary Features of Moses 1 \(Moses 1\)](#)

## **Why would Joseph Smith include figures of speech in the Book of Moses, such as antenantiosis?**

Moses 1:28 includes an example of antenantiosis, which is a practice of stating a proposition in terms of its opposite:

*And he beheld also the inhabitants thereof, and there was not a soul which he beheld not; and he discerned them by the Spirit of God; and their numbers were great, even numberless as the sand upon the sea shore.*

The Bible contains many examples of antenantiosis but would we expect it to be in the Book of Moses?

See:

- [Book of Mormon Central and Mark J. Johnson - Book of Moses Essays #44: Moses 1: A Literary Masterpiece. Hebrew Literary Features of Moses 1 \(Moses 1\)](#)

## Would we expect to see litotes in the Book of Moses?

If Joseph Smith wrote the Book of Moses, wouldn't we expect him to emphasize the greatness of God rather than the "nothingness" of man? Moses 1: 9-10 reads:

*And the presence of God withdrew from Moses, that his glory was not upon Moses; and Moses was left unto himself. And as he was left unto himself, he fell unto the earth.*

*And it came to pass that it was for the space of many hours before Moses did again receive his natural strength like unto man; and he said unto himself: Now, for this cause I know that man is nothing, which thing I never had supposed.*

This figure of speech known as litotes deemphasizes one thing in order to emphasize another. While we may expect to see this in the Bible, wouldn't this be unnatural to Joseph Smith?

See:

- [Book of Mormon Central and Mark J. Johnson - Book of Moses Essays #44: Moses 1: A Literary Masterpiece. Hebrew Literary Features of Moses 1 \(Moses 1\)](#)

## Why would Joseph Smith go to the effort of including polysyndeton in the Book of Moses?

In Moses 1:8 we see an example of repeated conjunctions:

*And it came to pass that Moses looked, **and** beheld the world upon which he was created; **and** Moses beheld the world **and** the ends thereof, **and** all the children of*



*men which are, **and** which were created; of the same he greatly marveled **and** wondered. (emphasis added)*

Repeated conjunctions are a classic Hebrew rhetorical device which we would not expect to see in English. In fact, [many examples of polysyndeton were removed in the King James Version of the Bible.](#)

Why would Joseph Smith repeat conjunctions like this? How would he know about this technique?

See:

- [Book of Mormon Central and Mark J. Johnson - Book of Moses Essays #44: Moses 1: A Literary Masterpiece. Hebrew Literary Features of Moses 1 \(Moses 1\)](#)

## **Why are there compound prepositions in the Book of Moses?**

Similar to the Book of Mormon, the Book of Moses includes compound prepositions which would not be expected in English.

Mark J. Johnson explains:

*Compound prepositions: Simple prepositions are words such as in, on, under, after, and around, that establish a relationship between a noun and a pronoun.*

*Compound prepositions perform the same function, but with a combination of prepositions which act as a single word. Examples include on top of, in front of, or over against. Parry demonstrates one example from the Old Testament, “The Lord God of Israel hath dispossessed the Amorites from before his people Israel” (Judges 11:23, emphasis added). Moses 1:1 contains an example of a compound preposition, where “Moses was caught up into an exceeding high mountain.”*

*- [Mark J. Johnson - Book of Moses Essays #44: Moses 1: A Literary Masterpiece. Hebrew Literary Features of Moses 1 \(Moses 1\)](#)*

Why would Joseph Smith have included this if no-one noticed it in the Book of Mormon?

See:

- [Mark J. Johnson - Book of Moses Essays #44: Moses 1: A Literary Masterpiece. Hebrew Literary Features of Moses 1 \(Moses 1\)](#)

## **Wouldn't Joseph Smith have bolstered his case for the authenticity of the Book of Moses by including the relevant verses about Enoch from Jude (which quote from 1 Enoch)?**

The book of Jude contains a prophecy from Enoch which Joseph Smith was aware of. Jeffrey M. Bradshaw explains the significance:

*Note that since Joseph Smith was aware that the biblical book of Jude quotes Enoch — more specifically 1 Enoch itself — the most obvious thing he could have done to bolster his case for the authenticity of the book of Moses (if he were a conscious deceiver) would have been to include the relevant verses from Jude somewhere within his revelations on Enoch. But this the Prophet did not do.*

*- [Jeffrey M. Bradshaw - An Old Testament KnoWhy for Gospel Doctrine Lesson 5: “If Thou Doest Well, Thou Shalt Be Accepted” \(Moses 5-7\) \(JBOTL05C\)](#)*

Why would Joseph Smith not include the Jude verses in the Book of Moses? Couldn't he have pointed to it as proof of the Book of Moses?

See:

- [Jeffrey M. Bradshaw - An Old Testament KnoWhy for Gospel Doctrine Lesson 5: “If Thou Doest Well, Thou Shalt Be Accepted” \(Moses 5-7\) \(JBOTL05C\)](#)
- [Jeffrey M. Bradshaw - Moses 6–7 and the Book of Giants: Remarkable Witnesses of Enoch’s Ministry](#)

## **Where would Joseph Smith have gotten the idea that Enoch made “rivers turn from their course“?**

The Book of Moses mentions rivers turning from their course, such as in 6:34 which reads:

*Behold my Spirit is upon you, wherefore all thy words will I justify; and the mountains shall flee before you, and the rivers shall turn from their course; and thou shalt abide in me, and I in you; therefore walk with me.*

This is fulfilled in Moses 7:13:

*And so great was the faith of Enoch that he led the people of God, and their enemies came to battle against them; and he spake the word of the Lord, and the earth trembled, and the mountains fled, even according to his command; and the rivers of water were turned out of their course; and the roar of the lions was heard out of the wilderness; and all nations feared greatly, so powerful was the word of Enoch, and so great was the power of the language which God had given him.*

Jeffrey M. Bradshaw notes how [we find no account of a river's course turned by anyone in the Bible](#) however we do find it in a Mandaean Enoch account:

*The [Supreme] Life replied, Arise, take thy way to the source of the waters, turn it from its course ... At this command Tavril [the angel speaking to Enoch] indeed turned the pure water from its course ...*

*- J. P. Migne, Livre d'Adam, 21, p. 169*

How would Joseph Smith have known about a Mandaean Enoch account? Where would he have gotten this information from?

See:

- [Jeffrey M. Bradshaw - KnowWhy OTLO5C — Could Joseph Smith Have Drawn On Ancient Manuscripts When He Translated the Story of Enoch?](#)

## **Was it a lucky guess that the Book of Moses claims Enoch was a “lad” at 65?**

In Moses 6:31, Enoch describes himself as a “lad”:

*And when Enoch had heard these words, he bowed himself to the earth, before the Lord, and spake before the Lord, saying: Why is it that I have found favor in thy sight, and am but a lad, and all the people hate me; for I am slow of speech; wherefore am I thy servant?*

The Bible does not refer to Enoch as a “lad”, but the idea of Enoch as youthful does appear in the pseudepigraphal books of 2 and 3 Enoch (found at the end of the nineteenth century, well after the Book of Moses was published).

Where did Joseph Smith get this information on Enoch from?

See:

- [Jeffrey M. Bradshaw - KnowWhy OTLO5C — Could Joseph Smith Have Drawn On Ancient Manuscripts When He Translated the Story of Enoch?](#)
- [Strong Reasons - The Book of Enoch and the Book of Moses](#)

## Why does the Book of Enoch support the Book of Moses claim that Enoch was given the right to God's throne?

Moses 7:59 reads

*And Enoch beheld the Son of Man ascend up unto the Father; and he called unto the Lord, saying: Wilt thou not come again upon the earth? Forasmuch as thou art God, and I know thee, and thou hast sworn unto me, and commanded me that I should ask in the name of thine Only Begotten; thou hast made me, and **given unto me a right to thy throne**, and not of myself, but through thine own grace; wherefore, I ask thee if thou wilt not come again on the earth. (emphasis added)*

This parallels the language in 3 Enoch 10:1-3 (found long after the publication of the Book of Moses)

*The Holy One **made for me a throne** like the throne of glory . . . He placed it at the door of the seventh palace and sat me down upon it. (emphasis added)*

Where would Joseph Smith have found this information on Enoch?

See:

- [Jeffrey M. Bradshaw - KnowWhy OTLO5C – Could Joseph Smith Have Drawn On Ancient Manuscripts When He Translated the Story of Enoch?](#)
- [Strong Reasons - The Book of Enoch and the Book of Moses](#)

## Why do we find other sources agreeing with the Book of Moses that Satan conspired with Cain?

The Book of Moses (as well as the Book of Mormon) claims that Satan spoke directly with Cain, such as in Moses 5:18, 29-31:

*And Cain loved Satan more than God. And Satan commanded him, saying: Make an offering unto the Lord.*

*And Satan said unto Cain: Swear unto me by thy throat, and if thou tell it thou shalt die; and swear thy brethren by their heads, and by the living God, that they tell it not; for if they tell it, they shall surely die; and this that thy father may not know it; and this day I will deliver thy brother Abel into thine hands.*

*And Satan sware unto Cain that he would do according to his commands. And all these things were done in secret.*

*And Cain said: Truly I am Mahan, the master of this great secret, that I may murder and get gain. Wherefore Cain was called Master Mahan, and he gloried in his wickedness.*

This is curious because the Bible does not contain this detail, however it is supported by [other Christian texts](#) discovered after the publication of the Book of Moses (and Book of Mormon) such as Conflict of Adam and Eve with Satan and Book of the Bee.

What are the odds this would also show up in recently discovered texts?

See:

- [Evidence Central - Book of Mormon Evidences: Traditions of Cain](#)

## **Why are the six characteristic features of the Old Testament narrative call pattern shown in the commissioning of Joseph Smith's Enoch?**

Moses 6:26-27 describes Enoch's prophetic call:

*And it came to pass that Enoch journeyed in the land, among the people; and as he journeyed, the Spirit of God descended out of heaven, and abode upon him.*

*And he heard a voice from heaven, saying: Enoch, my son, prophesy unto this people ...*

Professor [Stephen D. Ricks](#) notes six characteristic features of the prophetic call pattern in the Bible. The Book of Moses account of Enoch's calling is remarkably similar:

- *the divine confrontation (Moses 6:26)*
- *the introductory word (Moses 6:28)*
- *the commission (Moses 6:27)*
- *the objection (Moses 6:31)*
- *the reassurance (Moses 6:32-34)*
- *the sign (Moses 6:35-36)*

How was Joseph Smith so familiar with the characteristics of prophetic callings?

See:

- [Pearl of Great Price Central - Enoch's Prophetic Commission: Introduction](#)
- [Jeffrey M. Bradshaw - KnowWhy OTLO5C — Could Joseph Smith Have Drawn On Ancient Manuscripts When He Translated the Story of Enoch?](#)

## Why do ancient texts (unavailable to Joseph Smith) agree with the Book of Moses claim that Enoch was clothed with glory?

Moses 7:3 reads:

*And it came to pass that I turned and went up on the mount; and as I stood upon the mount, I beheld the heavens open, **and I was clothed upon with glory;** (emphasis added)*

This language is remarkably similar to 2 Enoch 22:8-10

*The LORD said to Michael, Take Enoch, and extract (him) from the earthly clothing. And anoint him with the delightful oil, **and put (him) into the clothes of glory.** . . . And I gazed at myself, and I had become like one of the glorious ones, and there was no observable difference. (emphasis added)*

What are the odds the same language would appear in 2 Enoch found long after the Book of Moses? Where did Joseph find out about this?

See:

- [Jeffrey M. Bradshaw - KnowWhy OTLO5C — Could Joseph Smith Have Drawn On Ancient Manuscripts When He Translated the Story of Enoch?](#)
- [Strong Reasons - The Book of Enoch and the Book of Moses](#)

## Why do other ancient texts agree with the Book of Moses in its use of the “son of man”?

The Book of Moses uses the phrase “son of man” multiple times such as in 7:3:

*And it came to pass that when Moses had said these words, behold, Satan came tempting him, saying: Moses, son of man, worship me.*

Jeffrey M. Bradshaw explains the significance of this phrase:

*1 Enoch’s Book of Parables holds special interest for students of the book of Moses. Both books describe visions of Enoch with a central figure and a common set of titles. The title “Son of Man,” which is a notable feature of the Book of Parables, also appears in marked density throughout Enoch’s grand vision in the book of Moses. The titles “Chosen One,” “Anointed One,” and “Righteous One” also appear prominently in both texts. Consistent with the conclusions of Nickelsburg and VanderKam about the use of these multiple titles in the Book of Parables, the book of Moses applies them all to a single individual. Moreover, Moses 6:57 gives a single,*

*specific description of the role of the Son of Man as a “righteous judge.” According to Nickelsburg and VanderKam, this conception is highly characteristic of the Book of Parables, where the primary role of the Son of Man is also that of a judge.*

*- [Jeffrey M. Bradshaw - KnoWhy OTLO5C – Could Joseph Smith Have Drawn On Ancient Manuscripts When He Translated the Story of Enoch?](#)*

Where was Joseph Smith getting all this information on Enoch?

See:

- [Jeffrey M. Bradshaw - KnoWhy OTLO5C – Could Joseph Smith Have Drawn On Ancient Manuscripts When He Translated the Story of Enoch?](#)

## **Why do ancient texts translated long after the Book of Moses agree that Enoch wept for the wickedness of mankind?**

The Book of Moses claims that Enoch wept after seeing the wicked in the time of Noah. Moses 7:44 reads:

*And as Enoch saw this, he had bitterness of soul, and wept over his brethren, and said unto the heavens: I will refuse to be comforted; but the Lord said unto Enoch: Lift up your heart, and be glad; and look.*

This is similar to that of 2 Enoch 41:1 which reads:

*And I (Enoch) sighed and burst into tears, and I said concerning their disreputable depravity, Oh how miserable . . .*

Where did Joseph Smith find out about this part of the Enoch story?

