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**Title** A Chronological Setting for the Epistles of Mormon to Moroni

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**Abstract** Although chapters 8 and 9 of the book of Moroni (Mormon's epistles to Moroni) were placed with Mormon and Moroni's abridgment by Moroni sometime between the years AD 401 and 421, these chapters were not written at that time. The insertion into the text of these epistles was done for doctrinal reasons; however, mixed in with the doctrinal message are certain facts and phrases that deal with their historical-chronological setting. By analyzing the specific chronological clues contained within Mormon's epistles and comparing them with his abridged record of the final years of the Nephite nation, we can create a set of chronological time frames which then can be compared to construct a reasonable historical setting of AD 375 to 376.

## A Chronological Setting for the Epistles of Mormon to Moroni

Alan C. Miner

Abstract: Although chapters 8 and 9 of the book of Moroni (Mormon's epistles to Moroni) were placed with Mormon and Moroni's abridgment by Moroni sometime between the years A.D. 401 and 421, these chapters were not written at that time. The insertion into the text of these epistles was done for doctrinal reasons; however, mixed in with the doctrinal message are certain facts and phrases which deal with their historical-chronological setting. By analyzing the specific chronological clues contained within Mormon's epistles, and comparing them with his abridged record of the final years of the Nephite nation, we can create a set of chronological time frames which then can be compared to construct a reasonable historical setting of A.D. 375 to 376.

At least sixteen years, if not more, after the final Nephite battles at Cumorah, and after finishing the abridgment of the record of the Jaredite people, Moroni had an unexpected opportunity to include a few more things "of worth" in his final book of Moroni before he buried the plates. Among the writings he chose were two epistles (chapters 8 and 9) which his father Mormon had written to him years before. Although the epistles were included because they contained valuable gospel teachings, they also contain some comments that reflect on their historical chronology. Because these epistles inadvertently speak about events not specifically chronicled in the abridged history, their chronological

setting has been a difficult thing to establish;<sup>1</sup> however, I believe a reasonable estimate is attainable. In this article, chronological clues have been extracted from the epistles and are listed as an overview. They will be followed by a more lengthy chronological analysis. A chart has also been designed to help the reader more fully understand the reasoning. Ultimately, the reader will see that all the clues blend together to suggest a unique time frame in Book of Mormon history for the setting of Mormon's epistles.

### Overview of Chronological Clues

1. The epistle of chapter 8 was written "soon after" Moroni was called to the ministry (Moroni 8:1).

2. During an apparent time lapse and distance gap since Mormon and Moroni had been together, disputations had apparently arisen (Moroni 8:4-5).

3. Apparently, Mormon had devoted enough time apart from his military calling to serve in a leadership capacity in the church, and Moroni as well was old enough to labor in the church (Moroni 8:6-7).

4. In chapter 8, Mormon says "I will write unto you again if I go not out soon against the Lamanites." If this refers to the

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<sup>1</sup> Sidney B. Sperry, *Book Of Mormon Compendium* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1975), 491. Sperry writes:

When were Mormon's two pastoral epistles written? An exact answer to this question cannot be given. The contents of the letters seem to indicate a time late in Nephite history, when the nation was ripe for destruction. . . . Moreover, the letters must have been written sometime after Mormon had reconsidered his decision not to lead the wicked Nephites into battle (Mormon 5:1; cf. 3:16), for in the first letter to his son the great leader mentions, as we have seen, the possibility of his going out against the Lamanites to battle ([Moroni] 8:27). The decision to lead the Nephites once more in battle seems to have been made shortly before A.D. 380 (Mormon 5:1-6). In the second letter to his son, Mormon writes, "I trust that I may see thee soon; for I have sacred records that I would deliver up unto thee." ([Moroni] 9:24) We know that by 384 Moroni already had in his possession the sacred records mentioned by his father (Mormon 6:6). All things considered, it seems quite probable that Mormon's letters to Moroni were written sometime between 380 and 384.

epistle in chapter 9, then chapter 9 is apparently linked to the same general time period as chapter 8 (Moroni 8:27).

5. Mormon was personally involved in battles (Moroni 9:2).
6. The battle mentioned by Mormon was specifically termed a "sore battle" (Moroni 9:2).
7. The battle was one in which the Nephites "did not conquer" (Moroni 9:2).
8. The Lamanites at this time "have many prisoners" (Moroni 9:7).
9. The Nephite prisoners of the Lamanites were slain and treated inhumanely (Moroni 9:8).
10. The Nephites were making inhumane sacrifices of their own (Moroni 9:9-10).
11. Aaron was in charge of a Lamanite army (Moroni 9:17).
12. Mormon "cannot any longer enforce [his] commands" (Moroni 9:18).
13. Mormon has "sacred records that [he] would deliver up unto [Moroni]" (Moroni 9:24).

