



7-31-2002

# A Third Jaredite Record: The Sealed Portion of the Gold Plates

Valentin Arts

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jbms>

### BYU ScholarsArchive Citation

Arts, Valentin (2002) "A Third Jaredite Record: The Sealed Portion of the Gold Plates," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*: Vol. 11 : No. 1, Article 10.

Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jbms/vol11/iss1/10>

This Feature Article is brought to you for free and open access by the All Journals at BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* by an authorized editor of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact [scholarsarchive@byu.edu](mailto:scholarsarchive@byu.edu), [ellen\\_amatangelo@byu.edu](mailto:ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu).



---

NEAL A. MAXWELL INSTITUTE  
FOR RELIGIOUS SCHOLARSHIP

---

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY • PROVO, UTAH

**Title** A Third Jaredite Record: The Sealed Portion of the Gold Plates

**Author(s)** Valentin Arts

**Reference** *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 11/1 (2002): 50-59, 110-11.

**ISSN** 1065-9366 (print), 2168-3158 (online)

**Abstract** In the Book of Mormon, two records (a large engraved stone and twenty-four gold plates) contain the story of an ancient civilization known as the Jaredites. There appears to be evidence of an unpublished third record that provides more information on this people and on the history of the world. When the brother of Jared received a vision of Jesus Christ, he was taught many things but was instructed not to share them with the world until the time of his death. The author proposes that the brother of Jared did, in fact, write those things down shortly before his death and then buried them, along with the interpreting stones, to be revealed to the world according to the timing of the Lord.



A  
THIRD JAREDITE RECORD

THE SEALED PORTION OF THE GOLD PLATES

VALENTIN ARTS

**T**HE BOOK OF MORMON informs us about two Jaredite records possessed by the Nephites. The first was a large stone with engravings that recounted the history of Coriantumr and his slain people, as well as a few words concerning his fathers. The people of Zarahemla brought this stone to Mosiah the elder, who translated the engravings by the gift and power of God (see Omni 1:20–22). Several decades later, King Limhi sent a small number of men to search for the land of Zarahemla. On this expedition they found 24 gold plates among the bones of a destroyed people (see Mosiah 21:25–27). Mosiah the younger translated this second Jaredite record by the gift and power of God (see Mosiah 28:11–13). Moroni abridged these 24 plates and called the record the book of Ether (see Ether 1:2). This abridgment, which does not contain the “hundredth part” of the original (Ether 15:33), is included in the Book of Mormon.

Evidence demonstrates that the Nephites also possessed a third Jaredite record, one that was translated only after Jesus Christ’s appearance to the Nephites. This study will focus on who wrote this record, what it contained, how the Nephites obtained it, and what became of it. Most of the evidence for my conclusions is found in Ether 3–5. Within these chapters, Moroni provides us with a wealth of information on this third Jaredite record that has often been neglected or overlooked.

### **The Vision of the Brother of Jared**

The unabridged book of Ether contained a history of the Jaredites, whose civilization lasted many centuries longer than that of the Nephites, as well as an account of “the creation of the world, and also of Adam, and an account from that time even to the great tower” (Ether 1:3). Ether is the author of the book and probably consulted many records to write his inspired history, much as Mormon appealed to the Nephite records to write his own account. In his abridgment of Ether’s book, Moroni omits the first part of Ether’s account, the early Genesis story, because he knows that it will come to our knowledge through the record of the Jews (see Ether 1:3–4). He then begins the abridged history, or rather prosopography (which is more like an annotated genealogy), by giving the genealogy from Ether back to Jared. From there Moroni starts the story line with the account of Jared and the Tower of Babel and ends with the life of the prophet Ether and the destruction of the Jaredites.

While commenting on the most important persons and events of Jaredite history, Moroni digresses several times to draw attention to important lessons, usually starting with the words “And now I, Moroni . . .” (Ether 3:17; 5:1; 8:20; 12:6). In the first digression, which is also the longest, Moroni informs us about the vision of the brother of Jared, the record that was made of that vision, and its destiny to come forth in the last days (see Ether 3:17–5:6).

Moroni describes in Ether 3:1–16 how the brother of Jared, as a consequence of his efforts to provide light for the barges in order to cross the oceans, first saw the finger of the Lord and afterward the Lord himself in a vision. It is that very important vision upon which Moroni wishes to elaborate.