See:

- [Jeffrey M. Bradshaw - KnoWhy OTLO5C – Could Joseph Smith Have Drawn On Ancient Manuscripts When He Translated the Story of Enoch?](#)

## **Where would Joseph Smith have read that not only Enoch but his whole city were translated?**

The Book of Moses deviates from the Biblical account of Enoch by claiming the whole city was translated. Moses 7:69 reads:

*And Enoch and all his people walked with God, and he dwelt in the midst of Zion; and it came to pass that Zion was not, for God received it up into his own bosom; and from thence went forth the saying, Zion is Fled.*

Jeffrey M. Bradshaw explains how this is supported by non-biblical texts:

*Genesis implies that Enoch escaped death by being taken up alive into heaven. In a significant addition to the biblical record, the Book of Moses states that not only Enoch but his entire city was eventually received up into heaven. Two late accounts preserve echoes of a similar motif. In Adolph Jellenik's translation of Jewish traditions, *Bet ha-Midrash*, we find the account of a group of Enoch's followers who steadfastly refused to leave him as he journeyed toward the place where he was going to be taken up to heaven. Afterward, a group of kings came to find out what happened to these people. After searching under large blocks of snow they unexpectedly found at the place, they failed to discover any remains of Enoch or of his followers. In a Mandaean Enoch fragment, a group of the prophet's adversaries complain that Enoch and those who had gone to heaven with him have escaped their reach: "By fleeing and hiding the people on high have ascended higher than us. We have never known them. All the same, there they are, clothed with glory and splendors. ... And now they are sheltered from our blows."*

*In addition to these accounts alluding to a group who rose with Enoch to heaven, David Larsen provides a valuable discussion that includes "examples in early Jewish and early Christian literature that depict this motif in a different way. Although they do not feature Enoch or his city explicitly, there is a recurring theme in some of the texts that corresponds to the idea of a priestly figure who leads a community of priests in an ascension into the heavenly realm."*

*- [Jeffrey M. Bradshaw - KnoWhy OTLO5C — Could Joseph Smith Have Drawn On Ancient Manuscripts When He Translated the Story of Enoch?](#)*

Why wouldn't Joseph Smith stay true to the biblical account if he was trying to convince everyone the Book of Moses was scripture?

See:

- [Jeffrey M. Bradshaw - KnoWhy OTLO5C — Could Joseph Smith Have Drawn On Ancient Manuscripts When He Translated the Story of Enoch?](#)

## **Why would Joseph Smith have specifically differentiated the “giants” from Enoch’s other adversaries?**

The account of Enoch in the Book of Moses closely resembles The Book of Giants discovered at the location of the Dead Sea Scrolls (which would have been unavailable to Joseph Smith).



The Book of Giants mentions two groups known in Hebrew as [the gibborim and the nephilim](#). This is interesting as Jeffrey M. Bradshaw notes:

*In the Bible, gibborim almost always referred to a “mighty hero” or “warrior” and only later came to be interpreted in some cases as “giant.” Correctly understanding the distinctions among these groups is important because Joseph Smith specifically differentiated the “giants” from Enoch’s other adversaries.*

*- [Jeffrey M. Bradshaw - KnowWhy OTLO5C – Could Joseph Smith Have Drawn On Ancient Manuscripts When He Translated the Story of Enoch?](#)*

This differentiation is found in Moses 7:14-15 which mentions two distinct groups including giants:

*There also came up a land out of the depth of the sea, and so great was the fear of the enemies of the people of God, that they fled and stood afar off and went upon the land which came up out of the depth of the sea.*

*And the giants of the land, also, stood afar off; and there went forth a curse upon all people that fought against God;*

How would Joseph Smith have known about these giants in relation to Enoch?

See:

- [Jeffrey M. Bradshaw - KnowWhy OTLO5C – Could Joseph Smith Have Drawn On Ancient Manuscripts When He Translated the Story of Enoch?](#)

## **How could Joseph Smith correctly guess Mahijuah/Mahujah?**

In Moses 6:40 we read of the only named character in the story of Enoch (apart from Enoch himself):

*And there came a man unto him, whose name was Mahijah, and said unto him: Tell us plainly who thou art, and from whence thou comest?*

In the next chapter, Moses 7:2 reads:

*And from that time forth Enoch began to prophesy, saying unto the people, that: As I was journeying, and stood upon the place Mahujah, and cried unto the Lord, there came a voice out of heaven, saying—Turn ye, and get ye upon the mount Simeon.*

While “Mahujah” may look like a misspelling of “Mahijah”, this is actually consistent with the underlying Hebrew of Genesis 4:18 which uses both spellings for the same person.

At this time in Joseph’s life he didn’t understand Hebrew so how did he know about the different ways of spelling Mahijah/Mahujah?

See:

- [Pearl of Great Price Central - Could Joseph Smith Have Borrowed Mahijah/Mahujah from the Book of Giants?](#)
- [Jeffrey M. Bradshaw - KnoWhy OTLO5C — Could Joseph Smith Have Drawn On Ancient Manuscripts When He Translated the Story of Enoch?](#)

## How could Joseph Smith guess that Mahijah was sent to Enoch?

The role of Mahijah in the Book of Moses is strikingly similar to his role in the Book of Giants.

Jeffrey M. Bradshaw explains:

*In the Book of Giants, we read the report of a series of dreams that troubled the gibborim. The dreams “symbolize the destruction of all but Noah and his sons by the Flood.” In an impressive correspondence to the questioning of Enoch by Mahijah in the book of Moses, the gibborim send Mahawai to “consult Enoch in order to receive an authoritative interpretation of the visions.” In the Book of Giants, we read: [Then] all the [gibborim and the Nephilim] ... called to [Mahujah] and he came to them. They implored him and sent him to Enoch, the celebrated scribe and they said to him: “Go... and tell him to [explain to you] and interpret the dream...”*

*Cirillo comments: “The emphasis that [Joseph] Smith places on Mahijah’s travel to Enoch is eerily similar to the account of Mahawai to Enoch in the [Book of Giants].”*

*- Jeffrey M. Bradshaw - KnoWhy OTLO5C — Could Joseph Smith Have Drawn On Ancient Manuscripts When He Translated the Story of Enoch?*

Where would Joseph Smith have read this about Mahijah?

See:

- [Jeffrey M. Bradshaw - KnoWhy OTLO5C — Could Joseph Smith Have Drawn On Ancient Manuscripts When He Translated the Story of Enoch?](#)

## Is it luck that the Book of Moses describes Enoch's home as a land of righteousness?

In Moses 6:41, Enoch says:

*I came out from the land of Cainan, the land of my fathers, a land of righteousness unto this day.*

Enoch describes his home as a land of righteousness which has parallels with the Book of Giants. [The leader of the gibborim in the Book of Giants says that his "opponents...reside in the heavens and live with the holy ones"](#)

Where would Joseph Smith have gotten this information from?

See:

- [Jeffrey M. Bradshaw - KnowWhy OTLO5C — Could Joseph Smith Have Drawn On Ancient Manuscripts When He Translated the Story of Enoch?](#)

## What would make Joseph Smith think that Enoch's vision occurred by the sea?

Enoch describes the setting of his vision in Moses 6:42:

*And it came to pass, as I journeyed from the land of Cainan, by the sea east, I beheld a vision; and lo, the heavens I saw, and the Lord spake with me, and gave me commandment; wherefore, for this cause, to keep the commandment, I speak forth these words.*

The "sea east" is surprisingly similar to 1 Enoch 20-36 where Enoch travels "from the west edge of the earth to its east edge."

What are the odds that Joseph would correctly place the location of Enoch's vision?

See:

- [Jeffrey M. Bradshaw - KnowWhy OTLO5C — Could Joseph Smith Have Drawn On Ancient Manuscripts When He Translated the Story of Enoch?](#)

## **Where would Joseph Smith get the idea that Enoch kept a book of remembrance?**

In Moses 6:46 we read:

*For a book of remembrance we have written among us, according to the pattern given by the finger of God; and it is given in our own language.*

The idea that Enoch kept a book of remembrance containing the actions of the people is also attested in the Book of Giants, 1 Enoch, the Testament of Abraham and in Jubilees.

Where did Joseph get all this information from?

See:

- [Jeffrey M. Bradshaw - KnoWhy OTLO5C – Could Joseph Smith Have Drawn On Ancient Manuscripts When He Translated the Story of Enoch?](#)

## **Where would Joseph Smith have found out that the book Enoch kept put fear into the people?**

Enoch keeps a book of remembrance in Moses 6:46. Reading from the book puts fear into the people, in 6:47

*And as Enoch spake forth the words of God, the people trembled, and could not stand in his presence.*

The Book of Giants and 1 Enoch also mention a similar reaction from the people after Enoch finishes his preaching.

How did Joseph Smith manage to get this part of the storyline correct?

See:

- [Jeffrey M. Bradshaw - KnoWhy OTLO5C – Could Joseph Smith Have Drawn On Ancient Manuscripts When He Translated the Story of Enoch?](#)

## Why do the Book of Moses and Book of Giants both mention that the wicked people of Enoch's day conceived their children in sin?

In Moses 6:55, Enoch says:

*And the Lord spake unto Adam, saying: Inasmuch as thy children are conceived in sin, even so when they begin to grow up, sin conceiveth in their hearts, and they taste the bitter, that they may know to prize the good.*

The Book of Giants agrees with Joseph Smith's Enoch:

*Let it be known to you that ... your activity and that of [your] wives and of your children ... through your fornication*

What are the odds the Book of Moses would agree so strongly with other accounts of Enoch?

See:

- [Jeffrey M. Bradshaw - KnowWhy OTLO5C — Could Joseph Smith Have Drawn On Ancient Manuscripts When He Translated the Story of Enoch?](#)

## What would make Joseph Smith think that Enoch defeated his enemies?

In Moses 7:13 we read that Enoch's enemies did not repent but instead came to battle against him and lost:

*And so great was the faith of Enoch that he led the people of God, and their enemies came to battle against them; and he spake the word of the Lord, and the earth trembled, and the mountains fled, even according to his command; and the rivers of water were turned out of their course; and the roar of the lions was heard out of the wilderness; and all nations feared greatly, so powerful was the word of Enoch, and so great was the power of the language which God had given him.*

This resembles the Book of Giants in which [the leader of the gibborim describes his defeat in battle:](#)

*[... I am a] [mighty warrior], and by the mighty strength of my arm and my own great strength [I went up against a]ll mortals, and I have made war against them; but I am not ... able to stand against them.*

Surely all these correspondences are not a coincidence? Where would Joseph Smith have learned so much about the story of Enoch?

See:

- [Jeffrey M. Bradshaw - KnoWhy OTLO5C – Could Joseph Smith Have Drawn On Ancient Manuscripts When He Translated the Story of Enoch?](#)

## **Why would the Book of Moses and Book of Giants both specifically mention roaring beasts following the battle of Enoch?**

Moses 7:13 describes the battle led by Enoch:

*And so great was the faith of Enoch that he led the people of God, and their enemies came to battle against them; and he spake the word of the Lord, and the earth trembled, and the mountains fled, even according to his command; and the rivers of water were turned out of their course; and the roar of the lions was heard out of the wilderness; and all nations feared greatly, so powerful was the word of Enoch, and so great was the power of the language which God had given him.*

Why would Joseph Smith say that the roars of lions were heard? Notably, the Book of Giants also mentions the roaring of beasts after the battle:

*the roar of the wild beasts has come and they bellowed a feral roar.*

Where would Joseph Smith have gotten this curious idea?

See:

- [Jeffrey M. Bradshaw - KnoWhy OTLO5C – Could Joseph Smith Have Drawn On Ancient Manuscripts When He Translated the Story of Enoch?](#)

## **Why do other sources agree that Enoch was shown all generations?**

In Moses 7:4 we read:

*And I saw the Lord; and he stood before my face, and he talked with me, even as a man talketh one with another, face to face; and he said unto me: Look, and I will show unto thee the world for the space of many generations.*

This is similar to 3 Enoch 45 which says:

*And I saw Adam and his generation, their deeds and their thoughts (etc.) . . . And every deed of every generation, whether done or to be done in the time to come, to all generations, till the end of time.*

Why are there so many correspondences between the Book of Moses and other accounts of Enoch?

See:

- [Strong Reasons - The Book of Enoch and the Book of Moses](#)

## **Why would Joseph Smith say that the Lord's House shall be called Jerusalem?**

Moses 7:62 reads:

*And righteousness will I send down out of heaven; and truth will I send forth out of the earth, to bear testimony of mine Only Begotten; his resurrection from the dead; yea, and also the resurrection of all men; and righteousness and truth will I cause to sweep the earth as with a flood, to gather out mine elect from the four quarters of the earth, unto a place which I shall prepare, an Holy City, that my people may gird up their loins, and be looking forth for the time of my coming; for there shall be my tabernacle, and it shall be called Zion, a New Jerusalem.*

This echoes the [Testament of Levi 10:4 \(quoting from an otherwise unknown Enoch source\)](#) which reads:

*For the house which the Lord shall choose shall be called Jerusalem, as the Book of Enoch the Righteous maintains.*

Where would Joseph Smith have read about this?

See:

- [Strong Reasons - The Book of Enoch and the Book of Moses](#)

## Where would Joseph Smith have gotten the idea that Enoch was in possession of Adam's Book?

In Moses 6:51-68 Enoch quotes from the book of Adam. This echoes 2 Enoch 33:11-12 which reads:

*For I will give you an intercessor, Enoch; Michael, on account of your handwritings and the handwritings of your fathers—Adam and Seth. They will not be destroyed until the final age. For I have commanded my angels to guard them and to command the things of time to preserve the handwritings of your fathers so that they might not perish in the impending flood.*

How would Joseph Smith know that Adam kept a book?

See:

- [Strong Reasons - The Book of Enoch and the Book of Moses](#)

## Is it a coincidence that the Book of Enoch also claims (like the Book of Moses) that Enoch's book was to be restored?

In Moses 1:41 we read:

*And in a day when the children of men shall esteem my words as naught and take many of them from the book which thou shalt write, behold, I will raise up another like unto thee; and they shall be had again among the children of men—among as many as shall believe.*

This echoes 2 Enoch 35:1-3 which reads:

*And I will leave a righteous man (Noah), a member of your tribe, together with all his house, who will act in accordance with my will. And from their seed will arise a generation, the last of many, and very rapacious. And I shall raise up for that generation someone who will reveal to them the books in your handwriting and those of your fathers, by means of which the guardians of the earth will show themselves to the faithful men. And they will be recounted to that generation, and they will be glorified in the end more than at the first.*

Where was Joseph Smith getting all this information on Enoch?

See:

- [Strong Reasons - The Book of Enoch and the Book of Moses](#)



## Where would Joseph Smith have gotten the idea that Enoch saw the saints arise?

Moses 7:56 reads:

*And he heard a loud voice; and the heavens were veiled; and all the creations of God mourned; and the earth groaned; and the rocks were rent; and the saints arose, and were crowned at the right hand of the Son of Man, with crowns of glory;*

This echoes 3 Enoch 44:7 which reads:

*I saw the souls of the fathers of the world, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the rest of the righteous, who had been raised from their graves and had ascended to heaven.*

Where would Joseph Smith have learned this about Enoch?

See:

- [Strong Reasons - The Book of Enoch and the Book of Moses](#)

## Why do other books also claim that Enoch saw the return of Zion from Heaven?

Moses 7:63 reads:

*And the Lord said unto Enoch: Then shalt thou and all thy city meet them there, and we will receive them into our bosom, and they shall see us; and we will fall upon their necks, and they shall fall upon our necks, and we will kiss each other;*

This echoes 1 Enoch 39:1 which reads:

*And it shall come to pass in those days that the elect and holy children will descend from the high heavens, and their seed will become one with the children of men.*

Why does the Book of Moses agree with other texts like this?

