

The Structure of the Book of Mormon

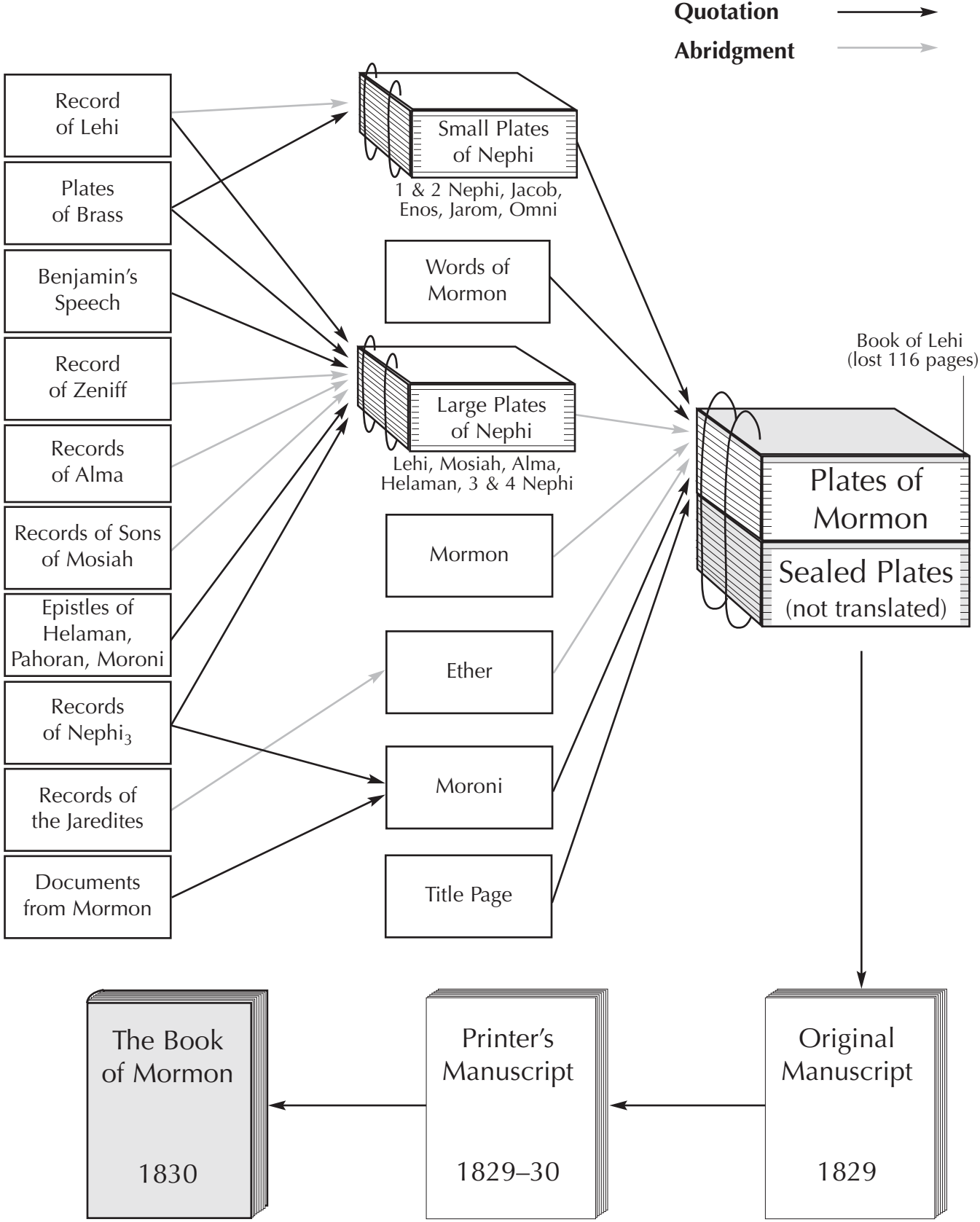
Book of Mormon Plates and Records

Key Scripture Words of Mormon 1:3–11

Explanation Many ancient documents such as King Benjamin’s speech or the plates of brass were quoted or abridged by the ancient authors who compiled the books found on the small and large plates of Nephi. The abridgments, quotations, and original writings of those Book of Mormon historians are displayed on the left-hand and middle columns of this chart and are then shown in relation to the new set of plates produced by Mormon and Moroni that was delivered to Joseph Smith by the angel Moroni. Joseph dictated the original manuscript of the Book of Mormon from the plates of Mormon. Copying that original manuscript, parts of which survive today, Oliver Cowdery prepared a printer’s manuscript (owned by the RLDS Church). The first edition of the Book of Mormon was typeset from that printer’s manuscript.

Source Grant R. Hardy and Robert E. Parsons, “Book of Mormon Plates and Records,” in Daniel H. Ludlow, ed., *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 5 vols. (1992), 1:196.

Book of Mormon Plates and Records



Contents of the Plates of Brass

Key Scripture 1 Nephi 5:11–14

Explanation The plates of brass contained a copy of the Law (five books of Moses), a history of the Jews, Lehi's genealogy, and the writings of many prophets. Some of these records were comparable to certain books now found in the Old Testament, but others did not find their way into the Bible. Nephi's summary of these contents, found in 1 Nephi 5:11–14, is graphically displayed here, along with sample references illustrating the profound influence of these records elsewhere in the Book of Mormon.

Source Expanded from the work of Paul Bankhead, student of John W. Welch, Book of Mormon 121H, Brigham Young University, fall 1997.