Moroni informs us that the Lord ministered to the brother of Jared as he ministered to the Nephites (see Ether 3:18). The verb *to minister* means “to serve or to supply with” and seems to connote more than just conversing or preaching. Moroni does not spell out the exact manner in which the Lord ministered to the brother of Jared, but he does provide us with some clues. Moroni draws a parallel with the ministering of the Lord among the Nephites. We know from the book of 3 Nephi that Jesus taught the people, healed them, and administered ordinances to them such as the sacrament and ordination. Thus we may infer that the Lord also administered ordinances to the brother of Jared, some of which were sacred and not to be revealed. This suggestion can be supported by another clue from Moroni. After the ministering session, the Lord commanded the brother of Jared,

Behold, thou shalt not suffer these things which ye have seen and heard to go forth unto the world, until the time cometh that I shall glorify my name in the flesh; wherefore, ye shall treasure up the things which ye have seen and heard, and show it to no man. And behold, when ye shall come unto me, ye shall write them and shall seal them up, that no one can interpret them; for ye shall write them in a language that they cannot be read. (Ether 3:21–22)

The brother of Jared was not to divulge the things he had “seen and heard.” He was further commanded to treasure up the things that he had learned. Then he was once more commanded to “show” his knowledge to no one. The word *show* in this verse deserves our attention because it must refer to a particular kind of

knowledge, namely the kind that can be shown or demonstrated visually. This commandment might refer to the record of the Lord's ministering to the brother of Jared, which was to remain hidden or sealed; but we are also informed in the next verse that he was not allowed to write "these things" until he would come unto the Lord, or, in other words, at the end of his life.<sup>1</sup> During his lifetime, the brother of Jared was therefore not able to show in written form the things he had seen and heard. He had to remember it all. Hence, the Lord stresses that he treasure up the things that he had heard and seen. If the knowledge that the Savior was referring to consisted of sacred ordinances, it was indeed important for him to remember it, since he could not be reminded of any sacred words or signs by anyone else. Such ordinances were to be performed only after the resurrection of Christ, including those for departed spirits. This view makes sense of the Lord's commandment to the brother of Jared not to show the things he had both heard and seen and to delay making a record of them.

As has been noted, at the end of his life the brother of Jared was to seal up his record of the sacred things he had received from the Lord (see Ether 3:22). The Lord further declared that he had confounded the language in which the brother of Jared should write, so that those things could not be read except through the interpreters (see Ether 3:22–24). From this we might suppose that because the record was not readable for anyone without the interpreters, it was, in a way, already sealed and thus may not have needed further physical attachment or burying. However, it appears that when the Lord commanded him also to seal up the two interpreting stones (see Ether 3:23), the sealing involved a physical act. Keeping in mind the way that Moroni uses the term *seal up* when referring to the gold plates, and remembering the commandment of the Lord to the brother of Jared to "show them [the interpreters] not" (Ether 3:28), we can infer that the record of the brother of Jared had to be buried in the ground.

The interpreting stones were prepared for the special purpose of translating this record of the Lord's ministering unto the brother of Jared: "These two stones will I [the Lord] give unto thee, and ye shall seal them up . . . ; wherefore . . . these stones shall magnify . . . these things which ye shall write" (Ether 3:23–24). The interpreters were to remain with the record for which they were prepared until it

was translated. This understanding is very important for the thesis that a third Jaredite record contained the full account of the brother of Jared's vision. It implies that any reference to either the sealed record or the interpreters would mean that both were held in possession at the same time. (The information that the Book of Mormon provides on this matter will be considered later in this study.)

After the Lord ministered unto him and gave him the commandments concerning this record, the brother of Jared was shown another vision, or the rest of the same vision. He saw all the inhabitants of the earth, "even unto the ends of the earth," for "the Lord could not withhold anything from him" (Ether 3:25–26). It appears that Moroni is not our only source for the contents of that vision. Nephi, commenting on the prophecy of Isaiah about a sealed book (which refers to the sealed part of the gold plates), said: "They reveal all things from the foundation of the world unto the end thereof . . . ; and all things shall be revealed unto the children of men which ever have been among the children of men, and which ever will be even unto the end of the earth" (2 Nephi 27:10–11). Moroni tells us that "never were greater things made manifest than those which were made manifest unto the brother of Jared" (Ether 4:4). Moroni does not say that the brother of Jared was the only or even the first prophet to receive such a great vision. He only says something about the vision itself. There are many examples of prophets who have seen very similar visions.<sup>2</sup> It is important to realize, however, that it was the special privilege of, and commandment to, the brother of Jared to record the vision in full, something forbidden to other prophets. The reason the brother of Jared, of all great prophets, was chosen for this task could be that it would serve the Lord's plan that a knowledge of this record would be given to the Nephites in their day and to the Latter-day Saints in the future. Both groups, then, will have had the opportunity to possess the sealed record and its interpreters.