See:

- [Strong Reasons - The Book of Enoch and the Book of Moses](#)

## Was it a lucky guess by Joseph Smith that Enoch saw the chains of Satan?

In Moses 7:26 we read

*And he beheld Satan; and he had a great chain in his hand, and it veiled the whole face of the earth with darkness; and he looked up and laughed, and his angels rejoiced.*

This echoes 1 Enoch 53:3-4 which reads

*So I saw all the angels of plague cooperating and preparing all the chains of Satan. And I asked the angel of peace, who was going with me, For whom are they preparing these chains?*

Why is there such a correspondence between the Book of Moses and other accounts of Enoch?

See:

- [Strong Reasons - The Book of Enoch and the Book of Moses](#)

## Is it luck that Joseph's Smith account of Enoch ends on a note of hope?

In Moses 6:52, Enoch offers hope to the people:

*And he also said unto him: If thou wilt turn unto me, and hearken unto my voice, and believe, and repent of all thy transgressions, and be baptized, even in water, in the name of mine Only Begotten Son, who is full of grace and truth, which is Jesus Christ, the only name which shall be given under heaven, whereby salvation shall come unto the children of men, ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, asking all things in his name, and whatsoever ye shall ask, it shall be given you.*

Jeffrey M. Bradshaw remarks:

*In the Book of Giants, Enoch also gives hope to the wicked through repentance: "Now, then, unfasten your chains [of sin]... and pray." In addition, Reeves conjectures that another difficult-to-reconstruct phrase in the Book of Giants might also be understood as an "allusion to a probationary period for the repentance of the Giants.*

[- Jeffrey M. Bradshaw - KnoWhy OTLO5C – Could Joseph Smith Have Drawn On Ancient Manuscripts When He Translated the Story of Enoch?](#)

Why are there such similarities between the Book of Moses and accounts of Enoch (discovered much later)?

See:

- [Jeffrey M. Bradshaw - KnoWhy OTLO5C – Could Joseph Smith Have Drawn On Ancient Manuscripts When He Translated the Story of Enoch?](#)

## **Why is there a “blatant pun” on the name Moses in the Joseph Smith translation of the Bible, before the Egyptian meaning of Moses's name was known to scholars?**

Recent scholarship has found that the name Moses [comes from the Egyptian verb “to beget,” which is also the root for the Egyptian word for child, or in the case of a male child, a “son.”](#)

Nathan J. Arp explains an interesting pun in Joseph Smith's translation of the Bible:

*In 1830 Joseph Smith embarked on a project he framed as a translation of the Bible with the intent to restore by revelation parts of the Bible that had been lost or changed from the original. One of these restored sections of the Bible was a prophecy the Lord gave Joseph who was sold into Egypt, regarding Moses. Almost certainly unaware of the possible Egyptian etymology for the name of Moses, Joseph Smith dictated the following text in July 1832 that contains a pun on the name of Moses and its Egyptian meaning of son:*

*For a seer will I raise up to deliver my people out of the land of Egypt; and he shall be called Moses And by this name he shall know that he is of thy house [Joseph's house]; for he shall be nursed by the king's daughter, and shall be called her son. (Joseph Smith Translation, Genesis 50:29)*

*According to this prophecy, the name of Moses was the key Moses would employ to unlock his own identity and recognize his connection to his ancestor Joseph and by extension to the rest of the children of Israel, the Hebrews. This prophecy also follows the same Egyptian pun between the name Moses and its Egyptian meaning of son in Exodus 2:10; “And the child grew, and she brought him unto Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. And she called his name Moses.”*

[- Nathan J. Arp - Joseph Knew First: Moses, the Egyptian Son](#)

Arp continues:

*The appearance of a blatant pun on the Egyptian etymology of the name Moses in the prophecy that Smith restored and its probable role as a key thematic element in the restored narratives in the Book of Moses support the authenticity of these texts, especially when one considers these elements as “firsts” in the modern era. Before the first known scholars published the idea that Moses’s name might be Egyptian and certainly before a general scholarly consensus was reached, the texts Joseph Smith restored contained evidence to support Moses’s Egyptian heritage. Indeed, Joseph the patriarch, who prophesied of Moses, and Joseph Smith Jr., who restored these texts, knew first!*

*- [Nathan J. Arp - Joseph Knew First: Moses, the Egyptian Son](#)*

How would Joseph Smith have known the meaning of Moses before the scholars?

See:

- [Nathan J. Arp - Joseph Knew First: Moses, the Egyptian Son](#)

## **Isn’t it unexpected that the Book of Moses would contain the expression “Behold I”?**

In the Book of Moses original manuscript, Moses 1:3 reads:

*And God spake unto Moses, saying, Behold I, I am the Lord God Almighty, and Endless is my name.*

Moses 4:1 similarly reads:

*That Satan, whom thou hast commanded in the name of mine Only Begotten, is the same which was from the beginning, and he came before me, saying—Behold I, send me, I will be thy son, and I will redeem all mankind, that one soul shall not be lost.*

This curious wording is not what we would expect in English, however Kent P. Jackson explains:

*In my judgment, the best explanation for “Behold I” is found in the grammar of the Hebrew Bible. The Hebrew construction hinēnî is found in about 180 locations in the Old Testament. It means “Behold I.” The construction contains the word hinnēh, “behold,” to which is affixed the suffix -nî, which is a first-person-singular pronoun. The word hinnēh does not translate easily into today’s English. It is not a verb and thus does not mean “behold” in the sense of “to look” or “to see.” It can be described best as an exclamatory particle that has the purpose of drawing the attention of the hearer to the speaker. In some places in the King James Version, it is translated*

*with the English word lo, a nonverbal exclamatory that reproduces better the intent of the Hebrew, as in “Lo, I die” (Gen. 50:5).*

- [Kent P. Jackson - Behold I](#)

Jackson concludes:

*That the unexpected combination “Behold I” appears in two places in the Joseph Smith Translation of Genesis suggests strongly that neither occurrence was a scribal error or an inadvertent misstatement by Joseph Smith. The Prophet is not recorded elsewhere as ever having employed such a construction, and thus it is unlikely that it represents his own speech pattern. Moreover, it is not a construction that is found in the Book of Mormon or in the King James Version of the Bible.<sup>13</sup> Consistent with English usage, “Behold I” was translated out of the English Bible, just as it was edited out of the book of Moses. Whereas the King James translation was a significant model for the language of the Prophet’s revelations and translations, it clearly was not the model for “Behold I.” I suggest that both occurrences of “Behold I” in the New Translation were once in the Hebrew text of Genesis—in passages that were lost since antiquity but were restored anew through the Prophet Joseph Smith.*

- [Kent P. Jackson - Behold I](#)

Where would Joseph Smith have learned this kind of Hebrew language?

See:

- [Kent P. Jackson - Behold I](#)

## **Would we expect Joseph Smith to include performative indicators in the Book of Moses?**

David M. Calabro explains how the Book of Moses contains performative indicators:

*The text itself provides some clues that indicate a performative context. At the conclusion of each major section of the book are statements that relate the narrative to a contemporary audience. These asides to the audience, each of which ends with the word amen, can be examined for what they may imply about the context in which the Book of Moses was meant to be read.*

- [David M. Calabro - An Early Christian Context for the Book of Moses](#)

These indicators are found in:

- *Moses 1:42*
- *Moses 4:32*
- *Moses 5:58–59*
- *Moses 6:65–68*

Calabro continues:

*What do we learn from these asides to the audience? First, they seem to indicate a performative context in which the text was recited to an audience of believers. We see, for instance, a shift from a general narrative voice, with God spoken of in the third person, to narration in which God speaks in the first person. The shift is evocative of a dramatic context in which a single person plays the double role of actor and narrator. The verbs used in the asides to the audience are also significant: “These words were spoken unto Moses in the mount . . . and now they are spoken unto you. Show them not unto any except them that believe . . . And these are the words which I spake unto my servant Moses . . . and I have spoken them unto you. See thou show them unto no man . . . except them that believe.” These verbs imply that the audience of the book is expected to experience the text aurally, as Moses did. They also imply that the text exists in written form, such that one might “show” the words to another outside of the performative context (an action that the audience is cautioned about).*

- [\*David M. Calabro - An Early Christian Context for the Book of Moses\*](#)

Is this what we would expect if Joseph Smith wrote the book of Moses?

See:

- [\*David M. Calabro - An Early Christian Context for the Book of Moses\*](#)

## **Why is there chiasmus in the Book of Abraham?**

The Book of Abraham (like the Book of Mormon and the Book of Moses) contains examples of chiasmus such as in Abraham 1:3:

*A It was conferred upon me  
 B from the fathers;  
 C it came down from the fathers, from the beginning of time,  
 D yea, even from the beginning,  
 D' or before the foundation of the earth,  
 C' down to the present time, even the right of the firstborn, or the first man, who is  
 Adam, or first father,  
 B' through the fathers  
 A' unto me.*

How did Joseph Smith know about chiasmus and why would he have included examples in the Book of Abraham if no one noticed it in the Book of Mormon?

See:

- [Pearl of Great Price Central- Chiasmus in the Book of Abraham](#)

## How do we account for the Egyptianisms in the Book of Abraham?

John Gee notes an interesting Egyptianism in the Book of Abraham:

*The manuscripts of the Book of Abraham produce one interesting feature, an Egyptianism, which might indicate some knowledge of Egyptian on Joseph Smith's part. The earliest manuscript (2) containing Abraham 1:17 reads "and this because their hearts are turned they have turned their hearts away from me." The phrase "their hearts are turned" was crossed out and "they have turned their hearts" was written immediately afterwards. In Egyptian of the time period of the Joseph Smith Papyri the passive is expressed by the use of a third person plural. So the two phrases would be identical in Egyptian. The translator has to decide which way to render the passage. While this is true of Egyptian of the time period of the papyri, it is not true of Greek, or Latin, or Hebrew, or Aramaic, or even classical Egyptian; English makes a distinction between the two even if late twentieth century and twenty-first century English sometimes uses a third person plural for an indefinite subject.*

*- [John Gee - Joseph Smith and Ancient Egypt](#)*

Where would Joseph Smith have learned about this?

See:

- [John Gee - Joseph Smith and Ancient Egypt](#)
- [Egyptianisms in the Book of Abraham - Pearl of Great Price Central](#)

## Why does the Book of Abraham contain Egyptian wordplays?

In Abraham 3:17–18 we read:

*Now, if there be two things, one above the other, and the moon be above the earth, then it may be that a planet or a star may exist above it; and there is nothing that the Lord thy God shall take in his heart to do but what he will do it.*

*Howbeit that he made the greater star; as, also, if there be two spirits, and one shall be more intelligent than the other, yet these two spirits, notwithstanding one is more intelligent than the other, have no beginning; they existed before, they shall have no end, they shall exist after, for they are gnolaum, or eternal.*

John Gee comments on this scripture:

*The conversation between Abraham and the Lord shifts from a discussion of heavenly bodies to spiritual beings [halfway through the chapter]. This reflects a play on words that Egyptians often use between a star (ach) and a spirit (ich). The shift is done by means of a comparison: “Now, if there be two things, one above the other, and the moon be above the earth, then it may be that a planet or a star [ach] may exist above it; . . . as, also, if there be two spirits [ich], and one shall be more intelligent than the other” (Abraham 3:17–18). In an Egyptian context, the play on words would strengthen the parallel. . . . The Egyptian play on words between star and spirit allows the astronomical teachings to flow seamlessly into teachings about the preexistence which follow immediately thereafter.*

*- [John Gee, An Introduction to the Book of Abraham, 117, 119](#)*

How would Joseph Smith know about common Egyptian wordplays like this?

See:

- [Pearl of Great Price Central - Egyptianisms in the Book of Abraham](#)

## **How did Joseph Smith manage to understand facsimiles?**

Joseph Smith said that Figure 6 of Facsimile 2 in the Book of Abraham: *Represents this earth in its four quarters*. Figure 6 contains 4 images which represent the four sons of the god Horus.

Richard H. Wilkinson remarks how they indeed represent the four directions:

*The earliest reference to these four gods is found in the Pyramid Texts [ca. 2350–2100 BC] where they are said to be the children and also the “souls” of [the god] Horus. They are also called the “friends of the king” and assist the deceased monarch in ascending into the sky (PT 1278–79). The same gods were also known as the sons of Osiris and were later said to be members of the group called “the seven blessed ones” whose job was to protect the netherworld god’s coffin. Their*



*afterlife mythology led to important roles in the funerary assemblage, particularly in association with the containers now traditionally called canopic jars in which the internal organs of the deceased were preserved. . . . The group may have been based on the symbolic completeness of the number four alone, but they are often given geographic associations and hence became a kind of “regional” group. . . . The four gods were sometimes depicted on the sides of the canopic chest and had specific symbolic orientations, with Imsety usually being aligned with the south, Hapy with the north, Duamutef with the east and Qebehsenuef with the west.*

*- Richard H. Wilkinson, [The Complete Gods and Goddesses of Ancient Egypt \(London: Thames and Hudson, 2003\), 88.](#)*

How would Joseph Smith know this interpretation?

See:

- [John Gee - Notes on the Sons of Horus](#)
- [Pearl of Great Price Central - The Four Sons of Horus \(Facsimile 2, Figure 6\)](#)

## **If Joseph Smith had gotten names in the Book of Abraham from his environment, then why would he choose the name Shulem rather than Shillem?**

In facsimile 3, figure 5, Joseph Smith explains:

*Shulem, one of the king’s principal waiters, as represented by the characters above his hand*

John Gee notes that the name Shulem is widely attested in Semitic languages, interestingly [the form of the name varies across time and place](#). He summarizes:

*The form of Shulem’s name is attested only at two times: the time period of Abraham and the time period of the Joseph Smith papyri. (Shulem thus constitutes a Book of Abraham bullseye.) If Joseph Smith had gotten the name from his environment, the name would have been Shillem.*

*- [John Gee - Shulem, One of the King’s Principal Waiters](#)*

What are the odds of this “bullseye” in the Book of Abraham?

See:

- [John Gee - Shulem, One of the King’s Principal Waiters](#)
- [Pearl of Great Price Central - Shulem, One of the King’s Principal Waiters](#)

## Why would Joseph Smith take a chance on disagreeing with creatio ex nihilo?

The dominant view within Christianity is that God created the universe ex nihilo, whereas the Book of Abraham presents an ex materia view. For example in Abraham 3:24:

*And there stood one among them that was like unto God, and he said unto those who were with him: We will go down, for there is space there, and we will take of these materials, and we will make an earth whereon these may dwell;*

Pearl of Great Price Central remarks:

*Scholars now recognize that the ancient cultures of Egypt, Syria-Canaan, and Mesopotamia did not seem to countenance ideas of creation ex nihilo but rather envisioned creation as the emergence of an ordered cosmos out of pre-existing chaos. This pre-ordered chaos is often personified as a primordial cosmic ocean or as a primeval cosmic combat between gods in ancient Near Eastern creation myths. For instance, in ancient Egyptian mythology, the earth first emerged as a primeval hillock springing out of a preexisting, chaotic, and unorganized primordial ocean called Nun.<sup>6</sup> In the Mesopotamian myth known today as Enuma Elish (from the opening lines of the text meaning “when on high” in ancient Akkadian), the evil goddess Tiamat is defeated in battle by the god Marduk and her body is split in half to form the cosmos.*

- [Pearl of Great Price Central - Creation from Chaos](#)

How would Joseph Smith know this?