Contents of the Plates of Brass

Listed in 1 Nephi 5:11–14

1 Nephi 5:11	Five Books of Moses	
	creation of the world	2 Nephi 2:15
	account of Adam and Eve	2 Nephi 2:18–19
	law of Moses	2 Nephi 5:10
1 Nephi 5:12	A Record of the Jews to the Reign of Zedekiah	Jacob 2:23
1 Nephi 5:13	Prophecies of the Holy Prophets	
Isaiah	coming of Christ	2 Nephi 19:1–8
	scattering of Israel	2 Nephi 19:11–21
	day of the Gentiles	1 Nephi 20
	victory of God	1 Nephi 21
Zenos	burial of Christ	1 Nephi 19:10
	allegory of the olive tree	Jacob 5
	hymn on prayer	Alma 33:4–11
Zenock	crucifixion of Christ	1 Nephi 19:10
Neum	crucifixion of Christ	1 Nephi 19:10
Joseph	concerning his posterity	2 Nephi 4:2
Jeremiah	many prophecies	Helaman 8:20
1 Nephi 5:14	Genealogy of Lehi’s Fathers	Alma 10:3

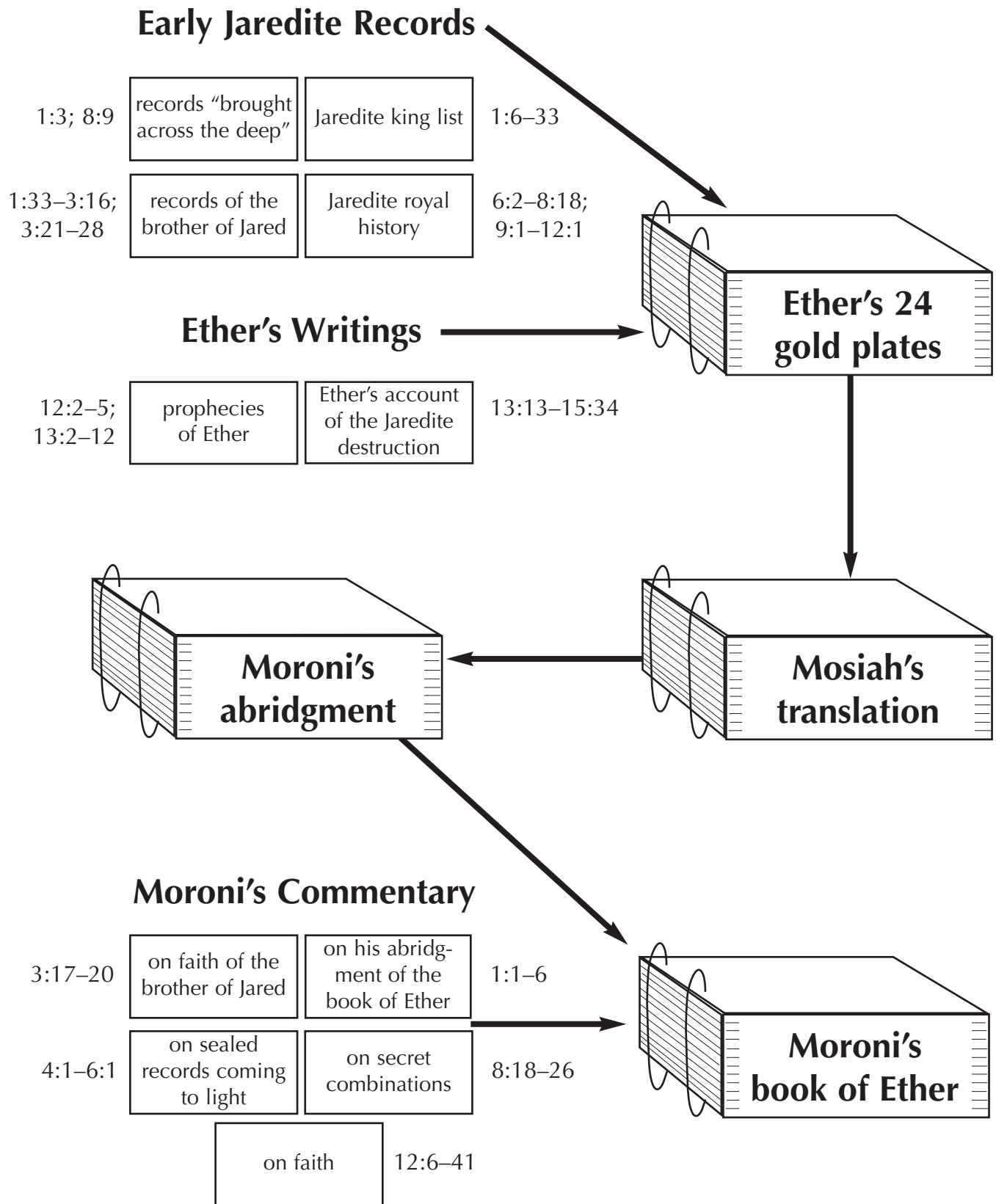
Sources behind the Book of Ether

Key Scripture Ether 1:1–5

Explanation What we now know as the book of Ether originated from early Jaredite records and Ether's writings, which Ether combined to produce his twenty-four gold plates near the end of the Jaredite civilization. The people of Limhi later found these plates while searching for the city of Zarahemla, and King Mosiah translated them around 120 B.C. Moroni later abridged the translated plates and, together with his commentary, included them in his record, thus producing the final form of the book of Ether. The seams between the insertions of Moroni's comments into the final text of this book are clearly discernible, with the underlying text resuming flawlessly after each interruption.

Source John W. Welch, "Sources behind the Book of Ether" (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1986).