The Lord speaks in the future tense in Ether 3:22: "When ye *shall* come unto me, ye *shall* write them and *shall* seal them up." But in verses 3:27 and 4:1 the Lord commands him to "write these things and seal them up" and to "write the things which he had seen," as if the brother of Jared had to fulfill the commandment straightaway. Possibly the second part of the vision, wherein he saw all the inhabitants of the earth and the history of mankind from the

beginning until the end, was to be recorded first and immediately, while the part wherein the Lord ministered unto him had to be recorded later on in his life. In any case, both records were to be sealed up with the interpreters, not to be shown to anyone until the due time of the Lord.

### **The Book of Ether and the Vision of the Brother of Jared**

Because Moroni interrupts his story on the migration of the Jaredites to tell more about the great vision of the brother of Jared, and only afterward continues his story of the Jaredites, it is possible that the record of that vision was contained in the unabridged book of Ether. It seems apparent that Moroni received his information about the vision from those 24 plates and that he made only a few general comments on the vision while abridging that record.<sup>3</sup> It is certain that Ether did indeed include some information in his book about that great vision (see Ether 12:20). However, he could not have included the entire record of that vision by the brother of Jared. Moroni writes:

Behold, I have written [note: not *abridged*] upon these plates the *very things* which the brother of Jared saw. . . . Wherefore the Lord hath commanded me to write them; and I have written them. (Ether 4:4–5)

While it seems that Moroni had access to the entire record, we will review seven arguments for believing that Moroni could not have copied the record of that vision from the unabridged book of Ether.

First of all, there simply was not enough space on the 24 plates to contain such an extensive record. This point can easily be demonstrated by doing a little arithmetic. The sealed portion of the gold plates contains, as Moroni explains, the complete record of the brother of Jared's vision. After elaborating on the origin and future of the record of this great vision (see Ether 3:17–4:19), Moroni writes a short letter, effectively addressed to Joseph Smith, wherein he warns him not to touch the sealed plates, evidently so he can keep the gift to translate them (see Ether 5:1). Although we might suppose that other great revelations were also contained in the sealed part of the gold plates, the Book of Mormon does not support this idea. Nephi, explaining the prophecy of Isaiah 29:11–12, writes:

And it shall come to pass that the Lord God shall bring forth unto you the words of a book, and they shall be the words of them which have slumbered. And behold the book shall be sealed; and in the book shall be *a* revelation from God, from the beginning of the world to the ending thereof. . . . Wherefore the book shall be kept from them. . . . For the book shall be sealed by the power of God, and *the* revelation which was sealed shall be kept in the book until the own due time of the Lord, that they may come forth; for behold, they reveal all things from the foundation of the world unto the end thereof. (2 Nephi 27:6–8, 10)

Nephi refers to the content of the sealed part of the plates in the singular as *a* or *the* revelation from God, which will reveal all things from the beginning to the end. It seems evident that he is referring to the great vision of the brother of Jared. In this connection, early and modern church leaders have taught that the sealed part of the gold plates consisted of the record of the vision of the brother of Jared.<sup>4</sup> If the great vision of the brother of Jared constituted about two-thirds of the gold plates, it should render us more than twice as many pages (about 1,000) of English translation as those in our current Book of Mormon, which represents less than one-third of the gold plates, if we take into account the 116 pages that were lost by Martin Harris. We also read that Moroni did not record the “hundredth part” of the Jaredite history as written by Ether (Ether 15:33). If we take that statement literally, as well as exclude Moroni's insertions of approximately 7 pages out of 30 in the English translation of the book of Ether, the unabridged book of Ether would render more than 2,300 pages of English translation. This amount of text from only 24 plates seems rather difficult, but we simply have to believe Moroni on this point. However, if we suppose the record of the vision of the brother of Jared was also included on those plates, another 1,000 pages would have to be translated from them. So much text from so few plates is simply impossible. The problem of limited space on those plates suggests that the Nephites possessed another Jaredite record. Lack of space on the 24 plates, however, is by no means the only, nor the most important, inconsistency that supports this view.

The second observation has to do with the very sacred nature of the revelation to the brother of

Jared. This record was not to be unsealed until Christ showed himself unto the Nephites (see Ether 4:1). However, there is no indication anywhere that even part of the 24 plates was sealed.<sup>5</sup> A large part of the Jaredite record would have been sealed if it had contained the record of the brother of Jared's vision. Mormon gives us detailed information on what the people of Limhi found, including the rust on the hiltless swords (see Mosiah 8:11), but there is no mention that a portion of the plates was sealed, something that could hardly have escaped attention and thus inclusion in the text. Furthermore, we read that Mosiah the younger "translated and caused to be written the records which were on the plates of gold which had been found by the people of Limhi, which were delivered to him by the hand of Limhi" (Mosiah 28:11). Because there is no hint in this statement that Mosiah translated only a part of the 24 plates, we may assume that they were translated in their entirety. We also read that after Mosiah had finished translating it, this record "gave an account of the people who were destroyed, from the time that they were destroyed back to the building of the great tower, at the time the Lord confounded the language of the people and they were scattered abroad upon the face of all the earth, yea, and even from that time back until the creation of Adam" (Mosiah 28:17). This passage refers only to Jaredite history, not to the sealed vision. If the sealed record was included, the Lord would not have allowed it to be unsealed in the days of Mosiah. It seems that Mosiah was allowed to translate all that was written on the 24 plates.