See:

- [Pearl of Great Price Central - Creation from Chaos](#)

## Why would Joseph Smith go against typical Jewish and Christian beliefs in his day by saying that the creation was the work of a divine council?

The Book of Abraham clearly describes a plurality of Gods involved in creation, such as in Abraham 4:1:

*And then the Lord said: Let us go down. And they went down at the beginning, and they, that is the Gods, organized and formed the heavens and the earth.*

Intriguingly, the Book of Abraham includes reference to a “divine council” such as in Abraham 4:26:

*And the Gods took counsel among themselves and said: Let us go down and form man in our image, after our likeness; and we will give them dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.*

This is in stark contrast to the typical Jewish and Christian views of Joseph Smith's day but [scholars now recognize a divine council as part of the Genesis account and its appearance in other ancient Near Eastern texts.](#)

If scholars have only recently discovered this, then where would Joseph Smith have gotten the idea from?

See:

- [Stephen O. Smoot - Council, Chaos, and Creation in the Book of Abraham](#)
- [Pearl of Great Price Central - The Divine Council](#)

## **What would have made Joseph Smith think that Abraham wrote a book of scripture if ancient texts supporting this were only discovered later and it is not mentioned anywhere in the Bible?**

The very existence of a Book of Abraham is attested in other sources. Jeff Lindsay explains:

*According to Joseph Smith, there was a Book of Abraham. The Bible never mentions this, and many Bible scholars have assumed that Abraham was an illiterate farmer who would not have written a book. There was nothing in Joseph Smith's information environment to give him the idea that Abraham wrote a book of scripture. Since Joseph Smith's day, numerous sources have been discovered that point to the existence of recorded writings from Abraham. The previously mentioned Apocalypse of Abraham, the Testament of Abraham, and Jubilees are examples. Many other documents suggest that Abraham kept written records, or that records containing the words of Abraham existed. The Babylonian Talmud calls the book of "Jashar" the "book of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" (p. 123). The Muslim writer al-Masudi (died 956 A.D.) wrote that God revealed ten sacred books to Abraham (p. 353). Vettius Valens (A.D. 102-152) wrote a treatise on astrology that mentioned Abraham, referring to what "Abraham showed us in his books about this subject, clarifying the explanations of others and his own, discovering and testing other things, especially concerning the beginnings of journeys abroad. .*

. " (p. 477). Firmicus Maternus in the fourth century refers to a "tractate excerpted from the books of Abraham" (p. 479).

[- Jeff Lindsay - Questions about the Book of Abraham, Part 3: Does It Agree with other Ancient Texts?](#)

Where would Joseph Smith have gotten the idea that Abraham wrote a book?

See:

- [Jeff Lindsay - Questions about the Book of Abraham, Part 3: Does It Agree with other Ancient Texts?](#)

## **Why do ancient texts unavailable to Joseph Smith also claim (like the Book of Abraham does) that Abraham was to be sacrificed?**

Jeff Lindsay explains:

*Facsimile 1 in the Book of Abraham shows Abraham on a pagan altar about to be sacrificed by an idolatrous priest, and chapter 1 relates the story of how Abraham was seized, bound, and put on an altar to be sacrificed by a pagan priest, who had previously sacrificed three virgins on the same altar because they refused to worship idols.*

*All this is wildly innovative, based on what Joseph Smith could have known about Abraham, but it fits well with numerous ancient traditions about Abraham. In fact, so many ancient texts refer to one or more attempts to the sacrifice Abraham that one can wonder why the Bible is lacking that detail. A majority of these texts indicate that the attempted sacrifice was made by throwing Abraham into fire, from which he was delivered by God's power. Though the Book of Abraham does not say that Abraham or sacrificed victims were thrown into a fire, ancient animal sacrifices typically involved killing the animal and then burning the victim, and the same may have applied to the human sacrifices mentioned in the Book of Abraham. On the other hand, since the name of the Chaldean city, "Ur," also means fire in Hebrew, perhaps some writers have assumed that Abraham's escape from Ur of the Chaldeans was deliverance from fire, possibly blending fire into the story of his deliverance from sacrifice.*

[- Jeff Lindsay - Questions about the Book of Abraham, Part 3: Does It Agree with other Ancient Texts?](#)

Where did Joseph Smith get the idea that Abraham was going to be sacrificed?

See:

- [Jeff Lindsay - Questions about the Book of Abraham, Part 3: Does It Agree with other Ancient Texts?](#)

## **Where would Joseph Smith have learned the tradition that Abraham was saved by God before being sacrificed?**

Abraham 1:15-17 describes Abraham being delivered by the Lord:

*And as they lifted up their hands upon me, that they might offer me up and take away my life, behold, I lifted up my voice unto the Lord my God, and the Lord hearkened and heard, and he filled me with the vision of the Almighty, and the angel of his presence stood by me, and immediately unloosed my bands;*

*And his voice was unto me: Abraham, Abraham, behold, my name is Jehovah, and I have heard thee, and have come down to deliver thee, and to take thee away from thy father's house, and from all thy kinsfolk, into a strange land which thou knowest not of;*

*And this because they have turned their hearts away from me, to worship the god of Elkenah, and the god of Libnah, and the god of Mahmackrah, and the god of Korash, and the god of Pharaoh, king of Egypt; therefore I have come down to visit them, and to destroy him who hath lifted up his hand against thee, Abraham, my son, to take away thy life.*

[Jeff Lindsay notes](#) how many other texts (discovered after the Book of Abraham) include similar accounts, namely:

- Biblical Antiquities
- Tanna debe Eliyahu
- Midrash Rabbah
- The Babylonian Talmud
- The Story of Abraham our Father from What Appended to Him with Nimrod
- A Study (Midrash) of Abraham our Father

Why do so many texts agree with the Book of Abraham in this regard?

See:

- [Jeff Lindsay - Questions about the Book of Abraham, Part 3: Does It Agree with other Ancient Texts?](#)

## Why are there other traditions that agree with the Book of Abraham that Terah sought to kill his son Abraham?

Abraham 1:5,7 describes how Abraham's fathers were responsible for his attempted sacrifice:

*My fathers, having turned from their righteousness, and from the holy commandments which the Lord their God had given unto them, unto the worshiping of the gods of the heathen, utterly refused to hearken to my voice;*

*Therefore they turned their hearts to the sacrifice of the heathen in offering up their children unto these dumb idols, and hearkened not unto my voice, but endeavored to take away my life by the hand of the priest of Elkenah. The priest of Elkenah was also the priest of Pharaoh.*

[Jeff Lindsay notes](#) how many other texts also make this point:

- The Jewish commentator Rashi
- The Chronicles of Jerahmeel
- The Quran
- Many Muslim texts
- An account from the Falasha Jews of Ethiopia

Where would Joseph Smith have found out about these traditions?

See:

- [Jeff Lindsay - Questions about the Book of Abraham, Part 3: Does It Agree with other Ancient Texts?](#)

## Where would Joseph Smith have learned that Terah repents after trying to kill Abraham?

In Abraham 1:39, Terah repents for trying to kill Abraham:

*Accordingly a famine prevailed throughout all the land of Chaldea, and my father was sorely tormented because of the famine, and he repented of the evil which he had determined against me, to take away my life.*

However this repentance is short-lived as he returns to idolatry in Abraham 2:5:

*And the famine abated; and my father tarried in Haran and dwelt there, as there were many flocks in Haran; and my father turned again unto his idolatry, therefore he continued in Haran.*

[Jeff Lindsay notes](#) how this correspond with other texts such as:

- The writings of Ibn Al-Tayyib
- The Chronicles of Jerahmeel
- Tanna debe Eliyahu

Where was Joseph Smith getting this information from?

See:

- [Jeff Lindsay - Questions about the Book of Abraham, Part 3: Does It Agree with other Ancient Texts?](#)

## **Why do ancient texts agree about the pervasive nature of idolatry in Abraham's day?**

Widespread idolatry is a major theme in the Book of Abraham yet it is not included in the biblical account. [Jeff Lindsay notes](#) how other texts agree on this point with the Book of Abraham. Such as:

- Pesikta Rabbati
- The Book of Jasher
- The Book of the Cave of Treasures
- Conflict of Adam and Eve with Satan
- The writings of Michael Glycas
- The Book of the Rolls
- The writings of Symeon Logothetes
- The writings of Michael the Syrian

Why do so many texts agree with the Book of Abraham?

See:

- [Jeff Lindsay - Questions about the Book of Abraham, Part 3: Does It Agree with other Ancient Texts?](#)

## **Is it luck that ancient texts claim (like the Book of Abraham) that children were being sacrificed to idols in Abraham's area?**

In Abraham 1:8 we learn that children were being sacrificed to idols:

*Now, at this time it was the custom of the priest of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, to offer up upon the altar which was built in the land of Chaldea, for the offering unto these strange gods, men, women, and children.*

[Jeff Lindsay notes](#) how this is also confirmed by other texts including:

- The Kebra Nagast
- The Book of the Cave of Treasures
- An anonymous Christian chronicle
- Book of the Rolls
- The Conflict of Adam and Eve with Satan
- The writings of the Persian historian al-Biruni
- Pseudo-Philo's Biblical Antiquities
- Chronicles of Jerahmeel
- Many Jewish and Arabic texts

Why would so many texts agree with Joseph Smith? Where did he learn this information from?

See:

- [Jeff Lindsay - Questions about the Book of Abraham, Part 3: Does It Agree with other Ancient Texts?](#)

## **Why do the Genesis Apocryphon and the Book of Noah support the Book of Abraham's claim that Abraham had access to sacred records from the patriarchs?**

In Abraham 1:31 we learn that Abraham had the records of the patriarchs:

*But the records of the fathers, even the patriarchs, concerning the right of Priesthood, the Lord my God preserved in mine own hands; therefore a knowledge of the beginning of the creation, and also of the planets, and of the stars, as they were made known unto the fathers, have I kept even unto this day, and I shall endeavor to write some of these things upon this record, for the benefit of my posterity that shall come after me.*

[Jeff Lindsay notes](#) how The Genesis Apocryphon and the Book of Noah support this claim.

What are the odds that Joseph Smith's story of Abraham would be supported by other ancient texts?

See:



- [Jeff Lindsay - Questions about the Book of Abraham, Part 3: Does It Agree with other Ancient Texts?](#)

## **Why do ancient texts not available to Joseph Smith agree with the Book of Abraham's claim that Abraham received the priesthood and was a High Priest?**

In Abraham 1:2 we read:

*And, finding there was greater happiness and peace and rest for me, I sought for the blessings of the fathers, and the right whereunto I should be ordained to administer the same; having been myself a follower of righteousness, desiring also to be one who possessed great knowledge, and to be a greater follower of righteousness, and to possess a greater knowledge, and to be a father of many nations, a prince of peace, and desiring to receive instructions, and to keep the commandments of God, I became a rightful heir, a High Priest, holding the right belonging to the fathers.*

Where did Joseph Smith learn that Abraham was a high priest if it is not found in the biblical account?

[Jeff Lindsay notes](#) how other texts agree with this claim such as:

- Midrash Rabbah
- The writings of George Syncellus
- Pesikta Rabbati
- The writings of Ibn Al-Tayyib, the Arabic Nestorian Christian

If Joseph Smith wrote the Book of Abraham would we expect so many correspondences with other texts unavailable to him?

See:

- [Jeff Lindsay - Questions about the Book of Abraham, Part 3: Does It Agree with other Ancient Texts?](#)

## **Why do ancient texts agree with the Book of Abraham's claim that Abraham preached against his fathers' idolatry?**

In Abraham 1:5 we read that Abraham preached against his fathers idolatry:

*My fathers, having turned from their righteousness, and from the holy commandments which the Lord their God had given unto them, unto the worshipping of the gods of the heathen, utterly refused to hearken to my voice;*

[Jeff Lindsay notes](#) how this is consistent with other ancient texts including:

- The Story of Abraham our Father from What Appended to Him with Nimrod
- The writings of George Syncellus, a Byzantine scholar
- The writings of Ibn Kathir, a Syrian Muslim authority in the fourteenth century

Where was Joseph Smith getting this information from?

See:

- [Jeff Lindsay - Questions about the Book of Abraham, Part 3: Does It Agree with other Ancient Texts?](#)

## **Wouldn't it have been odd for Joseph Smith to think Abraham taught astronomy?**

The Book of Abraham claims that Abraham taught astronomy which would have seemed odd to those in Joseph Smith's day.

[Jeff Lindsay notes](#) how many ancient texts support this part of the story:

- The writings of Josephus
- The writings of the Jewish writer, Artapanus
- The writings of Eupolemus
- The Babylonian Talmud
- The Chronicles of Jerahmeel
- The writings of George Syncellus, a Byzantine scholar
- The Clementine Recognitions
- The writings of Ioannes Zonaras, a twelfth-century Byzantine historian and monk
- The writings of Michael Glycas, a Byzantine historian of the twelfth century
- The writings of Alcuin, a deacon in the eighth century
- The writings of Symeon Logothetes
- The writings of Vettius Valens

How did Joseph Smith know about Abraham's dealings with astronomy? What evidence is there that Joseph was reading Josephus?

See:

- [Jeff Lindsay - Questions about the Book of Abraham, Part 3: Does It Agree with other Ancient Texts?](#)

## Why do ninth-century Hebrew documents agree with the Book of Abraham that it was God who taught Abraham astronomy?

In Abraham 3 it is God who teaches Abraham about the stars and the planets. Such as in verse 5:

*And the Lord said unto me: The planet which is the lesser light, lesser than that which is to rule the day, even the night, is above or greater than that upon which thou standest in point of reckoning, for it moveth in order more slow; this is in order because it standeth above the earth upon which thou standest, therefore the reckoning of its time is not so many as to its number of days, and of months, and of years.*

[Jeff Lindsay notes](#) how this is attested in ancient documents such as:

- The ninth-century Hebrew document Pesikta Rabbati
- The Midrash Rabbah

Where would Joseph have learned this specific part of Abraham's story?

See:

- [Jeff Lindsay - Questions about the Book of Abraham, Part 3: Does It Agree with other Ancient Texts?](#)

## Why do other books support the Book of Abraham's claim that Abraham was desirous to be one who possesses great knowledge?