### **1. Chapter 8 was written "soon after" Moroni was called to the ministry (Moroni 8:1)**

An epistle of my father Mormon, written to me, Moroni; and it was written unto me *soon after my calling to the ministry.* (Moroni 8:1)

If in A.D. 321<sup>2</sup> Mormon was ten years old when Ammaron commanded him to retrieve the plates at the age of twenty-four (Mormon 1:2-4), then Mormon was apparently born in 311 and would retrieve the plates from the hill Shim in 335. However, at age fifteen or in his "sixteenth year," Mormon was chosen to head the Nephite armies (Mormon 2:1-2). From that point on (326 forward), there seems to have been no big break in the battles until the year 331 when the Nephite army was able to spend the next fourteen years occupying the land of Joshua in apparent peace (Mormon 2:6-9, 15). Although we have few specifics, during this period Mormon (age 20-34) finally had time for family, the ministry, and recordkeeping. This period of peace also seems

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<sup>2</sup> All dates in this paper are A.D.

to have been a good time for Moroni's birth; however, in order to more fully appreciate the chronology of that birth we must understand the timing of Moroni's call to the ministry.

Under the law of Moses and at the time of King David, thirty was the age at which men commenced "the service of the ministry" and "the work in the tabernacle of the congregation" (Numbers 4:35). Christ, too, began his ministry at age thirty (Luke 3:23), but with Christ the law of Moses had been fulfilled (3 Nephi 12:17). Thus Mormon attempted to start preaching to the Nephites at age fifteen; however, he was forbidden by the Lord not because of his age but "because of the hardness of their hearts" (Mormon 1:16-17). Mormon's next recorded act related to the ministry was to retrieve the plates at age twenty-four (cf. Mormon 1:2-4; 2:17). Whether Mormon's retrieval of the plates constituted the beginning of his formal ministry is not known. Thus we have a possible range of between fifteen and thirty years of age for the beginning of a "ministry."

If we assume that Moroni's call to the ministry likewise came when he was between fifteen and thirty years of age, then by adding this amount of time to the beginning or ending of the previously noted fourteen-year period of peace (beginning in 331), we might be able to establish the minimum and maximum stretch of time until Moroni was called to the ministry. Thus, if we allow one year for pregnancy:

| ---Peace--- |  
331            345

| ---15 years--- |  
332            347

| -----30 years----- |  
346                            376

MINIMUM<sup>3</sup> = 331 + 1 + 15 years = [earliest probable date of 347 for call to ministry]

<sup>3</sup> Using the chart on page 113, we can see that even though we might conclude that Moroni was born before this fourteen-year period of peace, and even though we might assume the earliest probable call to the ministry at age

MAXIMUM<sup>4</sup> = 345 + 30 years + "soon after" = [latest probable date of 376 for epistle]

The word "ministry" also might refer to Moroni's administrative responsibility over part of the church, which could have been initiated by Mormon's return to military leadership early in the time period of 375–79. Therefore, clue 1 gives a possible time period of 347–76 (see chart on page 113).

## 2. During an apparent time lapse and distance gap since Mormon and Moroni had been together, disputations had apparently arisen (Moroni 8:4–5)

And now, my son, I speak unto you concerning that which grieveth me exceedingly; for it grieveth me that there should disputations rise among you. *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. For immediately after I had learned these things of you I inquired of the Lord concerning the matter. And the word of the Lord came to me by the power of the Holy Ghost. . . . Pray for them, my son, that repentance may come unto them. But behold, I fear lest the Spirit hath ceased striving with them; and *in this part of the land* they are also seeking to put down all power and authority which cometh from God; and they are denying the Holy Ghost. And after rejecting so great a knowledge, my son, they must perish soon, unto the fulfilling of the prophecies which were spoken by the

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fifteen, all of the other factors dealing with the chronology of Mormon's epistles are not within this range.

<sup>4</sup> Although less probable, if Moroni was born during the next period of peace (350–60) then the minimum figure would be 350 + 1 + 15 = 366 for the earliest call to the ministry, and 360 + 1 + 30 = 391 for the latest call to the ministry.

prophets, as well as the words of our Savior himself.  
(Moroni 8:4–7, 28–29)

While Sidney Sperry assumes that Moroni's "ministry" involved just missionary labor,<sup>5</sup> it is my opinion that Moroni's calling also involved administrative work. Assuming that Mormon was involved in battles at this time (Moroni 8:27), the text leaves little doubt that after 350, which was the beginning of the time when Moroni would have been old enough to have a church calling (see clue 3), most all of the battles fought were near the boundaries of Nephite territory.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, Mormon was apparently the one who was away from the headquarters of the Nephites, leaving Moroni in charge of the central church. Since there are no other ecclesiastical leaders mentioned in the last part of the Nephite history other than Mormon and Moroni, it is only reasonable that Moroni would have remained in charge of the ecclesiastical affairs of the church if Mormon was off fighting

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<sup>5</sup> Sperry, *Book of Mormon Compendium*, 488, writes, "It may be taken for granted that by 'ministry' is meant missionary labor. It would appear that in the course of Moroni's missionary labors he seems to have encountered persons in a certain branch of the Nephite Church who were contending that little children should be baptized."