My third point also deals with the sacred character of the record of the brother of Jared. The Lord commanded the brother of Jared to seal up his record so it would not be made public or fall into the wrong hands. The people of Limhi found the 24 plates somewhere among the bones and ruins of the Jaredites (see Mosiah 8:8–9). This circumstance is very strange, to say the least, when we consider the sacredness and importance of the sealed record. Although scripture has come to us before in unusual ways (e.g., the Book of Abraham), it does not seem the Lord's way that a most sacred record be found, apparently unsealed and by chance, by a group of soldiers, particularly in an era when the Lord expressly commanded that it should not come to the world.

Fourth, it is not only the length and nature of the sacred record that indicate the great vision was

not written on the 24 plates. If the vision was contained in the book of Ether, something very important was missing: the interpreters. We notice that the people of Limhi did not have means wherewith to translate the discovered record, which would not have been the case if it contained the great vision. We recall that the Lord commanded the brother of Jared to seal up the interpreters together with his records for the purpose of translating them. Not King Limhi but, very interestingly, King Mosiah the younger in the land of Zarahemla was in possession of interpreters, evidently those that the Lord had entrusted to the brother of Jared. This is most remarkable because, reversing the argument, it implies that Mosiah had not only the interpreters but also custody of the sealed record (see Ether 4:1–2; Mosiah 8:13–14) even *before* he received the book of Ether, since the sealed vision and the interpreters must come together (see Ether 3:23, 28). That the interpreters of King Mosiah were the very same that the brother of Jared had received becomes obvious from Doctrine and Covenants 17:1, where we learn that Joseph Smith also had custody of the Urim and Thummim that were given to the brother of Jared. To assume that Mosiah, or the Nephites in general, had other interpreters than the ones given to the brother of Jared would raise more questions than it would answer.<sup>6</sup>

Fifth, there is a stronger point—one based on chronological reasons—that shows the sealed record was not contained in the book of Ether. The printer's manuscript of the Book of Mormon reads "Benjamin" instead of "Mosiah" in Ether 4:1: "for this cause did king Mosiah keep them." Critics have assumed that the change from the original name Benjamin to the current name Mosiah provides evidence that Joseph Smith wrote the book himself, since it is an obvious anachronism to refer to King Benjamin when we are also told that the 24 plates were not brought to Zarahemla until the days of his son Mosiah. Although most Latter-day Saints attach little weight to the change, it is generally accepted that it would indeed be an anachronism if we were still to read "Benjamin" in this verse.<sup>7</sup> This change from the original translation is one of the very few of a few thousand changes that really can affect the meaning of what is said. If the Mosiah of Ether 4:1 was Mosiah the younger, the original reference to Benjamin would be an anachronism and thus be a "mistake of man," as Moroni calls such an error on the title page. In fact, this change

has actually led to serious misunderstanding because we almost automatically assume that Mosiah the younger is meant. However, the change appears to be an improvement rather than a correction, for it seems that not Mosiah the younger but his grandfather Mosiah the elder is meant, which leaves the original reading of “Benjamin” perfectly correct. This is because, if King Benjamin did keep back the records of the vision, “that they should not come unto the world until after Christ should show himself unto his people” (Ether 4:1), the record could not possibly have been written on the 24 plates, which were only later handed over to his son Mosiah.

My sixth observation arises from this statement of Moroni: “Behold, I have written upon these plates the very things which the brother of Jared saw. . .

Wherefore the Lord hath commanded me to write them; and I have written them” (Ether 4:4–5). It appears from these verses that Moroni had already finished writing, or copying, the whole vision of the brother of Jared even before he had finished, or possibly even begun, the abridgment of the book of Ether. The phrase “these plates” refers to the gold plates that were delivered to Joseph Smith. This is an important chronological note. Apparently, the record of the sealed vision was attached (or ready to be attached) to the gold plates even before Moroni finished abridging the book of Ether and before he added his own book of Moroni. Hence, when Moroni addressed Joseph Smith in Ether 5 to instruct him, he was already referring to the sealed part of the gold plates and had just barely begun to abridge Ether’s book.