In Abraham 1:2 we read that Abraham desired to possess great knowledge:

*And, finding there was greater happiness and peace and rest for me, I sought for the blessings of the fathers, and the right whereunto I should be ordained to administer the same; **having been myself a follower of righteousness, desiring also to be one who possessed great knowledge**, and to be a greater follower of righteousness, and to possess a greater knowledge, and to be a father of many nations, a prince of peace, and desiring to receive instructions, and to keep*

*the commandments of God, I became a rightful heir, a High Priest, holding the right belonging to the fathers. (emphasis added)*

[Jeff Lindsay notes](#) how this is attested in other ancient texts:

- The writings of Philo of Alexandria
- The early Christian Clementine Recognitions

Where did Joseph Smith get all his information from?

See:

- [Jeff Lindsay - Questions about the Book of Abraham, Part 3: Does It Agree with other Ancient Texts?](#)

## **Why does the Genesis Apocryphon from the Dead Sea Scrolls (like the Book of Abraham) claim that God is the one who warns Abraham that the Egyptians will want to kill him to get his wife?**

In Abraham 2:22-23 the Lord warns Abraham:

*And it came to pass when I was come near to enter into Egypt, the Lord said unto me: Behold, Sarai, thy wife, is a very fair woman to look upon;*

*Therefore it shall come to pass, when the Egyptians shall see her, they will say—She is his wife; and they will kill you, but they will save her alive; therefore see that ye do on this wise:*

The idea that God told Abraham this is not found in the Bible, so where did Joseph get it from?

Jeff Lindsay remarks:

*The Genesis Apocryphon from the Dead Sea Scrolls (pp. 26-29 in Tvedtnes et al.) indicates that Abraham had a dream which warned him of the threat to his life in Egypt, and of the need to have his wife claim to be his sister (p. 27).*

*- [Jeff Lindsay - Questions about the Book of Abraham, Part 3: Does It Agree with other Ancient Texts?](#)*

Was this a lucky guess by Joseph Smith?

See:

- [Jeff Lindsay - Questions about the Book of Abraham, Part 3: Does It Agree with other Ancient Texts?](#)

## **Why do other books also claim that God showed Abraham the heavens and those in the premortal existence?**

In Abraham 3, God shows Abraham the premortal world:

*Now the Lord had shown unto me, Abraham, the intelligences that were organized before the world was; and among all these there were many of the noble and great ones;*

*And God saw these souls that they were good, and he stood in the midst of them, and he said: These I will make my rulers; for he stood among those that were spirits, and he saw that they were good; and he said unto me: Abraham, thou art one of them; thou wast chosen before thou wast born.*

[Jeff Lindsay notes](#) how this is not found in the Bible but is found in other ancient documents:

- The Sefer Yetzirah or "Book of Creation"
- The Apocalypse of Abraham
- The Midrash Rabbah,

Why does the Book of Abraham correspond to all these other ancient documents?

See:

- [Jeff Lindsay - Questions about the Book of Abraham, Part 3: Does It Agree with other Ancient Texts?](#)

## **Why do ancient texts support the Book of Abraham's claim that Abraham was honored by kings – or on a throne?**

Joseph Smith explains facsimile 3, figure 1 as follows:

*Abraham sitting upon Pharaoh's throne, by the politeness of the king, with a crown upon his head, representing the Priesthood, as emblematical of the grand Presidency in Heaven; with the scepter of justice and judgment in his hand.*

This is not found in the Bible but [Jeff Lindsay notes](#) how this is consistent with other ancient texts such as:

- The Book of Jasher
- The Midrash Rabbah
- The Babylonian Talmud
- The Chronicles of Jerahmeel
- The midrashic Hebrew text, Tanna debe Eliyahu
- The writings of Nicophorus Gregoras

What are the odds Joseph Smith would have gotten this correct?

See:

- [Jeff Lindsay - Questions about the Book of Abraham, Part 3: Does It Agree with other Ancient Texts?](#)

## **How would Joseph Smith know that Abraham experienced two famines during his life and not just one?**

The Book of Abraham claims that Abraham experienced two famines during his lifetime. This is opposed to just one found in the Bible.

[Jeff Lindsay notes](#) how this is consistent with other ancient texts such as:

- The Midrash Rabbah
- The seventh-century writings of Jacob of Edessa
- The writings of Bar Hebraeus
- The Muslim Qisas al-anbiya

How would Joseph Smith know this?

See:

- [Jeff Lindsay - Questions about the Book of Abraham, Part 3: Does It Agree with other Ancient Texts?](#)

## **How could Joseph Smith have guessed the god Elkenah?**

In Abraham 1:6 we read of the god Elkenah:

*For their hearts were set to do evil, and were wholly turned to the god of Elkenah, and the god of Libnah, and the god of Mahmackrah, and the god of Korash, and the god of Pharaoh, king of Egypt;*

Where would Joseph Smith have learned about Elkenah if he is not found in the Bible?

Pearl of Great Price Central explains:

*Elkenah is very likely the shortened form of the name of the Canaanite god El koneh aratz, meaning “God who created the earth” (or “God, creator of earth”). Among the ancient Hittites living in Asia Minor he was known as Elkunirsha.*

*Originally a Canaanite deity, his worship spread to the Hittite capital of Hattusha in northern Turkey, to Karatepe near the border of modern Turkey and Syria, to Palmyra in inland Syria, to Jerusalem, and to Leptis Magna in Libya. All told, Elkunirsha was worshipped for more than 1500 years—from the time of Abraham to the time of Christ*

*- [Pearl of Great Price Central - The Idolatrous God of Elkenah](#)*

What are the odds we find an Egyptian god that fits so well?

See:

- [John Gee - Four Idolatrous Gods in the Book of Abraham](#)
- [Pearl of Great Price Central - The Idolatrous God of Elkenah](#)
- [FAIR Latter-day Saints - What evidence does the Book of Abraham show to support its own antiquity?](#)

## **Where would Joseph Smith have learned about Libnah?**

In Abraham 1:13 we read of the god Libnah:

*It was made after the form of a bedstead, such as was had among the Chaldeans, and it stood before the gods of Elkenah, Libnah, Mahmackrah, Korash, and also a god like unto that of Pharaoh, king of Egypt.*

Jeff Lindsay explains:

*One Hebrew text, *The Story of Abraham*, uses essentially the same word (identical if written without vowels, as was done in early Hebrew texts), meaning "white one," to refer to Abraham's brief, misguided worship of the moon on one evening as a three-year-old child seeking to know what to worship. The Hebrew text makes repeated mention of the moon, but in all other instances uses a different Hebrew*

word. It's interesting that in a case where someone is praying to the moon as if it were a god, a text about Abraham would use the same name of a false god listed in the Book of Abraham. (The other Hebrew word for moon used in this text is "yareah," which may be related to "Olea" in Abraham 3:13, said to signify the moon - based on the fact that in ancient Egyptian, a Semitic language related to Hebrew, the letters l and r were identical (yareah = yaleah = Olea?))

[- Jeff Lindsay - Questions about the Book of Abraham, Part 3: Does It Agree with other Ancient Texts?](#)

Where would Joseph Smith have gotten the idea of "Libnah" as a god?

See:

- [John Gee - Four Idolatrous Gods in the Book of Abraham](#)
- [Jeff Lindsay - Questions about the Book of Abraham, Part 3: Does It Agree with other Ancient Texts?](#)

## How would Joseph Smith know about Mahmackrah?

John Gee notes:

*The name of a deity that is at least somewhat close to that of Mahmackrah was found at Beth-Shan in 1927. It was found in Level IX of the tell, and is associated with a scarab of Thutmosis III, which would date it to the Eighteenth Dynasty of the Egyptian New Kingdom, which, in fact, is the standard date assigned to it by archaeologists. The deity is speculated to have been imported into the land of Israel from northern Mesopotamia during Amorite incursions at the end of the Early Bronze Age and thus part of the landscape during the time of Abraham.*

*The god of Beth-Shean is written Mkr (or M'k'r?). This may be a variation of m'q'rw (alternately m'qwrwiw), which is a type of vessel. The word is thought to be related to Ugaritic mqrt, which is "a container or pot," or to Akkadian maqārtu, which is some sort of vessel. The prefixed element might be the demon dMÁ attested at Ugarit, or perhaps a Hurrian prefix. The use of the Egyptian q to write a Semitic k and the reverse (k for q) are rare, but attested. The point, however, is moot, since both would have been rendered as a k or ck in Joseph Smith's transliteration system. Modern scholars have often assumed that the r<sup>i</sup> that ends the name in the Egyptian script is trying to transcribe a Semitic l, which it can do, but it more often transcribes a Semitic r.*

[- Four Idolatrous Gods in the Book of Abraham - John Gee](#)

Where would Joseph Smith have been getting all his information on Egyptian gods?



See:

- [Four Idolatrous Gods in the Book of Abraham - John Gee](#)

## Where would Joseph Smith have learned about the god Korash?

As well as naming Elkenah Libnah and Mahmackrah, the Book of Abraham also mentions the god Korah. John Gee explains what we know about this god:

*Of the various deities, perhaps the one we have the most information on is Korash, known among the Hittites as Kurša, which is conventionally translated as “hunting bag.” It was typically “made of appropriately prepared sheepskins and sometimes even decorated,” but “leather, wood, and reed” are all attested materials for a Kurša. The bag “functions as the symbol of a deity and is therefore treated as a god.” It seems to have been “worshiped as an impersonal deity.” The Hittites used “implements associated with a particular god as the actual cult representation of that god.” Some of the tablets mentioning Kurša are in Middle Hittite script, which seems to be a couple hundred years after Abraham, but it is known also from Old Hittite sources. For example, there is an Old Hittite mythic fragment in which “the bee is the goddess’s messenger bringing the lost kurša.” The term also appears in New Kingdom Egypt.*

*- [John Gee - Four Idolatrous Gods in the Book of Abraham](#)*

How would Joseph Smith have known about this god?

John Gee goes on to explain the odds of Joseph Smith guessing the names of the four gods in the Book of Abraham:

*What are the odds of Joseph Smith guessing right? A number of factors complicate the calculation, so only a simplified calculation will be done. Joseph Smith provided four names, two of two syllables and two of three syllables. Using the twenty-two unique consonants provided by the Seixas transliteration system, a CVC syllabic structure (since one of the Seixas consonants is a null value), and five vowels, there are 2420 possible syllable combinations; but because the vowels were not always written and frequently changed in dialects, we drop them, for a total of 484 syllable combinations. Since there are ten syllables in the names Joseph Smith provided, this is a total of  $7.05 \times 10^{26}$  different possible combinations. The Mesopotamian god list AN: dA-nu-um lists 2130 non-unique deities. Multiplying the number by five to account for deities not included in the Mesopotamian list, and taking the ratio of the two numbers, gives us a very rough estimate of the chance of randomly putting together syllables into four correct ancient deities’ names of one in  $6.62 \times 10^{22}$  By*

*comparison, the odds of winning the Powerball lottery by buying a single ticket are merely one in 292 million ( $2.92 \times 10^6$ ). The odds of winning the Powerball lottery two weeks in a row are one in  $8.52 \times 10^{16}$ . The odds of winning three weeks in a row are one in  $2.49 \times 10^{25}$ . Though only a crude calculation of the odds, it gives some idea how difficult it would be for Joseph Smith to simply guess correctly.*

*- [John Gee - Four Idolatrous Gods in the Book of Abraham](#)*

Aren't the odds of Joseph Smith guessing these names astronomically high?

See:

- [John Gee - Four Idolatrous Gods in the Book of Abraham](#)

## **How would Joseph Smith guess an association between a pharaoh contemporary to Abraham and a crocodile god?**

The Book of Abraham's facsimile 1, figure 9 depicts a crocodile and is described by Joseph Smith as "The idolatrous god of Pharaoh."

Pearl of Great Price Central writes:

*From evidence unknown in Joseph Smith's day, we can say the following about "the god of Pharaoh" in the Book of Abraham and Facsimile 1. First, the god in question is most likely the crocodile deity Sobek. Second, among other things, Sobek was closely associated with the Pharaoh of Egypt. Third, Sobek was especially venerated by king Amenemhet III, a pharaoh contemporary to Abraham. Fourth, and finally, specimens of Sobek iconography have been recovered from the likely region of Abraham's homeland during the right period for Abraham's lifetime (the Middle Bronze Age).*

*- [Pearl of Great Price Central - Sobek, The God of Pharaoh](#)*

What are the odds that Joseph would have gotten this right?

See:

- [Pearl of Great Price Central - Sobek, The God of Pharaoh](#)

## **How would Joseph Smith know that Abraham possessed the Urim and Thummim?**

In Abraham 3:1 we read:

*And I, Abraham, had the Urim and Thummim, which the Lord my God had given unto me, in Ur of the Chaldees;*

Jeff Lindsay remarks:

*The Book of Abraham teaches that Abraham possessed the Urim and Thummim, which we understand to be stone-like tools that allow seers and prophets to see things with divine power (Abr. 3:1-2). Abraham learned of the stars and of God's works through these tools. A parallel comes from the kabbalistic work, the Bahir, compiled in the twelfth century but attributed to Rabbis from the first century and earlier. It says that God created a precious stone that "included all the commandments" in it. God, seeking to give "a power" to Abraham, gave him the precious stone, though Abraham did not want it. The Babylonian Talmud reports that:*

*R. Eliezer the Modiite said that Abraham possessed a power of reading the stars for which he was much sought after by the potentates of East and West. R. Simeon b. Yohai said: Abraham had a precious stone hung round his neck which brought immediate healing to any sick person who looked on it . . ." (p. 123).*

*- [Jeff Lindsay - Questions about the Book of Abraham, Part 3: Does It Agree with other Ancient Texts?](#)*

Where would Joseph Smith have learned this?

See:

- [Jeff Lindsay - Questions about the Book of Abraham, Part 3: Does It Agree with other Ancient Texts?](#)

## **Why would Joseph Smith take a chance on mentioning chariots in the Book of Abraham?**

In Abraham 2:7 we read of chariots:

*For I am the Lord thy God; I dwell in heaven; the earth is my footstool; I stretch my hand over the sea, and it obeys my voice; I cause the wind and the fire to be my chariot; I say to the mountains—Depart hence—and behold, they are taken away by a whirlwind, in an instant, suddenly.*

Weren't chariots only invented much later than Abraham's day? Why would Joseph mention them?

John Gee remarks:

*The “horse and horse-drawn chariot” are supposed to have appeared in Egypt “toward the very end of the Hyksos occupation.” Some think the first organized Egyptian “chariotry division” was fought at the battle of Megiddo under the Eighteenth Dynasty pharaoh Thutmose III. Others assign the first Egyptian chariot battle to either Thutmose III’s father, Thutmose II, or grandfather, Amenhotep I. Some have gone so far as to argue that the introduction of the chariot forms the transition from the Middle Bronze Age to the Late Bronze Age in the Ancient Near East.*

*...Abraham, however, lived before the Hyksos. The most probable time for Abraham’s life would range from the end of the Twelfth Dynasty through the beginning of the Fourteenth Dynasty. The Hyksos, on the other hand, ruled Egypt during the later Fifteenth Dynasty.*

*[- John Gee - “The Wind and the Fire to Be My Chariot”: The Anachronism that Wasn’t](#)*

Gee goes on to explain that [while the chariot may not have entered Egypt until Hyksos times in the second millennium BC, it entered the Near East in the third millennium BC.](#)

What were the chances chariots would be attested both archaeologically and textually in times and locations relevant to Abraham?