Sources behind the Book of Ether

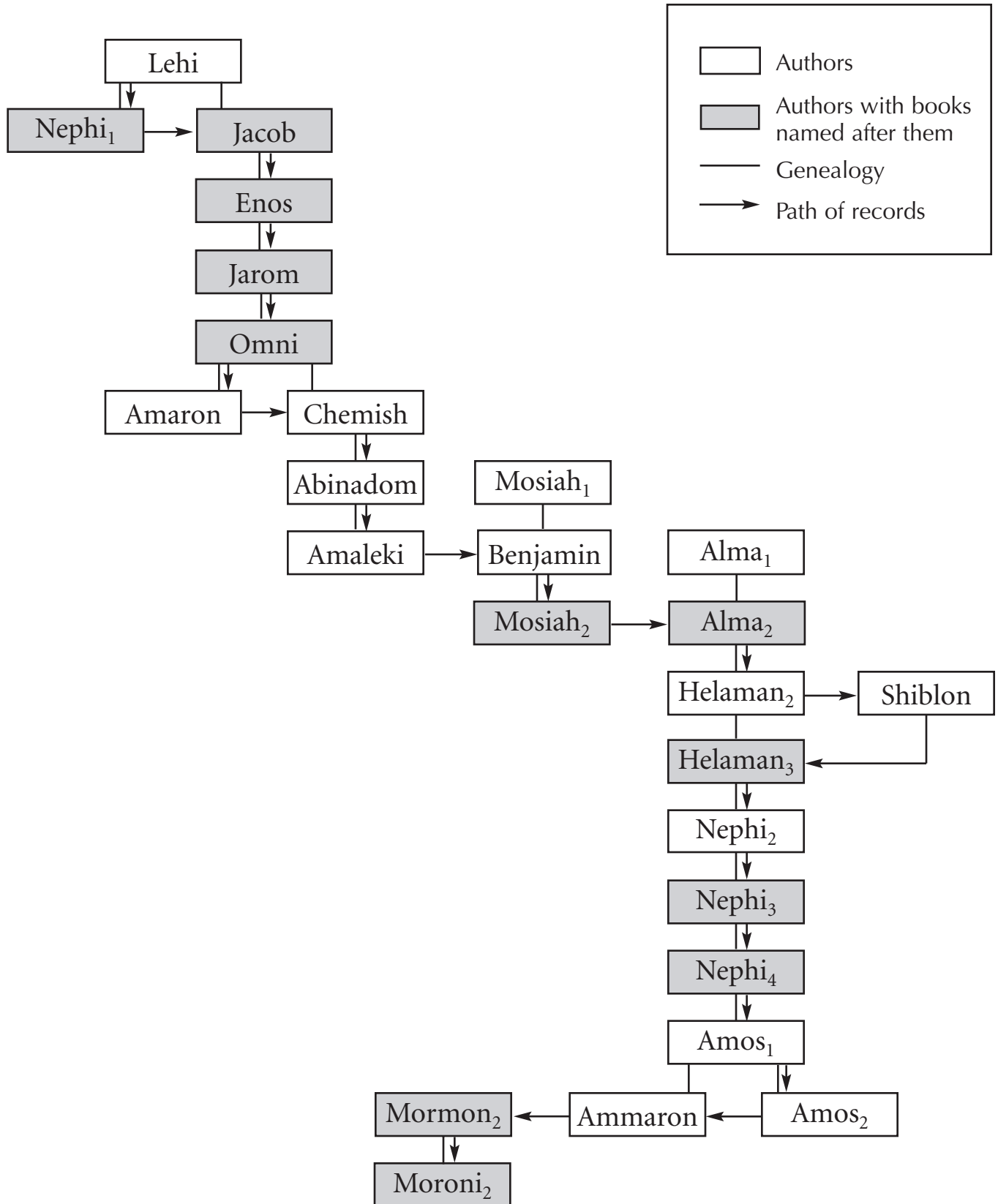


Who Kept the Records in the Book of Mormon? (Overview)

Key Scripture Mormon 9:30–37

Explanation Genealogical, historical, legal, and prophetic records of the Nephites were handed down in sacred trust, usually from father to son. Only four Nephite families kept the plates: Lehi's posterity mainly through Jacob, Mosiah's family, Alma and his long line of descendants, and Mormon and his son Moroni. As anthropologist John L. Sorenson has pointed out, the Book of Mormon is structured as a "lineage history."

Who Kept the Records in the Book of Mormon?



Who Kept the Records in the Book of Mormon? (By Lineages)

Key Scripture Mormon 9:30–37

Explanation The four families of Nephite record keepers of the Book of Mormon are listed chronologically here, along with their approximate dates of birth and other important information. If a date is not found in or tied directly to a specific verse, then the information has been deduced from general historical information. This list is similar to chart 16 and can be used to document and explain the relationships between keepers of the plates of Nephi.

Source John W. Welch, “Longevity of Book of Mormon People and the ‘Age of Man,’” *Journal of Collegium Aesculapium* 3 (1985): 34–45.

Who Kept the Records in the Book of Mormon?

Lineage of Lehi

Record Keeper	Dates*	Comments	Reference
Nephi ₁	615 B.C.	born in Jerusalem	1 Nephi 1:4
	600 B.C.	begins record when about 15 years old	1 Nephi 1:1
	540 B.C.	dies about 75 years old	
Jacob	592 B.C.	born son of Lehi, brother of Nephi ₁	1 Nephi 18:7
	544 B.C.	becomes record keeper	Jacob 1:1
	495 B.C.	dies about 97 years old	Jacob 7:27
Enos	515 B.C.	born son of Jacob	Jacob 7:27
	420 B.C.	about to die	Enos 1:25
	417 B.C.	dies about 98 years old	
Jarom	440 B.C.	born son of Enos	Jarom 1:1
	420 B.C.	becomes record keeper	Jarom 1:1
	361 B.C.	gives plates to Omni	Jarom 1:15
	355 B.C.	dies about 85 years old	
Omni	390 B.C.	born son of Jarom	Omni 1:1
	361 B.C.	becomes record keeper	Jarom 1:15
	317 B.C.	writes 3 verses on plates in 44 years	Omni 1:1–3
	315 B.C.	dies about 75 years old	Omni 1:3
Amaron	350 B.C.	born son of Omni	Omni 1:4
	317 B.C.	becomes record keeper	Omni 1:4
	277 B.C.	dies about 73 years old	Omni 1:8
Chemish	330 B.C.	born son of Omni, brother of Amaron	Omni 1:9
	279 B.C.	becomes record keeper	Omni 1:9
	250 B.C.	dies about 80 years old	Omni 1:9
Abinadom	270 B.C.	born son of Chemish	Omni 1:10
	180 B.C.	dies about 90 years old	Omni 1:10
Amaleki	210 B.C.	born son of Abinadom	Omni 1:12
	150 B.C.	Nephites move to Zarahemla	Omni 1:13
	138 B.C.	dies about 72 years old	Omni 1:30