Mosiah Interprets the Jaredite Stone, by Minerva Kohlhepp Teichert

King Mosiah translating the Jaredite stone with the aid of the interpreters, which are attached to a breastplate.

The seventh and last point is that Ether alone is the author of the book of Ether (see Ether 1:6; 15:33). Of course, he may have quoted extensively from other sources, as Mormon did. But if he had copied the entire vision of the brother of Jared onto the 24 plates, we are led to ask several compelling questions, such as: Was Ether allowed to unseal the original record of the brother of Jared despite the fact that it was “forbidden to come unto the children of men until after that he [Jesus] should be lifted upon the cross” (Ether 4:1)? If so, did he translate the record from the original language into the later Jaredite language with the aid of the interpreters? Or did he engrave thousands and thousands of characters

The first direct reference to the interpreters comes from the days of the younger King Mosiah (see Mosiah 8:13). The first direct reference to the sealed record among the Nephites is, as we have seen, in the days of King Benjamin (see Ether 4:1, 1830 edition). The first indirect reference to the interpreters among the Nephites is in Omni 1:20. We read that the elder Mosiah translated the engravings on a large stone “by the gift and power of God.” To understand this expression, we notice that the title page of the Book of Mormon reads, “To come forth by the gift and power of God unto the interpretation thereof . . . The interpretation thereof by the gift of God.” The phrase “by the gift and power of God”

THERE ARE AT LEAST TWO REASONS TO BELIEVE THAT ETHER MIGHT HAVE VISITED MOSIAH TO HAND OVER THE PLATES OR DISCLOSE WHERE THEY WERE. FIRST, THE PROPHET ETHER WAS THE LAST SURVIVING RIGHTEOUS JAREDITE AND AS SUCH POSSESSED ALL THE SACRED RECORDS OF HIS CIVILIZATION. LIKE MORONI, HE PROBABLY HELD THE KEYS TO BRING FORTH THE SCRIPTURES THAT BELONGED TO HIS DISPENSATION.

that he simply could not understand? Finally, what happened to the original record after Ether copied it onto the 24 plates, since we read that Moroni also possessed the original sealed record (see Ether 4:3)? To remain consistent with the directions of the Lord on the matter, the first three questions must be answered in the negative. Ether, too, was not to unseal the record and therefore could not translate it nor copy all the strange characters. In this light, we must conclude that Ether also kept the original records safely sealed and that they were handed over that way to the Nephites (see Ether 4:1).

In summary, I have tried to demonstrate that, sometime before the 24 plates were found, there was a sacred record among the Nephites that contained the sacred words of the brother of Jared. This record was kept untranslated until the coming of Christ among the Nephites. It now becomes our object to investigate just how and when this sealed record was obtained by King Benjamin and how Moroni eventually came to possess it.

### **The Sealed Record and Interpreters among the Nephites**

If King Benjamin held the sealed record of the vision of the brother of Jared, he must also have possessed the interpreters. But how and when did the Nephites get possession of these Jaredite materials?

thus has reference to the interpreters and the gift of translation. From this we may conclude that Mosiah the elder was already in possession of the interpreters that the Lord had entrusted to the brother of Jared and therefore also in possession of the sealed record. This explains why Joseph Smith changed the name Benjamin in Ether 4:1 to Mosiah. Apparently, not only did Mosiah the younger hold both the sealed record and the interpreters, but his grandfather did too. This would mean that the original reading of Ether 4:1 was absolutely correct, but that the emended reading is more accurate because Mosiah the elder’s possession of the sacred relics predated Benjamin’s possession of them.

The question is now placed back in time, but it still remains the same: How did the elder Mosiah obtain the sealed record and the interpreters? Since Joseph Smith changed the name Benjamin to Mosiah, it was probably Mosiah the elder who was the first Nephite to possess the sealed record, and he must have found or received them by revelation. If we consider the way in which Joseph Smith received the gold plates (including the sealed part) from the angel Moroni, it would be no surprise if an angel or prophet had led Mosiah to the sacred material or handed it over to him in a similar manner. I suggest that this Jaredite messenger could have been Ether, author of the 24 gold plates.

There are at least two reasons to believe that Ether might have visited Mosiah to hand over the plates or disclose where they were. First, the prophet Ether was the last surviving righteous Jaredite and as such possessed all the sacred records of his civilization. Like Moroni, he probably held the keys to bring forth the scriptures that belonged to his dispensation (see D&C 27:5).