<sup>6</sup> In the treaty of 350, the Lamanites "did give unto us [the Nephites] the land northward, yea, even to the narrow passage which led into the land southward. And we did give unto the Lamanites all the land southward" (Mormon 2:29). Thus, the narrow passage represented the key border position in the Nephite-Lamanite treaty, and it was so strategic a position that when the Lamanite king wrote to Mormon in 360 that he was "preparing to come again to battle" (Mormon 3:4), the Nephites placed their armies there "that they [the Lamanites] might not get possession of *any* of our lands" (Mormon 3:5–6). From 363 to 75 the Nephites, without Mormon, waged a series of battles which eventually led twice to the loss and retaking of the land of Desolation, which was near the narrow pass (Mormon 3:5). In 375, when the Lamanites came down against the Nephites with all their power, the Nephite army retreated to the city of Boaz. Although we don't quite know where the city of Boaz is located from the text, it seems to be within the land that the Lamanites were about to overthrow, which was the land of Desolation (Mormon 4:1). Thus, in 375 Mormon apparently rejoined the Nephite army in the borders of the land. From that time forward, because all the Nephites who would not gather in with Mormon's army were swept down and destroyed (Mormon 5:5), the position of Mormon's army would have to be considered as always on the borders of Lamanite-controlled territory.



battles. However, faced with a question of doctrine, Moroni would have deferred to Mormon's superior authority. Sometime after 380, the Nephites began to gather to Cumorah, which would have brought Mormon and Moroni together again.

Thus, the time periods in which Mormon devoted himself to military duties while Moroni would have been old enough to labor in the church at a distance from Mormon were:

- (1) 360–62 (see Mormon 3:1–11)
- (2) 375–80 (see Mormon 5:1–6:3)

**3. Apparently, Mormon had devoted enough time apart from his military calling to serve in a leadership capacity in the church, and Moroni as well was old enough to labor in the church (Moroni 8:6–7)**

And now, my son, I speak unto you concerning that which grieveth me exceedingly; for it grieveth me that there should disputations rise among you. 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. For immediately after I had learned these things of you I inquired of the Lord concerning the matter. And the word of the Lord came to me by the power of the Holy Ghost. (Moroni 8:4–7)

The time period(s) in which Mormon had time to devote himself more entirely to the church were:

- a. The fourteen years of peace (331–45; see Mormon 2:10–15) (age 20–34)
- b. The ten-year period of peace (350–60; see Mormon 3:1–2) (age 39–49)
- c. The twelve plus years that Mormon stood as an “idle witness” (362–75; Mormon 3:16) (age 51–63+)

Since Moroni had to be old enough to labor in the ministry during this time, textual clue 3 would have a possible time frame

from shortly before 350 until some time after 380 when Mormon and Moroni were together again (see chart on page 113).

**4. In chapter 8, Mormon says “I will write unto you again if I go not out soon against the Lamanites.” If this refers to the epistle in chapter 9, then chapter 9 is apparently linked to the same general time period as chapter 8 (Moroni 8:27)**

Behold, my son, *I will write unto you again if I go not out SOON against the Lamanites.* Behold, the pride of this nation, or the people of the Nephites, hath proven their destruction except they should repent. (Moroni 8:27)

*The second epistle of Mormon to his son, Moroni*  
(Subtitle to chapter 9)

The subtitle of chapter 9 identifies this chapter as “The second epistle of Mormon to his son, Moroni.” This subscript was part of the original manuscript and was not added at a later date as with many other chapter headings. If the eighth chapter of Mormon is to be considered the first epistle, then this subscript seems to help set the chronological record straight. Given the circumstances, the best<sup>7</sup> we can assume is that both epistles (chapters 8 and 9) were written within a short time of each other, probably within less than a year.

**5. Mormon was personally involved in battles (Moroni 9:2)**

For behold, *I HAVE HAD a sore battle with the Lamanites, in which we did not conquer; and Archeantus has fallen by the sword, and also Luram and Emron; yea, and we have lost a great number of our choice men.* (Moroni 9:2)

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<sup>7</sup> Although less likely, the words “the second epistle” might just refer to the order of these epistles in Moroni’s book and *not* to the fact that this “second epistle” was the one that Mormon wrote “soon” after the first.