See:

- [John Gee - “The Wind and the Fire to Be My Chariot”: The Anachronism that Wasn’t](#)

## **Why wouldn't Joseph Smith just agree with the Bible that Abraham was 75 when he went into the land of Canaan?**

Genesis 12:4 gives the specific age of Abraham when he leaves Haran:

*So Abram departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran.*

If Joseph Smith was fabricating the Book of Abraham, why would he contradict the age given in the Bible?

Jeff Lindsay explains:

*Multiple documents call into question the age of 75 given in Genesis for when Abraham went to the land of Canaan. The Book of Abraham says he was 62. A variety of other ages are offered in other documents, possibly because he may have made more than one journey away from Haran, as the Book of Jasher reports. Interestingly, a Dead Sea Scroll document, 4QCommGen A, suggests that he was in his sixties when he went to the land of Canaan. It's hard to know for sure, because the text breaks off after the "six" in what appears to be an age. The translation of Florentino Garcia Martinez gives "sixty-five years," though the "five" is a conjecture by the translator. The Babylonian Talmud suggests that his age was fifty-two years (p. 122), while the Book of Jasher says he was fifty. (Michael the Syrian in the twelfth century wrote that Abraham went to Haran at age 60, then stayed fourteen more years before leaving.)*

*- [Jeff Lindsay - Questions about the Book of Abraham, Part 3: Does It Agree with other Ancient Texts?](#)*

Where did Joseph Smith get the confidence to provide an age different to the Bible that is backed up by other sources?

See:

- [Jeff Lindsay - Questions about the Book of Abraham, Part 3: Does It Agree with other Ancient Texts?](#)

## **How could Joseph Smith correctly give the meaning of "Shinehah" in Abraham 3:13 (a word that applied during a narrow span of about 6 centuries comprising the likely time of Abraham's life)?**

In Abraham 3:13 we read:

*And he said unto me: This is Shinehah, which is the sun. And he said unto me: Kokob, which is star. And he said unto me: Olea, which is the moon. And he said unto me: Kokaubeam, which signifies stars, or all the great lights, which were in the firmament of heaven.*

Shinehah can indeed mean the sun in ancient Egyptian, as explained by the Book of Mormon Onomasticon:

*As Egyptian, SHINEHAH could certainly be the "sun," since it apparently incorporates Egyptian šn(w), the name for the solar "circuit," and for the old "cartouche" – "emblem of sun's orbit, which symbolizes eternity"; + Egyptian nḥḥ "eternity, forever" (with solar determinative ☉) > Coptic eneh "eternity," šaeneḥ*

“forever”; or Egyptian *ḥḥ* > Coptic *ḥah* “million, large number,” which may be related.

- [Book of Mormon Onomasticon - Shinehah](#)

Where did Joseph Smith get the word “Shinehah” from? How did he know it means the sun? Why is this word [only attested during a span of about six centuries overlapping with the likely time that Abraham lived?](#)

See:

- [Book of Mormon Onomasticon - Shinehah](#)
- [Jeff Lindsay - Trying to Take the Shine off Shinehah: Vogel’s Response to a Commonly Cited Evidence for Book of Abraham Authenticity](#)
- [John Gee - Fantasy and Reality in the Translation of the Book of Abraham](#)

## Why are we finding Abraham's name in Egyptian texts, including lion couch scenes?

Why would Joseph Smith connect Egyptian facsimiles with the Abraham of the Bible?

John Gee explains how recent examination of evidence shows that the name of Abraham does indeed appear in late Egyptian texts:

*There are dozens of references to Abraham in Egyptian texts, some of which have traditionally, been called “magical,” although many scholars are not sure how to distinguish ancient magic from religion. The references occur in five different languages—Demotic, Old Coptic, Coptic, Greek, and Hebrew. Here, we mention six of the references to Abraham, dating to the third century A.D., most of which came from Thebes, the place where the Joseph Smith papyri were found, and were originally acquired by Giovanni d’Anastasi, who sold them to several museums in Europe.*

- [John Gee - Research and Perspectives: Abraham in Ancient Egyptian Texts](#)

Why is Abraham’s name found on a lion couch scene similar to facsimile 1? Why are we now finding so many references to Abraham in Egyptian texts that have all come forward after the publication of the Book of Abraham?

See:

- [John Gee - Research and Perspectives: Abraham in Ancient Egyptian Texts](#)

## **Aren't the chances that Joseph Smith made up a fictional, outlandish place (Olishem) that turned out to be accurate in name, time, and location too astronomical even to be considered?**

In Abraham 1:10 we read:

*Even the thank-offering of a child did the priest of Pharaoh offer upon the altar which stood by the hill called Potiphar's Hill, at the head of the plain of Olishem.*

Kerry Muhlestein remarks:

*This is a name that no one had heard of during Joseph Smith's day; but since the Book of Abraham uses a number of terms that no one has encountered elsewhere, Olishem did not stand out in any way at first. However, discoveries of ancient texts since Joseph's day revealed two texts—one from before Abraham's time and one roughly contemporary—name a location near Haran called Olishem. The chances that Joseph Smith would make up a fictional, outlandish place that turned out to be accurate in name, time, and location are too astronomical even to be considered. I do not know how that fact could be interpreted as anything other than evidence that Joseph Smith was really translating an ancient document.*

*[- Kerry Muhlestein - Egyptian Papyri and the Book of Abraham - A Faithful, Egyptological Point of View](#)*

Where did Joseph Smith get the name “Olishem” from? Where would he have heard about it?

See:

- [Kerry Muhlestein - Egyptian Papyri and the Book of Abraham - A Faithful, Egyptological Point of View](#)

## **Why would the Book of Abraham resemble the inscription of Idrimi translated long afterwards in 1949?**

Since the discovery of the inscription of Idrimi we have been able to compare the Book of Abraham with another autobiography from the same general place and time.

John Gee writes:

*Not only are the general themes of the two autobiographies similar, but they also open in a similar manner. The first verse of the Book of Abraham divides neatly into*

*four clauses, parallels to each of which appear at the beginning of the autobiography of Idrimi*

- [John Gee - Abraham and Idrimi](#)

Gee concludes:

*According to Edward Greenstein and David Marcus, “The story of Idrimi is unlike Mesopotamian literature both in content and style.” The story, as Oppenheim describes it, is “without parallel in texts of this type from Mesopotamia and Egypt.” This led him to conclude that “all this seems to me to bespeak the existence of a specific literary tradition, totally different in temper and scope from that of the ancient Near East.” Thus Oppenheim considered the autobiography of Idrimi to be unusual even for the ancient Near East. But the Book of Abraham belongs to the same specific literary tradition as Idrimi’s autobiography. More inscriptions like Idrimi’s from Syria dating to the Middle Bronze Age would enable a better comparison, but it is at least worth asking, How did Joseph Smith manage to publish in the Book of Abraham a story that closely matched a Middle Bronze-Age Syrian autobiography that would not be discovered for nearly a hundred years?*

- [John Gee - Abraham and Idrimi](#)

Echoing John Gee’s question, how did Joseph Smith do it?

See:

- [John Gee - Abraham and Idrimi](#)

## **Why are we finding evidence that makes the Book of Abraham even more plausible and realistic?**

There are many other evidences which make the Book of Abraham more plausible and realistic such as: [Ancient Israelites and other Semitic peoples migrating into Egypt, the king of Egypt being a partaker of the blood of the Canaanites by birth, Ur and the “land of the Chaldeans”, the ancient owners of the Joseph Smith papyri, an ancient setting for Kolob, ancient Near Eastern creation myths, the divine foreordination of rulers, patterns of treaties and covenants](#) and [Near Eastern myths of the fall of Lucifer](#).

Pearl of Great Price Central writes:

*Since at least the 1960s, Latter-day Saint scholars have explored the text of the Book of Abraham to see what clues might exist that situate it in a plausible ancient setting. They have also argued for the legitimacy of Joseph Smith’s interpretation of the facsimiles as Egyptological knowledge has progressed. These efforts, in*



*conjunction with ongoing progress in the fields of Egyptology and Near Eastern archaeology, have uncovered numerous points of convergence between the text and the ancient world. Evidence for Joseph Smith's interpretation of the facsimiles has also come to light. These various lines of evidence do not "prove" the Book of Abraham is true, but they do help us situate the text in a plausible ancient environment, inform how we read the text, and positively impact our evaluation of Joseph Smith's claims to prophetic inspiration.*

*- [Pearl of Great Price Central - Book of Abraham - Introduction](#)*

How would Joseph Smith be able to create such a realistic and authentic Book of Abraham?

See:

- [The Interpreter Foundation - Scholarly Support for the Book of Abraham](#)

## **Joseph Smith's claim that he was a prophet was either truthful, deceitful or delusional. Are there any other options?**

It is difficult to claim Joseph Smith was anything other than a prophet, a charlatan or a liar. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland comments:

*Not everything in life is so black and white, but it seems the authenticity of the Book of Mormon and its keystone role in our belief is exactly that. Either Joseph Smith was the prophet he said he was, who, after seeing the Father and the Son, later beheld the angel Moroni, repeatedly heard counsel from his lips, eventually receiving at his hands a set of ancient gold plates which he then translated according to the gift and power of God—or else he did not. And if he did not, in the spirit of President Benson's comment, he is not entitled to retain even the reputation of New England folk hero or well-meaning young man or writer of remarkable fiction. No, and he is not entitled to be considered a great teacher or a quintessential American prophet or the creator of great wisdom literature. If he lied about the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, he is certainly none of those.*

*I feel about this as C. S. Lewis once said about the divinity of Christ: "I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: [that is,] 'I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept his claim to be God.' That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronising*

*nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to” (Mere Christianity, New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1952, pp. 40–41).*

*I am suggesting that we make exactly that same kind of do-or-die, bold assertion about the restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the divine origins of the Book of Mormon. We have to. Reason and rightness require it. Accept Joseph Smith as a prophet and the book as the miraculously revealed and revered word of the Lord it is or else consign both man and book to Hades for the devastating deception of it all, but let’s not have any bizarre middle ground about the wonderful contours of a young boy’s imagination or his remarkable facility for turning a literary phrase. That is an unacceptable position to take—morally, literarily, historically, or theologically.*

*...May I make it very clear where I stand regarding Joseph Smith, a stance taken because of the Book of Mormon. I testify out of the certainty of my soul that Joseph Smith entertained an angel and received at his hand an ancient set of gold plates. I testify of that as surely as if I had, with the three witnesses, seen the angel Moroni or, with the three and the eight witnesses, seen and handled the plates.*

*It was the Book of Mormon that changed my life, told me the gospel of Jesus Christ has been restored, and immersed me in the Church, heart and soul. I hold it in a category sacred to me among all the world’s literature. It stands preeminent in my intellectual and spiritual life, the classic of all classics, a reaffirmation of the Holy Bible, a voice from the dust, a witness for Christ, the word of the Lord unto salvation.*

*- [Elder Jeffrey R. Holland - True or False](#)*

If Joseph Smith wasn’t a prophet then which option is it? Was he deceitful or delusional, and how is that backed up by the evidence?

See:

- [Elder Jeffrey R. Holland - True or False](#)

**How did Joseph Smith manage to restore ordinances from the early Church (such as baptisms for the dead), when no major religions in Joseph's day believed in this doctrine?**

In 1 Corinthians 15:29, Paul asks:

*Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?*

Baptism for the dead is an ordinance not practiced by any major religion in Joseph Smith's day yet it was clearly practiced previously by the church and in ancient Judaism too.

John A. Tvedtnes commented:

*Historical records are clear on the matter. Baptism for the dead was performed by the dominant church until forbidden by the sixth canon of the Council of Carthage in A.D. 397. Some of the smaller sects, however, continued the practice. Of the [Cerinthus] of the fourth century, Epiphanius wrote: "In this country—I mean Asia—and even in Galatia, their school flourished eminently and a traditional fact concerning them has reached us, that when any of them had died without baptism, they used to baptize others in their name, lest in the resurrection they should suffer punishment as unbaptized." (Heresies, 8:7.)*

[\*- John A. Tvedtnes -Proxy Baptism\*](#)

Why did no other religion practice this ordinance if it was obviously part of the early church?

See:

- [John A. Tvedtnes -Proxy Baptism](#)
- [FAIR Latter-day Saints - Baptism for the dead](#)

## **Where would Joseph Smith have learned about prayer circles?**

Joseph Smith restored many aspects of the original Christian church which he likely would not have known about on his own.

John W. Welch notes:

*A volume of Gnostic writings from early Christianity, newly translated by Bentley Layton, was published in 1987 by Doubleday. It gives many texts analyzed several years ago by Hugh Nibley in *The World and the Prophets and Since Cumorah*, showing ways in which early Christian doctrines changed under the influences of Hellenistic philosophy and mystic religion. Today there is considerable evidence that secret and sacred covenants of early Christianity were lost early. Baptism for the dead, the use of prayer circles, and the sacrament itself underwent transformation, if not elimination. Similarly, asceticism and celibacy entered Christianity at an early stage to distort the meaning of the covenant of marriage and many passages in the Bible*

[\*- John W. Welch - The Plain and Precious Parts\*](#)

Where would Joseph Smith have gotten the idea of prayer circles from?

See:

- [John W. Welch - The Plain and Precious Parts](#)
- [FAIR Latter-day Saints - Prayer circles](#)

## **How did Joseph Smith manage to restore teachings from the early Church such as premortal life and deification?**

Joseph Smith restored teachings from the early Christian church that were later declared as heresies, such as premortal life and deification.

Speaking of the pre-existence, William de Arteaga wrote:

*This question was hotly debated by Christians of late antiquity, and the faction of the Church which was bitterly opposed to preexistence gained the upper hand. By the sixth century belief in preexistence was declared heresy. All of this is quite astonishing in view of the clear and repeated biblical evidence for preexistence.*

*- [William de Arteaga, Past Life Visions: A Christian Exploration \(New York: Seabury Press, 1983\), 127](#)*

Speaking of deification, Clement of Alexandria wrote:

*yea, I say, the Word of God became a man so that you might learn from a man how to become a god*

*- [Clement of Alexandria, Exhortation to the Greeks, 1](#)*

How did Joseph Smith know to restore these lost teachings which were clearly taught by the early church fathers?