* dates are approximate

Benjamin and Mosiah

Benjamin	190 B.C.	born son of Mosiah ₁	Omni 1:23
	140 B.C.	becomes record keeper	Omni 1:25
	121 B.C.	dies 69 years old	Mosiah 6:5
Mosiah₂	154 B.C.	born son of Benjamin	Mosiah 6:4
	91 B.C.	dies about 63 years old	Mosiah 29:46

Lineage of Alma₁

Alma₁	174 B.C.	born a descendant of Nephi	Mosiah 17:2
	149 B.C.	“young man” 25 years old; Abinadi martyred	Mosiah 17:2, 20
	120 B.C.	becomes high priest over church in Zarahemla	Mosiah 23:16
	91 B.C.	dies about 83 years old	Mosiah 29:47
Alma₂	126 B.C.	born son of Alma ₁	Mosiah 27:8
	91 B.C.	becomes record keeper	Mosiah 29:42
	73 B.C.	departs out of land; assumed to have been translated	Alma 45:18, 19
Helaman₂	97 B.C.	born son of Alma ₂	Alma 36:3
	73 B.C.	becomes high priest	Alma 45:20
	64 B.C.	leads 2,000 Ammonite warriors; 33 years old	Alma 53:22
	57 B.C.	dies about 40 years old	Alma 62:52
Shiblon	95 B.C.	born son of Alma ₂ , brother of Helaman ₂	Alma 63:1
	57 B.C.	becomes record keeper	Alma 63:1
	53 B.C.	dies about 42 years old	Alma 63:13
Helaman₃	76 B.C.	born son of Helaman ₂	Helaman 2:2
	53 B.C.	becomes record keeper	Helaman 2:2
	39 B.C.	dies about 37 years old	Helaman 3:37
Nephi₂	54 B.C.	born son of Helaman ₃	Helaman 3:37
	A.D. 1	departs out of land	3 Nephi 1:3
	A.D. 13	dies about 67 years old	

Nephi₃	30 B.C.	born son of Nephi ₂	3 Nephi 1:1
	A.D. 1	becomes record keeper	3 Nephi 1:1
	A.D. 34	one of 12 disciples	3 Nephi 12:1
	A.D. 60	dies about 90 years old	
	A.D. 100	all but 3 disciples have passed away	4 Nephi 1:14
Nephi₄	A.D. 50	born son of Nephi ₃	
Amos₁	A.D. 90	born son of Nephi ₄	
	A.D. 110	becomes record keeper for 84 years	4 Nephi 1:19
	A.D. 194	dies about 104 years old	4 Nephi 1:21
Amos₂	A.D. 174	born son of Amos ₁	
	A.D. 194	becomes record keeper	4 Nephi 1:21
	A.D. 305	dies about 131 years old	4 Nephi 1:47
Ammaron	A.D. 190	born son of Amos, brother of Amos ₂	
	A.D. 305	becomes record keeper	4 Nephi 1:48
	A.D. 320	dies about 130 years old	Mormon 1:5