Mormon resigned as commander of the Nephite armies in the year 362 (Mormon 3:8, 11), and apparently stood as an "idle witness" (Mormon 3:16) until sometime early in the period between 375 and 379, when Mormon "did repent of the oath which I had made that I would no more assist them; and they gave me command again of their armies" (Mormon 5:1). We can probably<sup>8</sup> say that the epistle was written either before or after this time period when Mormon stood as an "idle witness." After 380, the Lamanite king granted Mormon the opportunity to gather his people to Cumorah for the final battle (Mormon 6:2-3), so there would not have been any battles from that time forward until the final battle at Cumorah when Mormon and Moroni were together, but we will include that period anyway. Therefore, taking into consideration the age of Moroni and all the periods of peace, we can list the following time periods as satisfying clue 5:

- a. 345-50 (see Mormon 2:16-29)
- b. 360-62 (see Mormon 3:1-11)
- c. 375-85 (see Mormon 5:1-6:3)

## 6. The battle mentioned by Mormon was specifically termed a "sore battle" (Moroni 9:2)

For behold, *I have had a SORE BATTLE with the Lamanites, in which we did not conquer; and Archeantus has fallen by the sword, and also Luram and Emron; yea, and we have lost a great number of our choice men.* (Moroni 9:2)

Two scriptures specifically mention "sore battles" where the Nephites "did not conquer" in the chronological history of the Book of Mormon:

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<sup>8</sup> Although we could definitely say that the epistle was written generally before or after the time period when Mormon stood as an "idle witness," the phrase "*I have had a sore battle*" would not, in the opinion of the writer, eliminate the following possibility: Mormon might have just barely been put in command of the Nephite armies, and while not claiming the battle as his own because of personally participating in it, he could have included the information as part of the description of *his* difficulties and circumstances upon being named the new leader. This change of status could have been why Mormon wrote the epistle to Moroni in the first place.

And it came to pass that the armies of the Nephites were driven back again to the land of Desolation. And while they were yet weary, a fresh army of the Lamanites did come upon them; and they had a *sore battle*, insomuch that the Lamanites did take possession of the city Desolation, and did slay many of the Nephites, and did take many prisoners (363). (Mormon 4:2)

And it came to pass that the Lamanites did come down against the city Desolation; and there was an exceedingly *sore battle* fought in the land Desolation, in the which they did beat the Nephites (375). (Mormon 4:19)

Another reference also alludes to “sore battles” in which the Nephites “did not conquer” and in which Mormon was involved:

And it came to pass that in the three hundred and eightieth year the Lamanites did come again against us to battle, and we did stand against them boldly; but it was all in vain, for so great were their numbers that they did tread the people of the Nephites under their feet (380). (Mormon 5:6)

Thus, if we are to go strictly by the references in the text, the possible time periods for clue 6 are 363, 375, and 380.

## **7. The battle was one in which the Nephites “did not conquer” (Moroni 9:2)**

For behold, *I have had a sore battle with the Lamanites, in which WE DID NOT CONQUER*; and Archeantus has fallen by the sword, and also Luram and Emron; yea, and we have lost a great number of our choice men. (Moroni 9:2)

Assuming that Mormon has given us a record of all the “sore battles” in which the Nephites “did not conquer” (see the list under clue 6), the reader should notice that immediately prior to 362 when Mormon “did utterly refuse from this time forth to be

a commander and a leader of this people" (Mormon 3:11), *none* of the battles were won by the Lamanites. In other words, before 362 Mormon was involved in the battles, but the *Nephites conquered*. After 362 there were battles in which the Nephites "did not conquer"; however, Mormon was *not* a part of the army or the battles but "did stand as an idle witness" (Mormon 3:16) until the year 375 when Mormon stated that he "did repent of the oath, . . . and they gave me command again of their armies" (Mormon 5:1). Mormon made a record of his battles until sometime after 380 when he apparently stopped recording until after the battle of Cumorah (Mormon 6:1).

Thus, the time period referred to here would be from 375 to shortly after 380.