See:

- [FAIR Latter-day Saints - Early Christian Belief in a Pre-Mortal Existence](#)
- [FAIR Latter-day Saints - Early Christian Deification Belief](#)

## **Why are many aspects of contemporary Christian theology significantly converging in Joseph Smith's direction?**

Why would Joseph Smith be such a thought leader? Hal Boyd remarks:

*Since the beginning of the LDS Church, Christendom's catechists have largely dismissed LDS teachings as heretical. Yet in recent decades, Christians of all stripes have espoused — on both biblical and philosophical grounds — theological positions that were once considered distinctly Mormon.*

*Doctrines such as spiritual gifts, a social view of the Godhead, deification, post-mortal evangelization, divine embodiment and continuing revelation are just a few of the teachings once thought anathema that are now championed by an ever-expanding coterie of Christian thinkers.*

- [Hal Boyd - Are Christians Mormon?](#)

What does this say about Joseph Smith if contemporary Christian theology is converging in his direction?

See:

- [David L. Paulsen - Are Christians Mormon?: Reassessing Joseph Smith's Theology in His Bicentennial](#)
- [Hal Boyd - Are Christians Mormon?](#)

## **Why would Joseph Smith publish revelations chastising him? Doesn't this meet the criterion of embarrassment?**

After losing the 116 pages of the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith received and published the revelation found in Doctrine and Covenants 3. Verses 6 and 11 read:

*And behold, how oft you have transgressed the commandments and the laws of God, and have gone on in the persuasions of men.*

*Except thou do this, thou shalt be delivered up and become as other men, and have no more gift.*

Isn't this embarrassing for Joseph Smith? If he was trying to convince his followers he was a prophet why would he publish revelations like this? Wouldn't these have given his followers reason to leave him? Aren't these revelations too embarrassing not to be true?

See:

- [Book of Mormon Central - What Can We All Learn about Repentance from the Tragic Loss of the 116 Book of Mormon Pages?](#)

## **Why are there over 100 accounts of Brigham Young's transfiguration of looking and sounding like Joseph Smith at conference in 1844?**

Lynne W. Jorgensen summarizes a unique event in church history:

*On August 8, 1844, six weeks after the Prophet Joseph Smith's martyrdom, a meeting of the Saints was held in Nauvoo, Illinois. Brigham Young, President of the Quorum of the Twelve, and several other Apostles had just returned from missions. The purpose of the meeting was to determine by vote who had the right and responsibility to lead the Church—Sidney Rigdon, First Counselor in the First Presidency, or the Quorum of the Twelve with Brigham Young at their head. In the course of the two meetings held that day, many in attendance received a divine witness that Brigham Young was to be the next leader: some Saints specifically state that as Brigham Young addressed the congregation he sounded and appeared remarkably like Joseph Smith, others simply say that the "mantle of Joseph" or "of the prophets" rested on Brigham Young, and others state that they were given a witness "by the spirit" that Brigham was to lead the Church.*

*This spiritual experience, which has come to be known as "the mantle of the Prophet falling on Brigham Young," served to unite and comfort the Saints as they mourned the death of their beloved prophet and to direct them when they voted to support Brigham and the Twelve as leaders of the Church. Some Saints who were not present at the August 8 meetings reported experiencing a similar "mantle" witness on later occasions. At least one hundred people wrote or otherwise passed on their remembrances of this witness.*

*- [Lynne W. Jorgensen - The Mantle of the Prophet Joseph Passes to Brother Brigham - A Collective Spiritual Witness](#)*

One first-hand testimony is that of William Adams:

*There was a great multitude attending the meeting, more than one half the crowd could not find seats, and stood on their feet. Never were so many at one meeting that I ever saw. I was sitting down and could not see the speakers on the stand. I was listening very attentively, so that I could hear every word.*

*I heard a voice speaking, I was surprised, and jumping to my feet, expecting Joseph the Prophet was speaking, having heard him often in public and private, so that I was quite acquainted with his voice. This was a strong testimony that the Twelve Apostles were the rightful leaders of the church and that the mouth of Joseph had fallen on Brigham Young.*

*- [Autobiography of William Adams](#)*

Why are there so many accounts of this taking place?

See:

- [Lynne W. Jorgensen - The Mantle of the Prophet Joseph Passes to Brother Brigham - A Collective Spiritual Witness](#)

## **How do we explain the visions of the Latter-day prophets who have seen and spoken with the Savior? Are they lying or deceived?**

President Lorenzo Snow's son LeRoi C. Snow recounted the following experience of Allie Young Pond (President Snow's granddaughter):

*“One evening while I was visiting Grandpa Snow in his room in the Salt Lake Temple, I remained until the door keepers had gone and the night watchmen had not yet come in, so grandpa said he would take me to the main front entrance and let me out that way. ... After we left his room and while we were still in the large corridor leading into the celestial room, I was walking several steps ahead of Grandpa when he stopped me and said: ‘Wait a moment, Allie, I want to tell you something. It was right here that the Lord Jesus Christ appeared to me at the time of the death of President Woodruff. He instructed me to go right ahead and reorganize the First Presidency of the Church at once and not wait as had been done after the death of the previous presidents, and that I was to succeed President Woodruff.’*

*“Then Grandpa came a step nearer and held out his left hand and said: ‘He stood right here, about three feet above the floor. It looked as though He stood on a plate of solid gold.’*

*“Grandpa told what a glorious personage the Savior is and described His hands, feet, countenance, and beautiful white robes, all of which were of such a glory of whiteness and brightness that he could hardly gaze upon Him.*

*“Then he came another step nearer and put his right hand on my head and said: ‘Now, Granddaughter, I want you to remember that this is the testimony of your grandfather, that he told you with his own lips that he actually saw the Savior, here in the temple, and talked with Him face to face.’”*

*... I related this experience in the Eighteenth Ward sacramental service. After the meeting Elder Arthur Winter told me he also had heard my father tell of the Savior's appearance to him in the temple instructing him not only to reorganize the First Presidency at once but also to select the same counselors that President Woodruff had, Presidents George Q. Cannon and Joseph F. Smith.*

[- An Experience of My Father's," Improvement Era, Sept. 1933, 677, 679](#)

Why would President Snow say this experience happened? Why think the story is not true if it was told to multiple people?

See:

- [N.B. Lundwall - When Lorenzo Snow Saw the Savior in the Temple \(+ What He Looked Like\)](#)

## How do we account for fulfilled prophecies made by Latter-day prophets?

Joseph Bailey Smith born in 1870 was the grandson of Samuel H. Smith (brother of the prophet Joseph Smith Jr.). Part of a letter written on January 5, 1923 by Joseph Bailey Smith to his son Joseph Byron Smith reads:

*My Son Joseph you are all I have from Effie [Field Howell] that will listen an not always make one feel bad I love you more than I can tell and my first blessing go to you, you will build the Lord work as did Samuel H Smith you shall have part in the construction of many Wards. You was bless by Joseph F. Smith. Prophet of the church, and **when You and were in his office YOU was part of a REVELATION given when I spoke that it has to bad that the Abraham papyraham were burnt in the Chicago fire Joseph F. Smith put his hans to his face and said Bro Joseph they are not gon and before your son is 63 years old they will be in the hands of the Church.** You will live to see this and you will know the truth. I have not seen Young <Joseph> tell truth. (emphasis added)*

[- Joseph B. Smith letter, Salt Lake City, Utah to Joseph B. Smith Jr., Lofgreen, Utah](#)

In this letter Joseph Bailey Smith describes a prophecy by Joseph F. Smith given after a blessing from the prophet to Joseph Byron.

On November 27, 1967 this prophecy was fulfilled when the surviving fragments of the Joseph Smith Papyri were returned to the church just a few days before Joseph Byron Smith turned 61.

How would Joseph F. Smith have known this? Why would he be so specific in the prophecy?

See:

- [Stephen Smoot - A Fulfilled Prophecy of Joseph F. Smith](#)



## **What are we to make of the special witnesses of Christ when they testify of Jesus and his divinity?**

The Latter-day prophets and apostles have all shared their testimonies of Jesus Christ in a series entitled “Special Witnesses of Christ”.

President Gordon B. Hinckley testified:

*It is He, Jesus Christ, who stands at the head of this Church which bears His sacred name. He is watching over it. He is guiding it. Standing at the right hand of His Father, He directs this work. Unitedly, as His Apostles, authorized and commissioned by Him to do so, we bear our witness that He lives and that He will come again to claim His kingdom and rule as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Of this we are certain and bear apostolic testimony in His holy name, even the name of Jesus Christ, amen.*

*- [The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints - Special Witnesses of Christ](#)*

Why would the prophets and apostles testify like this? Why do they have the confidence to speak with certainty?

See:

- [The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints - Current Special Witnesses Videos](#)
- [The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints - Special Witnesses of Christ](#)

## **Isn't it an enormous burden to carry, in claiming that every single “perception of God” is untrue?**

Many people believe they have had a direct experience of God. In other words they claim to “perceive” God.

William Alston explains:

*Perceiving X simply consists in X's appearing to a subject S, for example, or being presented to one, as so-and-so. That's all there is to it, as far as what perception is, in contrast to its causes and effects. Where X is an external physical object like a book, to perceive the book is just for the book to appear to one in a certain way.*

*- [William Alston. \(2005\). Religious experience as perception of God.](#)*

We usually take people's direct experiences (or perceptions) at face value unless there is a good reason to think they are mistaken. What reason do we have to deny people's direct experiences of God?

See:

- [William P. Alston- Perceiving God: The Epistemology of Religious Experience](#)

## **If there isn't already something out there "bigger" than us, then isn't humanity likely to go extinct?**

In Micah Redding's "Minimum Viable Theology" he remarks:

*If we assume that there's someone bigger out there, then our reality has no ceiling.*

*...This conclusion is nothing more than a simple consideration of the nature of time, space, and probability. If you have an intelligent designer around, life can be created non-randomly. But even chance gets around to things eventually—whether that's monkeys churning out the works of Shakespeare, or the spontaneous emergence of super-intelligent life. All chance needs is a big enough universe, and enough rolls of the die. But we seem to have a big enough universe, with plenty of space and time. This means that if there's no one bigger out there, then something else is fundamentally limiting the existence of life. And that's very bad news for us.*

*This is why the Fermi Paradox is so worrying. Reality appears to be very big in every direction we can measure. So if there is no one else out there, then it must be constrained in some other way we cannot measure. Which would have ominous implications for the future of the human race.*

*If there is no one else out there, it probably means all intelligent species, across all space and time, die out. Quickly.*

*...So we return to our premise in yet another form. If we have a future, then there's someone bigger out there. If there's no one bigger out there, then we have no future.*

- [Micah Redding - Minimum Viable Theology: We Are Not Alone](#)

Is there anyone else out there "bigger" than us? If not, then why think we have a future?

See:

- [Micah Redding - Minimum Viable Theology: We Are Not Alone](#)

## **If we trust in our own superhuman potential, then shouldn't we also trust that we have a compassionate creator?**

The [New God Argument](#) by Lincoln Cannon argues that superhumanity probably created our world. The argument is as follows:

### *Faith Assumption*

*F1. Humanity will not become extinct before evolving into superhumanity (assumption)*

### *Compassion Argument*

*CO1. EITHER humanity probably will become extinct before evolving into superhumanity*

*OR superhumanity probably would not have more decentralized power than humanity has*

*OR superhumanity probably would be more compassionate than we are (assumption)*

*CO2. superhumanity probably would have more decentralized power than humanity has (assumption)*

*CO3. superhumanity probably would be more compassionate than we are (deduction from CO1, CO2, and F1)*

### *Creation Argument*

*CR1. EITHER humanity probably will become extinct before evolving into superhumanity*

*OR superhumanity probably would not create many worlds emulating its evolutionary history*

*OR superhumanity probably created our world (assumption)*

*CR2. superhumanity probably would create many worlds emulating its evolutionary history (assumption)*

*CR3. superhumanity probably created our world (deduction from CR1, CR2, and F1)*

### *God Conclusion*

*G1. BOTH superhumanity probably would be more compassionate than we are AND superhumanity probably created our world (deduction from CO3 and CR3)*

- [Lincoln Cannon - The New God Argument](#)

What valid objections are there to this argument?

See:

- [Lincoln Cannon - The New God Argument](#)

## **Aren't the chances that the universe was fine-tuned for life astronomically high?**

Astrophysicists have fairly recently discovered that for physical life to be possible anywhere in the universe, certain cosmological constants must be “fine tuned” to an incredible degree of accuracy. One example is the expansion rate of the universe which if deviated by more than 1 in  $10^{37}$  would not permit life anywhere in the universe.

Hugh Ross explains how large of a number this is:

*Imagine covering the entire North American continent in dimes and stacking them until they reached the moon. Now imagine stacking just as many dimes again on another billion continents the same size as North America. If you marked one of those dimes and hid it in the billions of piles you've assembled, the odds of a blindfolded friend picking out the correct dime is approximately 1 in  $10^{37}$ ; the same level of precision required in the strong nuclear force and the expansion rate of the universe.*

[- Hugh Ross - Where Did The Universe Come From? New Scientific Evidence for the Existence of God](#)

Hugh Ross lists [140 constants](#) which are required to be fine-tuned. What are the odds that all the constants are the correct values for life?

English astronomer Fred Hoyle famously said:

*Would you not say to yourself, "Some super-calculating intellect must have designed the properties of the carbon atom, otherwise the chance of my finding such an atom through the blind forces of nature would be utterly minuscule. A common sense interpretation of the facts suggests that a superintellect has monkeyed with physics, as well as with chemistry and biology, and that there are no blind forces worth speaking about in nature. The numbers one calculates from the facts seem to me so overwhelming as to put this conclusion almost beyond question.*

[- Fred Hoyle, "The Universe: Past and Present Reflections." Engineering and Science](#)

Why is the universe fine-tuned for life and who tuned it?

See:

- [Fred Hoyle, "The Universe: Past and Present Reflections." Engineering and Science](#)

## **If nothingness doesn't scientifically exist, then doesn't that mean there was something before the Big Bang?**

It may be a popular opinion that the universe came from “nothing”, but “nothing” is a misleading term.

Blake Ostler explains:

*“Absolute nothing” is physically impossible because there is always the probability of wave-particles smaller than the Planck constant occurring even in the absence of any other physical reality. Instead, “nothing” is described in quantum theory as a quantum vacuum. This vacuum is not a negation of any physical states of affairs whatsoever as required by the doctrine of creatio ex nihilo. The quantum theory prohibits us from suggesting that there could be absolutely “nothing.” Quantum theory requires us to admit that even in the absence of space-time altogether, there is a quantum vacuum that is buzzing and alive with the energy manifested as “virtual particles.” This vacuum is the perfect description of chaos because it is the lowest energy state in which an entire system can reside.*

*- [Blake Ostler - The Doctrine Of Creation Ex Nihilo Is A Big Fuss Over Nothing: A Response To Copan And Craig.](#)*

What came before the Big Bang? If “nothingness” is actually “something”, then doesn't that mean something has always existed and if so, what?