Second, although it is possible that an angel showed Mosiah where the sacred material could be found, there is a pattern in the scriptures that suggests otherwise. Whenever a prophet has held keys that needed to be transferred to another dispensation, this has always been done by a resurrected or translated being (see Matthew 17:2–5; D&C 13; 110; JS—H 1:39–54). In this light it is reasonable that Ether passed on the sealed record.

How so? Ether was a contemporary of Coriantumr, who lived among the people of Zarahemla for “nine moons” and thus also lived in the era of the Nephites (Omni 1:21). It is therefore possible that in his old age Ether visited Mosiah, either still in the land of Nephi or in Zarahemla. He also might have been translated. In this connection Moroni preserved an interesting note from Ether. After finishing his abridgment of Ether’s book, Moroni found it worthwhile to quote Ether’s last words: “Whether the Lord will that I be translated, or that I suffer the will of the Lord in the flesh, it mattereth not, if it so be that I am saved in the kingdom of God” (Ether 15:34). Moroni must have had a reason to include these words of Ether. Apparently, Ether suspected he would be translated. If he were chosen to hand over the sealed record and interpreters to the Nephites, he was likely aware of this calling when he wrote his last words, and he also would have known that he lived contemporaneously with the Nephites (see Ether 11:21), even though he must have been in his old age. It is possible, then, that Ether knew he had an important mission to fulfill but had not yet been commanded by the Lord to carry it out.

If such an important event as an appearance of Ether to Mosiah the elder occurred, why was it not explicitly recorded in the Book of Mormon? To that question we do not have a definitive answer. Maybe there was information on this topic in the 116 pages that were lost by Martin Harris. The small plates of Nephi contain very little information on Mosiah the elder, no more than 11 verses (see Omni 1:12–23). In our present Book of Mormon, Moroni is the only prophet who supplies clues about such an event.

It seems that the Nephites were little aware that their king, and later their high priests, possessed a sealed record. We raise the question, In what respect would the Nephites have benefited by knowing about a very sacred record of another dispensation that was to be kept sealed? The sealed record was of no practical interest to them until Christ came to unseal it. Even the high priests were only to keep the record, not to read or translate it. The Nephites in Zarahemla were aware, however, that their king had the interpreters, because he had used them to translate the large stone containing a history of the Jaredites (see Omni 1:20; Mosiah 8:13–14). This knowledge was clearly demonstrated when Ammon met King Limhi in the land of Nephi. After Ammon heard about the 24 plates, he was very quick to inform Limhi that his own king had interpreters that could be used for translating.

### The Sealed Record Unsealed

After Mosiah there is no other specific mention of any other prophet having the sealed record except for Moroni himself (see Ether 4:1). There is no doubt, however, that the sealed record was transmitted along the same line as the interpreters, as well as the other sacred records, the sword of Laban, and the Liahona.

From Ether 4:1–2 it is apparent that the sealed record was translated after Christ showed himself to the Nephites. In all probability it was the disciple Nephi, the presiding high priest, who translated this extensive record with the aid of the Urim and Thummim. Nephi already held the sealed record and the interpreters, but he could not start the translation until after Christ explicitly commanded him to do so. Nephi probably did not begin to translate the vision until after Jesus left the Nephites, because it would have taken quite some time to translate such a long record. In any event, during his ministry among the Nephites, the Lord revealed many things that were contained in the sealed record. For at one point

he did expound *all things, even from the beginning until the time that he should come in his glory*—yea, even all things which should come upon the face of the earth, even until the elements should melt with fervent heat, and the earth should be wrapt together as a scroll, and the heavens and the earth should pass away; And *even unto the great and last day*, when all people, and all kindreds, and all nations and tongues

shall stand before God, to be judged of their works, whether they be good or whether they be evil. (3 Nephi 26:3–4)

These verses have much in common with the report of Jesus' ministry to the brother of Jared, who was also shown all things (see Ether 3:26; 12:21) "even unto the ends of the earth" (Ether 3:25; see 2 Nephi 27:10).

Such language clarifies in part Moroni's declaration that "he [Christ] ministered unto him [the brother of Jared] even as he ministered unto the Nephites; and all this, that this man might know that he was God" (Ether 3:18). Thus the Lord not only administered ordinances to both the brother of Jared and the Nephites, but he also prophesied to both concerning the history of mankind to the end of the earth.

In this light, after Nephi had recorded the teachings of the resurrected Savior and had translated the sealed record, the Savior's teachings in their virtual entirety were in written form among the Nephites. Knowing this throws more light on the awful fate of the Nephites. In the decades leading up to their annihilation, it seems evident that many had sinned against the greater light that had come from the Lord.