### **8. The Lamanites at this time "have many prisoners" (Moroni 9:7)**

And now I write somewhat concerning the sufferings of this people. For according to the knowledge which I have received from Amoron, behold, *the Lamanites have many prisoners*, which they took from the tower of Sherrizah; and there were men, women, and children. (Moroni 9:7)

Although "many" prisoners might have been taken at other times, the Book of Mormon text specifically mentions the Lamanites taking "many prisoners" only twice:

And now it came to pass that in the three hundred and sixty and third year the Nephites did go up with their armies to battle against the Lamanites, out of the land Desolation. And it came to pass that the armies of the Nephites were driven back again to the land of Desolation. And while they were yet weary, a fresh army of the Lamanites did come upon them; and they had a sore battle, insomuch that the Lamanites did take possession of the city Desolation, and did slay many of the Nephites, and *did take many prisoners* (363). (Mormon 4:1-2)

And it came to pass that the Lamanites did take possession of the city Desolation, and this because their number did exceed the number of the Nephites. And they did also march forward against the city Teancum, and did drive the inhabitants forth out of her, and *did take many prisoners* both women and children, and did offer them up as sacrifices unto their idol gods (367). (Mormon 4:13–14)

We can assume “many” prisoners were taken during the period of 375–79 if mention is made that “women and their children were sacrificed to idols” (Mormon 4:21). After 380, we might also assume that the Lamanites *did not* take “many prisoners” from the statement “and we did stand against them boldly; but it was all in vain, for so great were their numbers that they did tread the people of the Nephites under their feet. And it came to pass that we did again take to flight, and those whose flight was swifter than the Lamanites’ did escape, and those whose flight did not exceed the Lamanites’ were *swept down and destroyed*” (Mormon 5:6–7).

In summary, clue 8 involves specific references to events that occurred in 363, 367, and 375–79.

## **9. The Nephite prisoners of the Lamanites were slain and treated inhumanely (Moroni 9:8)**

Two specific scriptural references mention the Lamanites’ sacrificing Nephite prisoners:

And they [the Lamanites] did also march forward against the city Teancum, and did drive the inhabitants forth out of her, and did take many prisoners both women and children, and did offer them up as sacrifices unto their idol gods (367). (Mormon 4:14)

And when they [the Lamanites] had come the second time, the Nephites were driven and slaughtered with an exceedingly great slaughter; their women and their children were again sacrificed unto idols (375–79). (Mormon 4:21)

Clue 9 would thus involve the times of 367 and 375–79.

### **10. The Nephites were making inhumane sacrifices of their own (Moroni 9:9–10)**

And notwithstanding this great abomination of the Lamanites, it doth not exceed that of our people in Moriantum. For behold, many of the daughters of the Lamanites have they taken prisoners; and after depriving them of that which was most dear and precious above all things, which is chastity and virtue—And after they had done this thing, they did murder them in a most cruel manner, torturing their bodies even unto death; and after they have done this, they devour their flesh like unto wild beasts, because of the hardness of their hearts; and they do it for a token of bravery. (Moroni 9:9–10)

The first indication that the Nephites would have even thought to act with such inhumanity was in 367 when the Nephites were “angry because the Lamanites had sacrificed their women and their children” (Mormon 4:15). However, nothing more is mentioned in retaliation other than that the Nephites “beat again the Lamanites, and [did] drive them out of their lands.”

We also should consider the idea that Mormon’s reflection on Nephite atrocities could have extended some distance backward in time; however, considering the fact that he didn’t return to active military status until shortly after 375, I doubt that these reflections would have gone back before 367 when the Nephites, contrary to Mormon’s desires, were attacking the Lamanites. On the other end of the time line, after 380 the Nephites were in full retreat (Mormon 5:6–7), apparently fleeing away from the borders of Lamanite territory and moving deeper into their own lands, so the chance of their capturing Lamanite women would have been remote.

Thus, the time frame for this textual clue would have to be sometime after 367 and before 380.

### 11. Aaron was in charge of a Lamanite army (Moroni 9:17)

And the army which is with me is weak; and the armies of the Lamanites are betwixt Sherrizah and me; and as many as have fled to the *army of Aaron* have fallen victims to their awful brutality. (Moroni 9:17)

According to Mormon 2:9, the Lamanites in 330 had a king whose name was Aaron. This Lamanite king was defeated in battle that year by a Nephite army with a nineteen-year-old commander by the name of Mormon. Depending on the age and longevity of the Lamanite king Aaron, the Aaron in clue 11 could have been either the same Aaron that Mormon fought when he was nineteen, or possibly a son who was given the same name or title (see Mosiah 24:3). In 380 Mormon also mentions writing to a Lamanite king (Mormon 6:2–3), but no name is given. Thus, rather than definitely linking the epistles to 330 as Hauck has done,<sup>9</sup> this reference to Aaron in clue 11 is better linked to a lengthy time period extending from 330 to 385.