Mormon and Moroni

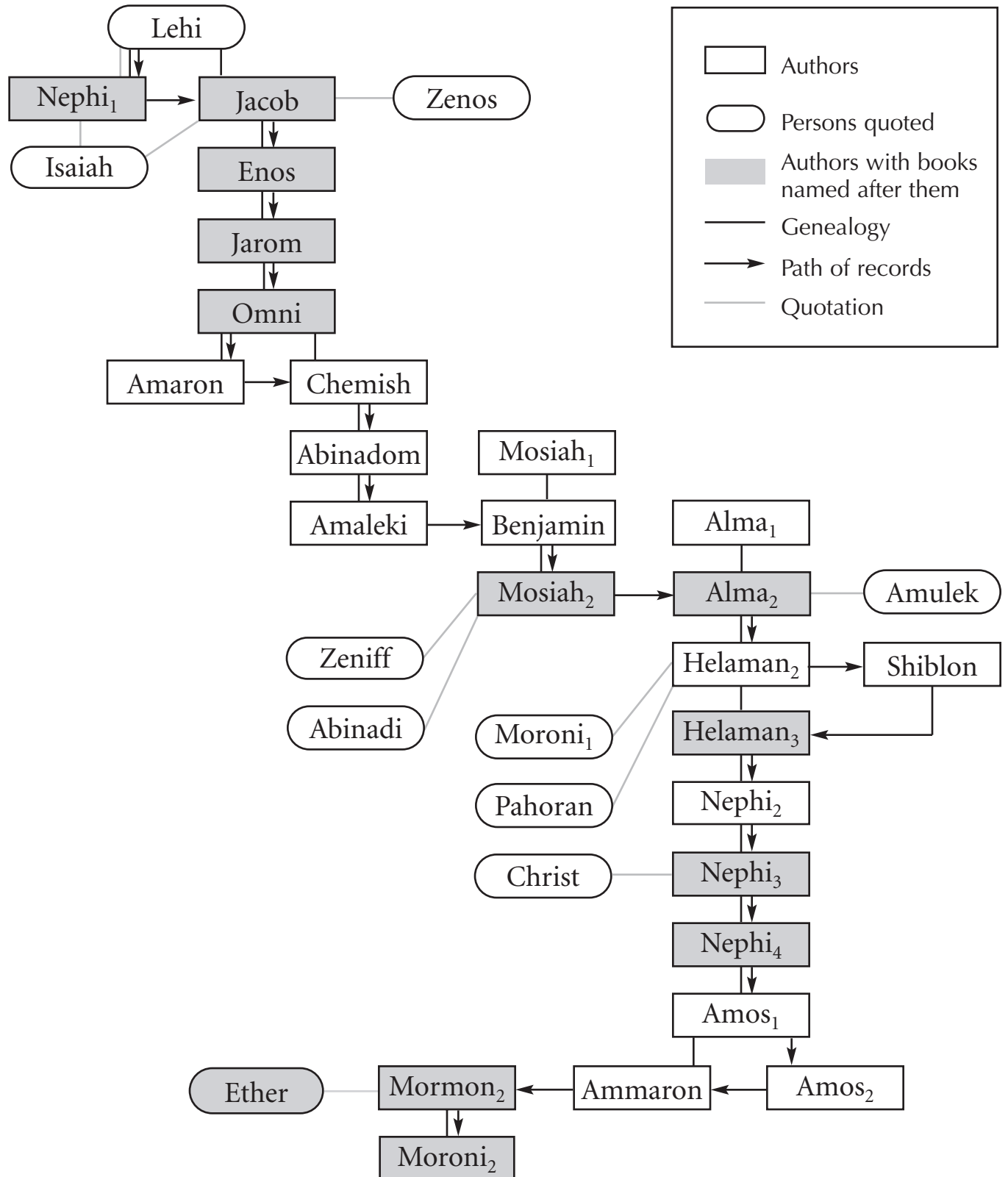
Mormon₂	A.D. 311	born	Mormon 1:2
	A.D. 321	told by Ammaron that at age 24 he would become record keeper	Mormon 1:2
	A.D. 326	visited by Lord; leads Nephite armies	Mormon 1:15
	A.D. 335	becomes record keeper	Mormon 2:18
	A.D. 385	delivered plates to Moroni; buried others in hill Cumorah	Mormon 8:1
	A.D. 401	dies about 90 years old at hands of Lamanites	Mormon 8:3
Moroni₂	A.D. 360	born son of Mormon ₂	Mormon 8:1
	A.D. 385	becomes record keeper	Mormon 8:1
	A.D. 421	“soon go to rest,” about 61 years old	Moroni 10:34

Whose Words Are Found in the Book of Mormon?

Key Scripture Omni 1:9

Explanation Although four families kept the main Nephite records (see chart 16), the words of many other authors are included in the Book of Mormon as well. The writings or speeches of Jesus Christ, Isaiah, Captain Moroni, and Zenos, for example, all add significantly to the Book of Mormon, even though these authors did not actually write upon the plates themselves. This chart adds to chart 16 some of the additional writers or speakers who are quoted in the Book of Mormon.

Whose Words Are Found in the Book of Mormon?



Writings of Lehi

Key Scripture 2 Nephi 1:1–4:11

Explanation Although the 116 pages of translation lost by Martin Harris in 1828 contained writings from the book of Lehi, not all of Lehi's words are lost to us. Lehi's prophecies, visions, and teachings were often quoted or paraphrased by his sons Nephi and Jacob in their own writing and preaching. S. Kent Brown, professor of ancient scripture at Brigham Young University, suggests that this is evidence that Nephi and Jacob used the personal record of Lehi as a primary source in writing about the new land of promise, Jesus Christ, Israel, marriage, and other important topics. This chart indicates where in the small plates of Nephi the words of Lehi, originally written from about 600 to 570 B.C., are found today.

Source S. Kent Brown, "Lehi's Personal Record: Quest for a Missing Source," *BYU Studies* 24/1 (1984): 19–42.



Writings of Lehi

Quoted or Paraphrased by Nephi and Jacob

1 Nephi 1:4–15	Lehi's calling as a prophet
1 Nephi 5:17–19	prophecies regarding brass plates
1 Nephi 8:2–28	dream of the tree of life
1 Nephi 10:1–16	prophecies about Christ and Israel
2 Nephi 1:1–12	prophecies about the New World
2 Nephi 1:13–32	blessing to Laman, Lemuel, Sam, sons of Ishmael, Nephi, Zoram
2 Nephi 2:1–30	blessing to Jacob
2 Nephi 3:1–25	blessing to Joseph
2 Nephi 4:3–7	blessing to the children of Laman
2 Nephi 4:8–9	blessing to the children of Lemuel
2 Nephi 4:11	blessing to Sam
Jacob 2:23–34	teachings about fidelity in marriage

Writings of Mormon

Key Scriptures Words of Mormon; Helaman 12; Mormon 1:1–7:10; Moroni 7–9

Explanation Mormon, the chief abridger and editor of the full Book of Mormon, also added comments of his own to many of the books in that record, besides writing two books within the Book of Mormon that also bear his name (the Words of Mormon and the book of Mormon). As this chart demonstrates, his editorial commentaries, skillfully woven into the text of the primary authors, provide important explanations of human nature, the gathering of Israel, the Book of Mormon in the latter days, and the Savior's visit to the Americas. His own writings include, among other things (not all of which are listed on this chart), an autobiography and important sermons or letters on good works and infant baptism.