### **Moroni and the Sealed Record**

From the time of Nephi (ca. A.D. 35), there were two copies of the record of the great vision of the brother of Jared: the original, "in a language that . . . cannot be read" (Ether 3:22), and "the interpretation thereof" by Nephi in the Nephite language (Ether 4:5; see vv. 1–2). Moroni possessed both records and added a third copy by writing or copying the words of the vision upon "these plates" (Ether 4:4), that is, the gold plates. He most likely used Nephi's translation as his master copy because he was familiar with that language and not with the language of the brother of Jared. For the same reason, Moroni probably also turned to Mosiah's translation of the book of Ether to make his abridgment.

Moroni does remark on the wondrous power of the sealed account from the brother of Jared and, in comparison, on his own modest ability. Moroni's words offer a sense of the extraordinary character of the sealed record:

Thou [the Lord] hast made us that we could write but little, because of the awkwardness of our hands. Behold, thou hast not made us mighty in

writing like unto the brother of Jared, for thou madest him that the things which he wrote were mighty even as thou art, unto the overpowering of man to read them. Thou hast also made our words powerful and great, even that we cannot write them; wherefore, when we write we behold our weakness, and stumble because of the placing of our words; and I fear lest the Gentiles shall mock at our words. (Ether 12:24–25)

### **The Interpreters**

So far we have paid attention mostly to the history of the sealed record of the brother of Jared. The history of the interpreters follows very much the same story line as that record, but the interpreters have an additional history. While the sealed record was simply kept for a long period of time, the interpreters were used for other purposes besides the translation of the sealed record for which they were primarily created. They were the means of several translations and revelations in various dispensations. King Limhi, referring to the translation of the 24 plates, said that "these interpreters were doubtless prepared for the purpose of unfolding all such mysteries to the children of men" (Mosiah 8:19).

We do not know whether other Jaredite prophets, apart from the brother of Jared and Ether, possessed or used the Urim and Thummim. The Book of Mormon is silent on this matter. The first instance that we know of wherein the interpreters were ever used was for the translation of the large stone brought to the people of Zarahemla by Coriantumr. It was Mosiah the elder who undertook the translation of the account engraved on this stone.

His grandson Mosiah used them next for the translation of the 24 plates, or the book of Ether. This extensive, unabridged translation of the book of Ether was in many respects of the same value to the Nephites as the Book of Mormon is to us. It was scripture, and it functioned as a prophetic warning to Nephite society. So it seems that the Nephites received the sealed record early, before it was to be translated, simply because they needed the accompanying interpreters for other important work.

After the time of Mosiah the younger we hear little of the use of the interpreters, except that they were handed over to Alma and his successors until they came into the possession of Nephi (see Alma 37:1; Helaman 3:15–16). Even though it is not explicitly stated in the Book of Mormon, we have already

postulated that Nephi the disciple translated the sealed record into the Nephite language. His forefathers had handed over that record together with the interpreters to him. From the time of Nephi, the by now unsealed record of the vision of the brother of Jared and its translation, as well as the interpreters, were handed over to a succession of record keepers until they came into the possession of Mormon and finally Moroni. Moroni did not translate any record but copied the entire vision of the brother of Jared, abridged the book of Ether, and added scripture of his own to the Book of Mormon.

On 21 September 1823, Moroni, then a resurrected being, appeared to Joseph Smith Jr. to inform and instruct him concerning the gold plates and the interpreters that were fastened on a breastplate. Four years later, Joseph Smith received the plates and the interpreters, which would aid him in the translation effort. During the time of translation, he also used the Urim and Thummim to receive several revelations between July 1828 and June 1829, which are now contained in the Doctrine and Covenants (see D&C 3; 6; 7; 11; 14; 15; 16; 17). After the translation of the gold plates was completed (the record of the brother of Jared was still sealed), the plates and interpreters were returned to Moroni. The Book of Mormon itself prophesies that the sealed portion will come to us in some future time when we exercise enough faith. When it comes to us, it will again be translated with the aid of the Urim and Thummim.

We note again that in the above summary the interpreters were never separated from the sealed record for which they were given. No person ever held the interpreters without possessing the record of the brother of Jared, either sealed or unsealed.

### Conclusion

In this study we have explored plausible answers to compelling questions concerning the sealed portion of the Book of Mormon, such as How could the extensive vision of the brother of Jared, which was sealed, possibly have been written on the 24 Jaredite plates, which were not sealed? Why is there a first reference to the Urim and Thummim among the Nephites in the days of the elder King Mosiah and not earlier? How and from whom did he receive those interpreters? Why does the first edition of the Book of Mormon say that

King Benjamin was in possession of the sealed record of the brother of Jared, and why was this changed to Mosiah in later editions? Why did Ether think that he might be translated? These questions, which once appeared to have little to do with one another, now appear to be connected to the sealed record.