### 12. Mormon “cannot any longer enforce [his] commands” (Moroni 9:18)

O the depravity of my people! They are without order and without mercy. Behold, I am but a man, and I have but the strength of a man, and *I cannot any longer enforce my commands*. (Moroni 9:18)

There came a time when the Nephites’ wicked desires came into conflict with the commands of Mormon. The military setting here seems to imply that this epistle was written either before or after Mormon did “utterly refuse from this time forth to be a

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<sup>9</sup> F. Richard Hauck, *Deciphering the Geography of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1988), 90. According to Hauck, “His [Mormon’s] role as commander-in-chief during the preparation of the letter to Moroni and his mention of his enemy Aaron indicate that the letter [the second epistle or Moroni chapter 9] was prepared before the treaty of 350. These various correlations, therefore, place the writing of the letter within the earlier period of warfare associated with the Jashon-Shem complexes.”



commander and a leader of this people" (Mormon 3:11), which would be before or after the period 362–75 (Mormon 3:8–5:1). Two specific textual references might apply: The first instance of the Nephite people going completely against Mormon was in 362 (Mormon 3:14), when they desired to wage war against the Lamanites who had not initiated any aggressive action. Mormon opposed them and was overruled. Also, during the period 375–79 there is an implication of Nephite disobedience associated with a statement reflecting Mormon's frustration with the Nephite people's reluctance to gather:

But it came to pass that whatsoever lands we had passed by, and the inhabitants thereof were not gathered in, were destroyed by the Lamanites, and their towns, and villages, and cities were burned with fire; and thus three hundred and seventy and nine years passed away. (Mormon 5:5)

Therefore, clue 12 is satisfied by two time periods, 360–62 and 375–79.

### **13. Mormon has "sacred records that [he] would deliver up unto [Moroni]" (Moroni 9:24)**

And if it so be that they perish, we know that many of our brethren have deserted over unto the Lamanites, and many more will also desert over unto them; wherefore, write somewhat a few things, if thou art spared and I shall perish and not see thee; *but I trust that I may see thee soon; for I have sacred records that I would deliver up unto thee.* (Moroni 9:24)

According to Mormon 1:3–5, when Mormon was ten years old he was commanded by Ammaron, the keeper of the Nephite records, that when he turned twenty-four years of age he was to "go to the land Antum, unto a hill which shall be called Shim." He was to "take the plates of Nephi [large plates] unto [himself]" and "engrave on the plates of Nephi all the things . . . observed concerning this people." In Mormon 1:5, Mormon records that "I remembered the things which Ammaron commanded me." If

Mormon used the phrase *I remembered* to mean that he actually carried out the terms of the command, then he would have retrieved the plates in the year 335 (4 Nephi 1:48;g Mormon 1:2). The last recorded location of Mormon before 335 was in the land of Joshua, which was apparently “in the borders west by the seashore” (Mormon 2:6).

In 345 Mormon makes a reference that he “did make a record according to the words of Ammaron” (Mormon 2:17–18). This refers to Mormon’s portion of the large plates.

In 375 Mormon saw that “the Lamanites were about to overthrow the land” (Mormon 4:23); therefore, Mormon “did go to the hill Shim, and take up *all* the records which Ammaron had hid up” (Mormon 4:23).

In 385 Mormon records:

And it came to pass that when we had gathered in all our people in one to the land of Cumorah, behold I, Mormon, began to be old; and knowing it to be the last struggle of my people, and having been commanded of the Lord that I should not suffer the records which had been handed down by our fathers, which were sacred, to fall into the hands of the Lamanites, (for the Lamanites would destroy them) therefore *I made this record out of the plates of Nephi*, and hid up in the hill Cumorah all the records which had been entrusted to me by the hand of the Lord, save it were *these few plates* which I gave unto my son Moroni. (Mormon 6:6)

In Mormon’s abridged record of the final years of the Nephite nation, there is no record of Mormon’s turning any of the records over to Moroni prior to 385. In my opinion, the phrases *these few plates* and *this record*, which record Mormon apparently “made<sup>10</sup>. . . out of the [large and small] plates of

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<sup>10</sup> The phrase “therefore *I made this record out of the plates of Nephi*” presents a dilemma. What record was it that Mormon made “when three hundred and eighty four years had passed away” (Mormon 6:5)? Did Mormon make all “this record” during 385? Which plates of Nephi did he make “this record” out of, the large plates? the small plates? or both? To present the different possibilities here would require sufficient detail to warrant another paper; therefore, I will only

Nephi," both seem to refer to that which Mormon gave<sup>11</sup> to Moroni. The question we now come to is this: If in clue 13 the

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attempt to present briefly an explanation for this phrase which supports the clues illustrated on the chart on page 113.