Writings of Mormon

Reference	Description of Text	Date Written*
W of M 1:1–2	on delivering plates to Moroni	A.D. 385
W of M 1:3–11	on abridging the plates of Nephi	A.D. 340
W of M 1:12–18	account of Benjamin	A.D. 340
Helaman 3:13–17	on record keeping	A.D. 340
Helaman 12	on human nature	A.D. 341
3 Nephi 5:8–26	on record keeping	A.D. 341
3 Nephi 10:11–19	on searching the scriptures	A.D. 341
3 Nephi 26:8–21	on Christ's visit to Americas	A.D. 341
3 Nephi 28:24–30:2	on Three Nephites and gathering of Israel	A.D. 341
4 Nephi	four generations of history	A.D. 342
Mormon 1:1–6:15	autobiography	A.D. 384
Mormon 6:16–7:10	lament over people and testimony to latter-day remnant	
Moroni 7	sermon on good works	A.D. 334
Moroni 8	epistle on baptism	A.D. 337
Moroni 9	farewell epistle to Moroni	A.D. 385

* dates are approximate

Writings of Moroni

Key Scriptures Mormon 8–9; Ether 12; Moroni 10

Explanation Sometime after A.D. 385, Moroni was left alone to “write the sad tale of the destruction” of the Nephite people (Mormon 8:3). His writings appear within the last three books of the Book of Mormon. Moroni recounted the final battle at Cumorah and abridged the record of the Jaredites. He also testified of Jesus Christ and preserved gospel ordinances for use in future generations. For example, Moroni’s record of the Nephite sacrament prayers is the historical source from which Joseph Smith received the prayers that are used today in administering the sacrament.



Writings of Moroni

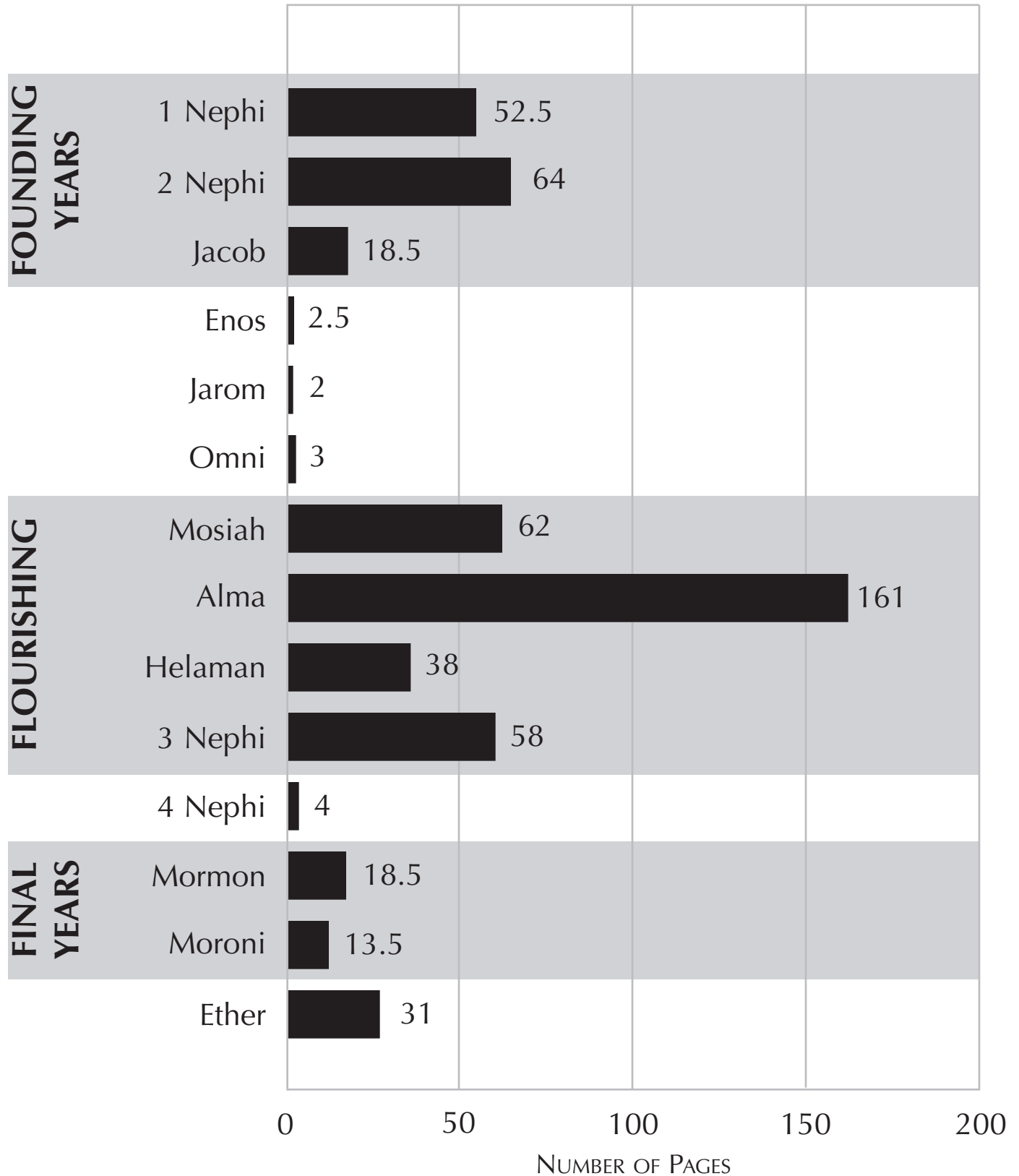
Reference	Description of Text
Mormon 8–9	concerning nonbelievers; call to repentance; coming forth of the Book of Mormon
Ether 1:1–6	on abridging the book of Ether
Ether 1:6–3:28	early Jaredite history (Moroni frequently relies on Ether’s texts here, although only by memory; see Ether 5:1)
Ether 4–5	on the coming forth of sacred records
Ether 6:1–12:5	Jaredite history (Moroni again recites history by memory; see Ether 5:1)
Ether 12:6–41	on faith and overcoming weakness
Ether 13–15	final Jaredite history (again by memory)
Moroni 1	on his inclusion of the book of Moroni
Moroni 2	on ordination of apostles
Moroni 3	on ordination of priests and teachers
Moroni 4–5	on administration of the sacrament
Moroni 6	on baptism and church membership
Moroni 10	exhortation to the Lamanites and others
Title Page	contents of the Book of Mormon