See:

- [Blake Ostler - The Doctrine Of Creation Ex Nihilo Is A Big Fuss Over Nothing: A Response To Copan And Craig.](#)
- [Fiona Macdonald - Physicists Say They've Manipulated 'Pure Nothingness' and Observed The Fallout](#)

## **Is every single "miracle" just a lucky coincidence or is at least one partly due to something beyond us?**

Many people claim to experience miracles from God. How confident can we ever be that none of them, not even one, are anything but coincidence?

Famous skeptic Michael Shermer wrote of an experience, paraphrased by Wray Herbert:

*In 2014, his fiancée (now wife) Jennifer Graf had moved to California from Germany, bringing with her a Philips transistor radio, a gift from her late and beloved grandfather, Walter. Walter had been a surrogate father to Graf, and she*

*had fond memories of listening to music with him, but the radio wasn't working. She and Shermer switched out the batteries, tried various stations and otherwise fiddled with the machine, but in frustration ended up tossing it into a desk drawer in the bedroom.*

*Months later, following a small wedding ceremony at their home, Graf was feeling melancholy and disconnected from her family. The newlyweds took a quiet moment together, away from the group, and at that precise moment music started wafting from the bedroom. They followed the sound, which was a love song, and traced it to the desk drawer, indeed to the "broken" radio. It was, Shermer recalls in his book "Heavens on Earth," a "spine-tingling experience."*

*And it gets better. The radio could have been tuned to any station, or to no station at all, but it was playing just the kind of emotionally comforting music the couple needed at that moment. The radio continued to broadcast similar music all evening, then went silent. It has remained silent since, despite Shermer's efforts to revive it.*

*What does Shermer make of it, long after the fact? He is a trained scientist and, more important, a devoted skeptic who has built a career debunking any and all claims of the paranormal. Yet by his own account he has difficulty dismissing this extraordinary experience as a psychic anomaly. The physics of the radio suddenly playing might be easily explained — a change in humidity, a speck of dust, whatever — but the timing and emotional significance of the experience are uncanny, and indeed impossible to explain with the scientific insights available to us now.*

*- [Wray Herbert - It's inexplicable: A broken radio plays soothing music at just the right time](#)*

Was this experience really just a wild coincidence?

See:

- [Wray Herbert - It's inexplicable: A broken radio plays soothing music at just the right time](#)

## **How do we explain near-death experiences?**

Many people report having near-death experiences, which often include any of the following (as noted by [Brent L. Top](#)):

- *Lifting out of one's body and being able to observe other people, events, and activities going on (e.g., resuscitative efforts)*
- *Intense emotions: commonly of profound peace, well-being, and love*

- *Rapid movement through darkness, often toward an indescribable light—becoming “engulfed” in the Being of Light’s overwhelming love and knowledge*
- *A sense of being somewhere else, like a spiritual realm or world*
- *Incredibly rapid, sharp thinking and observations, enhanced senses and abilities*
- *Encounter with deceased loved ones, sacred figures, or unrecognized beings with whom communication is mind-to-mind*
- *A life review, reliving actions and feeling their emotional impact on others*
- *A flood of knowledge about life and the nature of the universe*
- *Sometimes a decision to return to the body*

Even Joseph Smith had a near-death experience, Emma Smith recalled:

*The converts to Mr. Smith’s preaching were constantly arriving from all parts of the country, [which added] greatly to the disturbance of antagonists to the Mormon religion, and in March, 1832, the most violent persecution followed. Mr. Smith was dragged from his bed, beaten into insensibility, tarred and feathered and left for dead. A strange part of this experience was, that his spirit seemed to leave his body, and that during the period of insensibility he consciously stood over his own body, feeling no pain, but seeing and hearing all that transpired.*

*- Emma Hale Smith Bidamon, in [Recollections of the Pioneers of Lee County \(Dixon, IL: Inez A. Kennedy, 1893\), 98.](#)*

How do we account for people [being able to do things only explicable if they have a spirit distinct from their body?](#)

See:

- [Brent L. Top - The Near-Death Experience - Why Latter-day Saints Are So Interested](#)
- [Dr Gary Habermas - Near death experiences](#)

## **Why are some of the greatest names in science believers in God?**

If science disproves God, why do some of the greatest names in science maintain their faith? One of the greatest scientific names, Sir Isaac Newton, was a strong believer in God and [wrote over 1.3 million words on biblical subjects.](#)

Newton was famous for the laws of motion, universal gravitation, the inverse-distance-squared law, light and optics and inventing calculus and always maintained his faith.

Stephen E. Jones summarizes:

*Isaac Newton was one of the world's greatest scientists. He utilized his great genius and powers of reasoning to produce his famous scientific discoveries including his laws of motion, the law of universal gravitation, studies in optics, and the invention of calculus. But he was also a devout Christian, and he brought this same intellectual genius to bear in his analysis of Christianity, and he based his beliefs on his own studies of the Bible along with the earliest Christian writers. Based on his studies he rejected the doctrine of the Trinity and proved that it was unbiblical. He also concluded from that there had been an apostasy from the true Church of Christ, and that at some future time there would be a restoration.*

*- [Steven E. Jones - A Brief Survey of Sir Isaac Newton's Views on Religion](#)*

Why do many scientists develop or maintain great faith like this?

See:

- [Steven E. Jones - A Brief Survey of Sir Isaac Newton's Views on Religion](#)

## **Isn't theism a good bet?**

French mathematician Blaise Pascal famously set a wager in which he argued that a rational person should live as though God exists:

*If there is a God, He is infinitely incomprehensible, since, having neither parts nor limits, He has no affinity to us. We are then incapable of knowing either what He is or if He is....*

*..."God is, or He is not." But to which side shall we incline? Reason can decide nothing here. There is infinite chaos that separated us. A game is being played at the extremity of this infinite distance where heads or tails will turn up. What will you wager? According to reason, you can do neither the one thing nor the other; according to reason, you can defend neither of the propositions.*

*Do not, then, reprove for error those who have made a choice; for you know nothing about it. "No, but I blame them for having made, not this choice, but a choice; for again both he who chooses heads and he who chooses tails are equally at fault, they are both in the wrong. The true course is not to wager at all."*

*Yes; but you must wager. It is not optional. You are embarked. Which will you choose then? Let us see. Since you must choose, let us see which interests you least. You have two things to lose, the true and the good; and two things to stake, your reason and your will, your knowledge and your happiness; and your nature has two things to shun, error and misery. Your reason is no more shocked in choosing one rather than the other since you must of necessity choose. This is one point settled. But your happiness? Let us weigh the gain and the loss in wagering that*



*God is. Let us estimate these two chances. If you gain, you gain all; if you lose, you lose nothing. Wager, then, without hesitation that He is.*

*"That is very fine. Yes, I must wager; but I may perhaps wager too much." Let us see. Since there is an equal risk of gain and of loss, if you had only to gain two lives, instead of one, you might still wager. But if there were three lives to gain, you would have to play (since you are under the necessity of playing), and you would be imprudent, when you are forced to play, not to change your life to gain three at a game where there is an equal risk of loss and gain. But there is an eternity of life and happiness. And this being so, if there were an infinity of chances, of which one only would be for you, you would still be right in wagering one to win two, and you would act stupidly, being obliged to play, by refusing to stake one life against three at a game in which out of an infinity of chances there is one for you if there were an infinity of an infinitely happy life to gain. But there is here an infinity of an infinitely happy life to gain, a chance of gain against a finite number of chances of loss, and what you stake is finite.*

[- Blaise Pascal - Pensées, Section III, 233](#)

To summarize, Pascal argued that there are four possible outcomes:

1. If God exists and you believe, you will have an infinite gain
2. If God exists but you do not believe, you will have an infinite loss
3. If God does not exist but you believe, you will have a finite loss
4. If God does not exist and you do not believe, you will have a finite gain

Pascal argues that it is rational to believe in God and avoid an infinite loss. If you are wrong, then at most you will have a finite loss.

What is wrong with Pascal's wager? Haven't all the [objections been addressed?](#)

See:

- [Paul Boaheng - Gambling on God: A Qualified Defense of Pascal's Wager](#)
- [Blaise Pascal - Pensées](#)

## **Aren't religious people, on balance, happier than non-religious people?**

Anna Brown from Pew Research reports:

*Numerous studies have shown that people who are religious are happier in life. Now, a new study has found those who believe in God with no doubts are more likely to strongly disagree with the idea that life does not have meaning.*

*...The latest data on happiness and religious belief from a Pew Research Center survey shows religious people, on balance, are happier than nonreligious people.*

*Adults who attended religious services once a week or more often were significantly more likely to report feeling “very happy” (36%) than those who attended seldom or never (23%), and less likely to say they were “pretty happy” (46% vs. 55%) or “not too happy” (13% vs. 19%). Those who attend services more than once a week are the most happy of all, with 43% reporting that they are “very happy.”*

*- [Anna Brown - Study: Religious people more likely to reject the idea that life has no purpose](#)*

Why would religious people be happier than non-religious people?

See:

- [Anna Brown - Study: Religious people more likely to reject the idea that life has no purpose](#)

## **Why do Latter-day Saints have a "glow"?**

Katherine Orgill reports a surprising finding:

*Researchers from Canada have proven that something is different about Mormons, and even those who do not subscribe to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints can see it. A study done by psychology professor Nicholas Rule, of Toronto University, shows that Mormons and non-Mormons alike can identify Mormons based on no more than their skin quality.*

*...Participants were brought in for each of the different studies and were asked to look at a series of images and to differentiate between who was Mormon and who was not.*

*After additional testing based on this supposition, Rule and his colleagues found that skin texture was the key indicator and determinant in distinguishing a Mormon from a non-Mormon. Rule attributes these results to the healthy lifestyle adopted by active Latter-day Saints, relative to the average American. Mormons abstain from alcohol, tobacco, illegal drugs, coffee and tea. Consequently Mormons have an average lifespan of six to 10 years longer than does the average American. Non-Mormons were able to identify Mormons 60 percent of the time, and the percentage of Mormons identifying Mormons was slightly higher. While the results are not fool proof, Rule concluded the results are statistically significant and higher than simple chance.*

*“People make inferences about group membership based on how healthy someone looks, and some see spirituality in that,” Rule said. “The study shows how tiny pieces of information can have a big effect, and we don’t even know it’s happening. Something as benign as skin texture can tell us if someone is in a particular group and may affect how we behave toward that person.”*

- [Katherine Orgill - Skin texture glow distinguishes Mormons from others](#)

Why would Latter-day Saints have a glow that is noticeable by those in and outside of the church?

See:

- [Nicholas O Rule, James V Garrett, Nalini Ambady - On the perception of religious group membership from faces](#)
- [Katherine Orgill - Skin texture glow distinguishes Mormons from others](#)

## Isn't the church “true” in a pragmatic sense?

The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy explains pragmatism as follows:

*Pragmatism is a philosophical movement that includes those who claim that an ideology or proposition is true if it works satisfactorily, that the meaning of a proposition is to be found in the practical consequences of accepting it, and that unpractical ideas are to be rejected.*

- [Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy - Pragmatism](#)

Studies have shown that there are many benefits of being a Latter-day Saint such as [feeling more attached to communities and neighbors](#), [lower cancer rates](#), [living longer than the general population](#), [being the most likely to marry](#), [have children](#), [and less likely to divorce](#), [having a higher well-being](#), [being more financially stable than the general population](#), [having many more close friends than other Americans](#), [volunteering as much as seven times more than the average American](#), [donating more money to social causes](#), [being significantly more likely than the population overall to have some college education](#) and [having youth with lower rates of delinquent and immoral behavior](#).

Does this make the restored gospel “true”? What else is there to a good life?

See:

- [Greg Hamblin - Latter-day Hope](#)
- [All About Mormons - Mormon benefits](#)

## **Why does statistical analysis show a correlation between higher education and loyalty to Latter-day Saint beliefs? If the gospel was a fraud, wouldn't the scholars and those who are more educated leave first?**

Pew Research reports:

*Among Mormons, those who are more highly educated are not simply as religious as those with less education – Mormons with college experience are more religiously observant, on average, than Mormons with less education. Fully 92% of college-educated Mormons are highly religious, as are 91% of Mormons with some college. Among Mormons whose education topped out with high school, however, just 78% score high on the index of religious observance.*

*- [Pew Research - In America, Does More Education Equal Less Religion?](#)*

Interestingly, Latter-day Saints [buck the trend in this regard](#). Why do Latter-day Saints buck the trend that exists among other religions? Why do those who are more educated remain in the church and why are they more religious?

See:

- [Pew Research - In America, Does More Education Equal Less Religion?](#)
- [Latter-day Saint Scholars Testify](#)

## **Can there be any valid criticisms of the church?**

Daniel Peterson asks: *Can there be any valid evidence against the Church?*

In response to this question he remarks:

*Since the Church is ex hypothesi true, there can be no genuine evidence that it is false. There can be seeming evidence against its claims, evidence that reasonable people might well regard as genuine and damning. In the end, though, on the assumption that the claims of the Church are true, what seems to be genuine, damning evidence against it must ultimately prove not to be such.*

*...There might be evidence strongly suggesting that Frank killed Bob. But if, in fact, it was Jim who killed Bob, and not Frank, the evidence suggesting that Frank was the murderer must eventually be reinterpreted as demonstrating no such thing.*

*...It's in that sense that I say that there can, in the end, be no valid evidence against the claims of Mormonism. Ultimately, you see, there can never be proof that something that is true is actually false.*

- [Dan Peterson - Can there be any valid criticisms of the Church?](#)

If the church is true, can there be any valid criticisms?

See:

- [Dan Peterson - Can there be any valid criticisms of the Church?](#)
- [Dan Peterson - Son of "Can there be any valid criticisms of the Church?"](#)

## **Do we even need any evidence that God exists?**

In August 2007 Blake Ostler gave a critical talk on the subject of spiritual experiences:

*I will not give some argument or evidence to try to persuade you or anybody else that your spiritual experiences are valid and trustworthy. If I were to attempt to argue with you to prove that to you, I would only show and prove (quite conclusively) that I believe that in reality there is something more basic and trustworthy than spiritual experiences; that is, the arguments I would give you. If I were to argue in that way, I would show conclusively that I really don't believe what I am about to tell you. Now in saying this I'm not stating that I won't give reasons, or that I won't do my best to reason with you. I am saying, however, that at bottom, these arguments are not what is most trustworthy and basic in Mormonism. What is most basic in Mormonism is the individual experience of the Spirit.*

*...I will also suggest that these spiritual experiences are so powerful that they reorient everything in our lives, they become the bases through which we see.*

- [Blake Ostler - Spiritual Experiences as the Basis for Belief and Commitment](#)


Why do we not require evidence to support our other properly basic beliefs? Why can't beliefs about God, formed from direct experiences, be properly basic?

See:

- [Blake Ostler - Spiritual Experiences as the Basis for Belief and Commitment](#)
- [Dr Ronald Walsh - God Exists: No Evidence Required](#)

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