It is my opinion that Mormon used the term "made" to mean that he put together the set of plates that Moroni would eventually give to Joseph Smith. I feel it would have been improbable for Mormon to complete the entire task of abridging the large plates at a time when his entire nation had gathered for the imminent final battles with the Lamanites, and were looking to Mormon for leadership. Additionally, in view of the many records that Mormon used as source material (Helaman 3:13; Words of Mormon 1:3-5; Moroni 9:23-24), in less than a year he would have needed to abridge the messages contained in what amounted to over 100 times the material contained within our present Book of Mormon. Thus, "knowing it to be the last struggle of [his] people" (Mormon 6:6), and having sought a promise of the Lord that Moroni would be spared (Moroni 9:22), and having grown old (Mormon 6:5), I believe Mormon "made" what technically amounted to a slightly different "record" because he attempted to give some order to his abridgment before turning it over to Moroni. Because of the fact that the Lamanites sought to destroy the Nephite records, Mormon planned to hide up all the large plates and other Nephite records (Mormon 6:6); thus, Mormon first included in "this record" his abridgment of the large plates, which he had started sometime after 362 when the Lord commanded him concerning the matter (Mormon 3:16-22; 5:9-15). This abridgment covered the events up to what is now known as chapter 6 of Mormon, but still left some remaining plates empty. Next, Mormon attached the small plates to the end of these plates containing the abridgment with an explanatory note attached (Words of Mormon 1:1-7). He then added a title page to his "record," and "gave" Moroni the responsibility to complete what he had started if he (Mormon) were not to survive the last battle (Mormon 8:1). Nevertheless, Mormon did survive the battle of Cumorah and had sufficient room on the remaining empty plates to finish the pertinent details of the final destruction and admonish the Lamanites (Mormon 6 and 7). When Mormon was finally killed in battle (Mormon 8:5), it became the responsibility of Moroni to find the time and circumstances to abridge the record of Ether, which he completed sometime after 401. Once this was accomplished, Moroni amended the title page and thought he was finished (Moroni 1:1); however, with some space still available on the plates and with an opportunity to add some things "of worth," Moroni added his own book of Moroni before he finally sealed up the records for the final time and buried them (Moroni 10:2; Mormon 8:4).

Thus, Mormon's statement in 385 that he "made this record out of the plates of Nephi" can be fully justified with the pertinent clues charted on page 113.

<sup>11</sup> The word "gave" implies that Mormon physically turned over "these few plates" to Moroni; however, this seems to contradict Mormon's story line which continues on to record the final battle at Cumorah, and it ignores the note

“sacred records that I (Mormon) would deliver up unto thee (Moroni)” were “these few plates,” and “these few plates” contained the abridgment, then when was the abridgment started?”

Although the work of the abridgment is specifically referred to by Mormon even before the abridged Nephite history chronologically reaches Mormon’s lifetime,<sup>12</sup> perhaps the first known chronological dating of the Lord’s *command* to write the abridgment is found in Mormon 3:14–17, and more thoroughly elaborated in Mormon 5:8–23. This would mean that “the sacred records that [Mormon] would deliver up unto [Moroni]” (the abridged records) were started some time after 362. At first glance, the time period referred to here in clue 13 would be 362–85. The fact that Mormon was considering the idea of turning the abridgment over to Moroni might imply some elapsed time after 362 for Mormon to complete a major portion of this work. On the other end of the proposed time period, the abridged records that covered the Nephite history from shortly after 380 (Mormon 6 and 7) were written after the battle of Cumorah.

Thus, the time frame related to clue 13 is from 362+ to 380+.

## Conclusion

By highlighting and charting the time periods relative to each analyzed chronological clue located within the epistles of Mormon to his son Moroni (see chart on page 113), it appears that chapters 8 and 9 in the book of Moroni (Mormon’s epistles) were written sometime within the year between 375 and 376. This chronological setting meets not just a majority of the textual clues,

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by Moroni which seems to mark the beginning of his own writing when “four hundred years have passed away” (Mormon 8:6). Thus, I feel that the term “gave” here refers to responsibility more than possession.

<sup>12</sup> Mormon’s specific editorial references to his work of the abridgment that chronologically appear in the text before his lifetime include: Words of Mormon 1:1–9; Helaman 2:13–14; 3 Nephi 5:13–17; and 3 Nephi 26:6–12. Mormon 2:18 (345) also specifically refers to the abridgment; however, it is situated during Mormon’s lifetime about seventeen years before the “command” mentioned in Mormon 3:14–17 (362). For a complete listing of Mormon’s editorial comments see Alvin C. Rencher, “Book of Mormon Authorship Chronology,” F.A.R.M.S. paper, 1986.

but it satisfies all thirteen time frames established for the clues. It is fascinating to realize that from limited references within the complex chronological story contained in the Book of Mormon, a consistent historical scenario can be mapped out.