Number of Pages in Books of the Book of Mormon

Key Scripture Words of Mormon 1:9

Explanation The individual books that compose the Book of Mormon vary significantly in length. The overall record concentrates on three periods: the founding of the Nephite civilization (sixth century B.C.), its flourishing (150 B.C.—A.D. 50), and its final years (fourth century A.D.).

Number of Pages in Books of the Book of Mormon



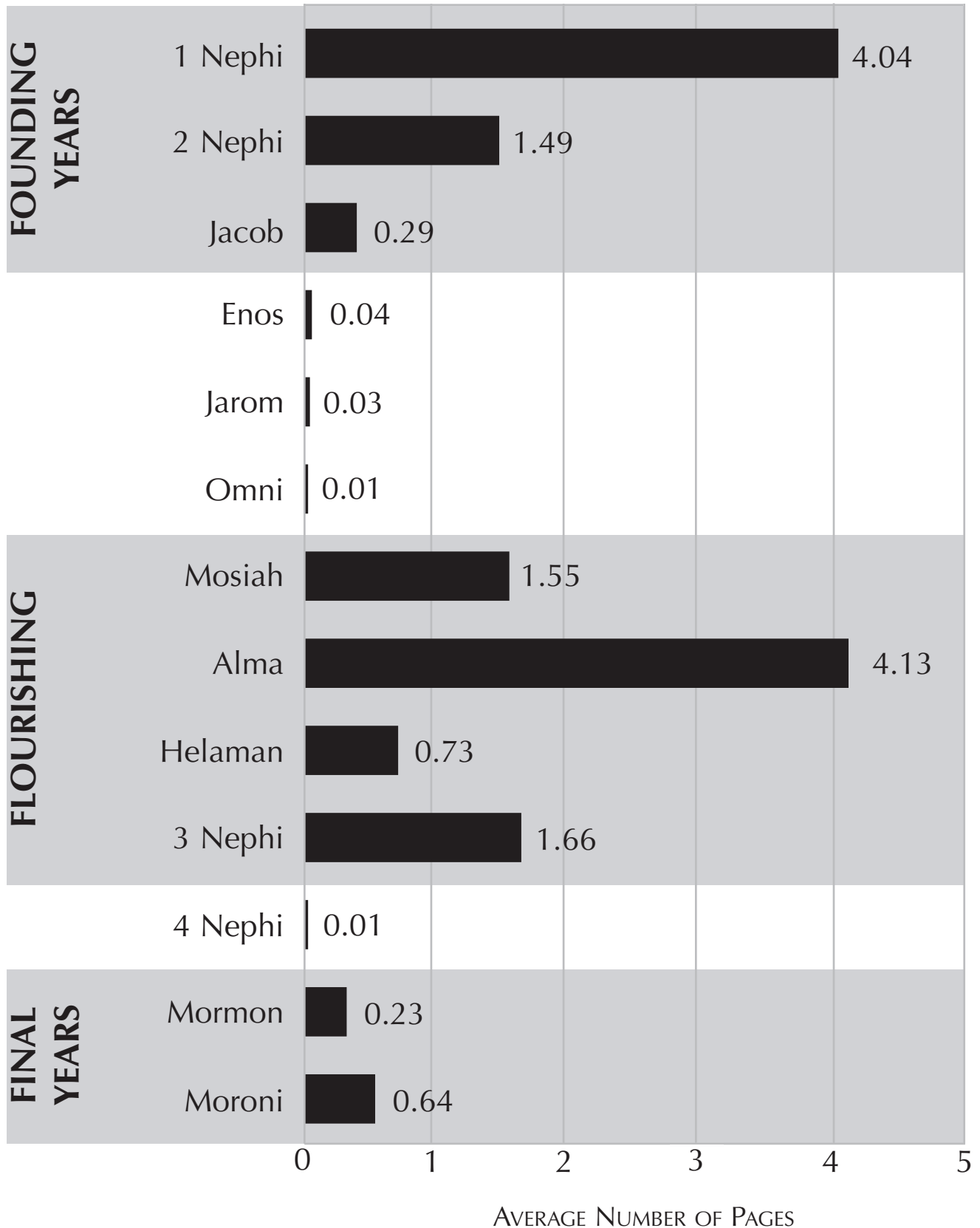
Average Number of Pages Covering One Nephite Year

Key Scripture Words of Mormon 1:9

Explanation This chart adds a time factor to chart 22. The number of pages in the Book of Mormon given to each year of Nephite history varies significantly. Some shorter books cover long periods of time, and longer books document relatively few years. For example, the book of Jacob on the average documents a year in one-third of a page, while the book of Alma averages about four pages per year. This suggests that Mormon most likely abridged some records more extensively than others or had less underlying text to work with in certain eras. The data used for this chart is listed below.