Through a better appreciation of the mission of Ether, we can see the similarities of his mission to that of Moroni more clearly. Both possessed all records of their dispensations. Both were among the last survivors of their respective civilizations and spent a great part of their lives in witnessing the destruction of their people and preparing records for other peoples and generations. Both held the record of the brother of Jared and the interpreters and (evidently, in the case of Ether) passed them on to a great prophet in another dispensation.

This study shows that the Lord has provided means for both the Nephites and the Latter-day Saints to receive scriptures from ancient prophets, as well as interpreters to translate them. The Lord provided another testament of Jesus Christ for the Nephites through the book of Ether and again for us through the Book of Mormon. It is amazing how the Lord prepared, in the era of the Tower of Babel, a most important revelation for humankind to be given later to the Nephites, after his ministry among them, and then again around the time of his second coming (see Ether 4:1–7, 16–17). It is also notable that, at the same time, he prepared the means whereby the Nephites could have the book of Ether and the Latter-day Saints the Book of Mormon.

The story of the record of the brother of Jared is not finished. It will be revealed to us also if we continue to grow in faith. The apocalypse of John teaches us about a book with seven seals, each seal covering the history of humankind for 1,000 years. Christ alone can unseal that record. Either the sealed part of the gold plates and this book spoken of by John cover much the same history or they could well be the same. Many great prophets have received a vision of the history of the world and have offered glimpses of that revelation to others. But the brother of Jared was chosen to write down the vision in its entirety. His writings will be the means for us to come to a far greater knowledge and understanding than we currently enjoy. 📖

**A Third Jaredite Record:  
The Sealed Portion of the Gold Plates**  
Valentin Arts

1. That the expression “when ye shall come to me” can be interpreted as “at the end of your life” is supported by other students of the Book of Mormon. See, for example, Joseph Fielding McConkie, Robert L. Millet, and Brent L. Top, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1987–92), 4:279.
2. See Doctrine and Covenants 107:56; Abraham 3:22–23; Moses 1:27–36; 7:2–6, 22–29; 1 Nephi 11–15; 3 Nephi 26:3–5; 27:12–16; Revelation 3–22.
3. To name but few, the following authors assume that the 24 plates contained the record of the great vision of the brother of Jared: Robert J. Matthews, “The Mission of Jesus Christ—Ether 3 and 4,” in *The Book of Mormon: Fourth Nephi through Moroni*, ed. Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate Jr. (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1995), 26, 32; Gary L. Sturgess, “The Book of Mosiah: Thoughts about Its Structure, Purposes, Themes, and Authorship,” *JBMS* 4/2 (1995): 114; Victor L. Ludlow, *Isaiah: Prophet, Seer, and Poet* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1982), 273–74; George Reynolds and Janne M. Sjodahl, *Commentary on the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1977), 2:284; Richard D. Draper, *Opening the Seven Seals: The Visions of John the Revelator* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1991), 12–13; and Sidney B. Sperry, *Book of Mormon Compendium* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1968), chap. 25.
4. See Orson Pratt, *Journal of Discourses* (London: Latter-day Saints’ Book Depot, 1854–86), 3:347 and 19:213; and Bruce R. McConkie, *A New Witness for the Articles of Faith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1985), 444.
5. From Alma 37:21–32 we learn that not all that was written on the 24 plates was to be revealed to the people, even though the entire record was translated. However, nowhere is it stated that this closely guarded portion—the part detailing “secret abominations”—was sealed. Rather, it was kept secret because of its wicked nature. This part of the record cannot possibly refer to the sealed record of the brother of Jared, because even Alma did not have access to the translation of this record (see Ether 4:1).
6. Assuming Mosiah received other interpreters than the ones given to the brother of Jared would raise such questions as Where and when did Mosiah obtain those other interpreters? How did Moroni come in possession of two sets of interpreters—the ones given to the brother of Jared and were used by Joseph Smith (see D&C 17:1) and others that were theoretically used by Mosiah and were

handed down from one generation to another? Why would the Lord allow a people to have two sets of interpreters? Where did Moroni leave Mosiah's other interpreters, if not with the gold plates (Joseph Smith found only one set)?

7. Hugh Nibley, in trying to solve the seeming anachronism, suggested that Benjamin in his last years had a share in the record keeping of the 24 plates with his son Mosiah. Besides the possibility that the sealed record and the 24 plates were separate records, this is rather unlikely since Benjamin was probably already dead or, if he still lived, in his very last months. Why would Moroni particularly refer to Benjamin's very short joint record keeping of the Jaredite plates if Mosiah had already been given custody of all the records and sacred artifacts three years earlier? See Hugh Nibley, *Since Cumorah* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1988), 7.