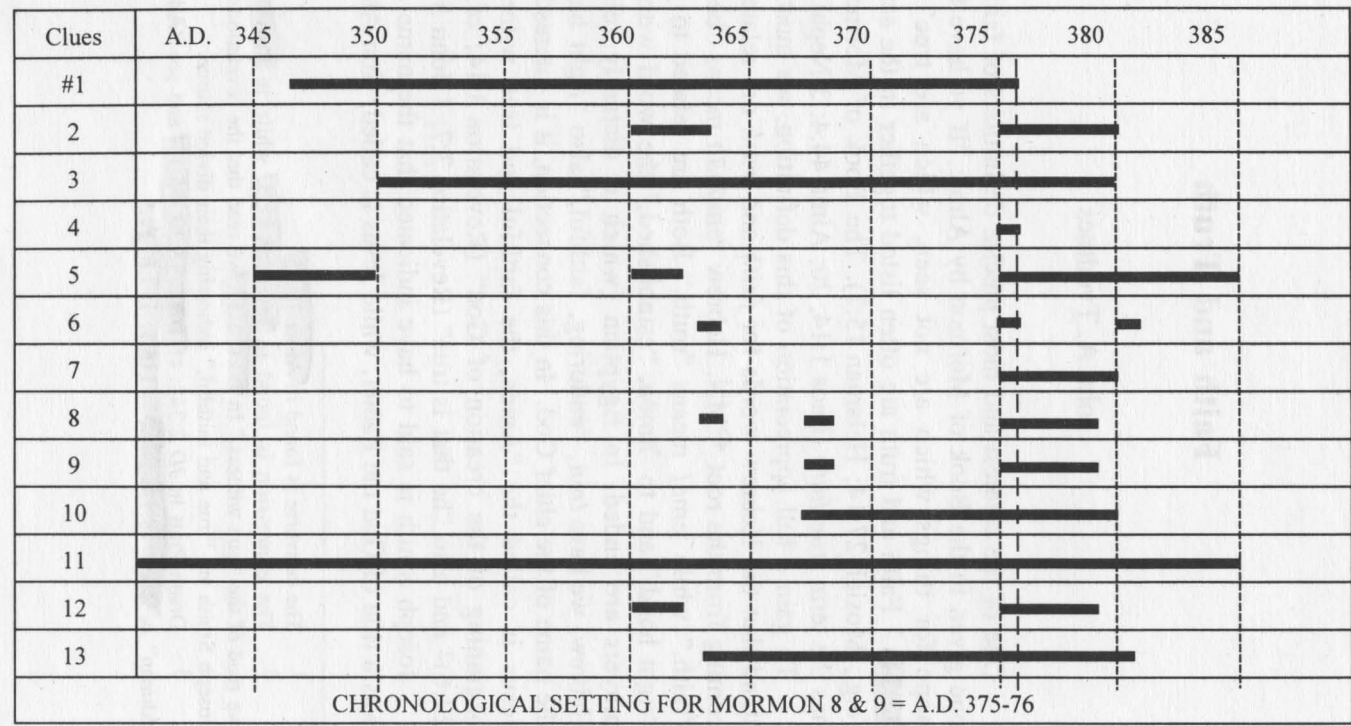
Although the... to by Mormon even before the abridged Nephiite history chronologically reaches Mormon's lifetime,<sup>12</sup> perhaps the first known chronological dating of the Lord's command to write the abridgment is found in Mormon 2:14-17, and more thoroughly stated in Mormon 2:8-13. This would mean that "the sacred records that [Mormon] would deliver up unto [Morton]" (the abridged records) were started some time after 362. At that stage, the time period referred to here in clue 13 would be 362-63. The fact that Mormon was considering the idea of turning the abridgment over to Morton might imply some elapsed time after 362 for Mormon to complete a major portion of his work. On the other end of the proposed time period, the abridged records that covered the Nephiite history from shortly after 350 (Morton 6 and 7) were written after the battle of Cumorah. Thus, the time frame related to clue 13 is from 362+ to 380+.

### Conclusion

By highlighting and charting the time periods relative to each analyzed chronological clue located within the epistles of Mormon to his son Moroni (see chart on page 113), it appears that chapters 2 and 3 in the book of Mormon (Mormon's epistles) were written sometime within the year between 375 and 376. This chronological setting means not just a majority of the textual clues

Mormon's specific editorial references in his work to the chronology appear in the text before his abridgment in the... also specifically refers to the abridgment however, it is not... For a complete listing of Mormon's editorial comments see A. L. Peterson, "Book of Mormon Authorship Chronology," F.A.M.S. paper, 1988.

CHARTING THE TIME FRAMES OF TEXTUAL CLUES



CHRONOLOGICAL SETTING FOR MORMON 8 & 9 = A.D. 375-76