Nephite Book	Approximate Years Covered	Total Years Covered	Number of Pages
1 Nephi	600–588 B.C.	13	52.5
2 Nephi	587–545 B.C.	43	64
Jacob	544–482 B.C.	63	18.5
Enos	481–420 B.C.	62	2.5
Jarom	419–361 B.C.	59	2
Omni	360–131 B.C.	230	3
Mosiah	130–91 B.C.	40	62
Alma	91–53 B.C.	39	161
Helaman	52–1 B.C.	52	38
3 Nephi	A.D. 1–35	35	58
4 Nephi	A.D. 36–321	286	4
Mormon	A.D. 322–400	79	18.5
Moroni	A.D. 401–421	21	13.5

Average Number of Pages Covering One Nephite Year for Books in the Book of Mormon



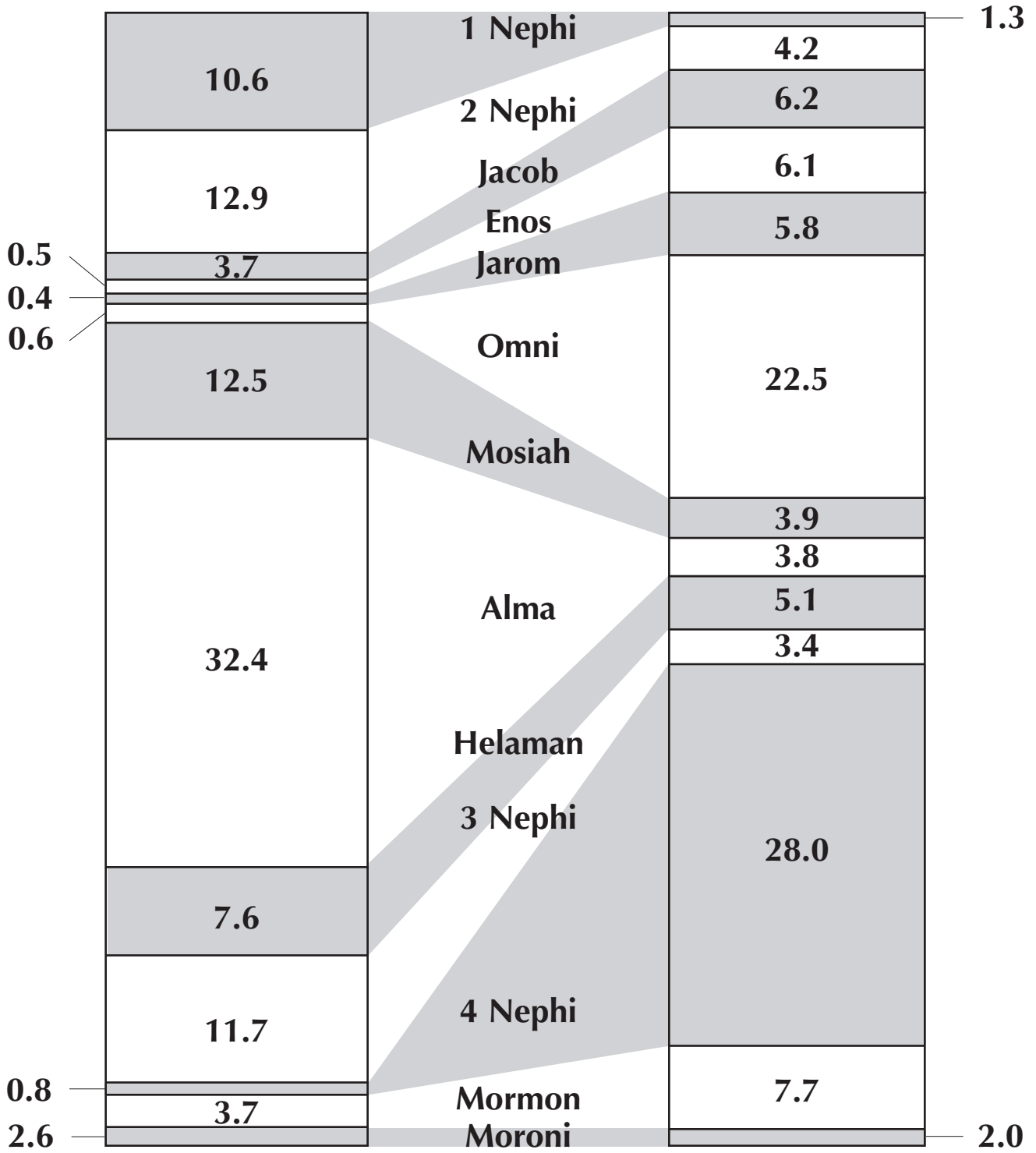
Nephite Books Compared by Length and Years Covered

Key Scripture 3 Nephi 5:8

Explanation This chart highlights the relationship between pages written and years recorded for individual books in the Book of Mormon. In this divided bar graph, each band spans three columns representing, from left to right, a percentage of the total number of pages of Nephite history a particular book includes, the name of the book (the book of Ether excepted because it covers Jaredite, not Nephite, history), and a percentage of the total number of years of Nephite civilization that the book covers. For example, while 4 Nephi is only a few pages long and represents 0.8 percent of the total number of Book of Mormon pages that record Nephite history, it is the record of four generations of people and covers 28 percent of the years in which the Nephite civilization existed. This chart consolidates information also found in charts 22 and 23.

Source Richard O. Cowan, “Historians of the Book of Mormon,” *Instructor*, December 1962, 444 and inside back cover. See also chart by Scott Haycock and Robert Turner, Springfield, Virginia.

Nephite Books Compared by Length and Years Covered



Nephite Books Listed Chronologically

Key Scripture Words of Mormon 1:5

Explanation The Nephites lived in the Americas from approximately 600 B.C. to A.D. 385, a period of about one thousand years. Moroni survived his people and buried the plates around A.D. 421. Throughout their history, the Nephites kept historical and doctrinal records. This graph shows which centuries each Nephite book covers, presenting Nephite chronology as a whole. Three periods of Nephite civilization receive the greatest attention: the founding (sixth century B.C.), the flourishing (150 B.C.–A.D. 50), and the final years (fourth century A.D.).

Nephite Books Listed Chronologically

