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What the Book of Mormon Is

Sidney B. Sperry

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What the Book of Mormon Is

Abstract: The records of the Nephite, Jaredite, and Mulekite peoples comprise the Book of Mormon, of which Mormon is the principal editor. Four divisions are evident, namely, the small plates of Nephi, Mormon's explanatory notes, the literary labors of Mormon, and the literary labors of Moroni. The first division, the small plates of Nephi, is analyzed in this chapter.

In this and the two succeeding chapters we shall analyze the Book of Mormon and find out what it is—its construction, the nature of its books, and the purposes for which it was written. Considerable exploratory work has already been accomplished toward discovering the nature of the Book of Mormon, but much still remains to be done. The eyes of trained scholars and spiritual readers will yet discover for us many things of interest that have not yet been discerned in this volume.

In its English dress, the Book of Mormon is “translation literature” or a collection of scriptures, the greater part of which stems from people who were descendants of two groups of Hebrews who left Jerusalem about 600 B.C., and came to this continent. It records in simple literary forms the relations of God with these covenant peoples, who were principally descendants of Abraham through Joseph who was sold into Egypt. One colony, composed mainly of people from the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, departed from Jerusalem in the year 600 B.C., under the

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leadership of a prophet by the name of Lehi; the other was made up of refugees who left Jerusalem, presumably about 589 B.C., when Zedekiah, king of Judah, was carried away captive into Babylon. One of these refugees was a son of Zedekiah by the name of Mulek, who is not mentioned in the Bible. The other sons of Zedekiah, it will be remembered, were slain by the Babylonians (2 Kings 25:7).

After arriving on this continent, the first colony eventually split into two groups: (1) the Nephites, named after Nephi, the son of Lehi, and (2) the Lamanites, named after Laman, the oldest son of Lehi. These were cursed with a red skin.

The members of the second colony, known among us as Mulekites, were led by the hand of the Lord to this continent, but, unlike the Nephites, they had no scriptures with them. They became more numerous than the people of Nephi and were discovered eventually by the Nephites and united with them sometime between 279 B.C. and 130 B.C. (Omni 1:12–23; Mosiah 25:1–4; notice that the King Mosiah mentioned in Omni is the grandfather of the one in the latter reference).

The Book of Mormon also contains a translation of the severely abridged records of another people called Jaredites, who left the Tower of Babel at the time the Lord confounded the language of the people, and under divine guidance came to this continent. The remnants of this people, who became a great nation, were being destroyed by internecine conflicts and civil wars at, or shortly before, the time the Nephites and Mulekites came to this hemisphere.

It will be observed from what has been said that the Book of Mormon covers a period of about twenty-seven hundred years: (1) the history of the Jaredites from 2300 B.C. [?] to 600 B.C. and (2) the history of the Nephites from 600 B.C. to A.D. 400. We hasten to add at this point that much of the Nephite scripture consists of abridged records, the details of which will be dealt with presently.

The Book of Mormon—like the Bible in many respects—is a book of life. It deals with the history of nations over a period of hundreds of years and therefore contains a great number of vital experiences, political and spiritual, individual and national, social and ethical, pleasant and painful. Through and behind these sig-
nificant and vital experiences we behold God at work, making known his character, will, and designs to his earthly children. In short, we may say that the Book of Mormon is a book of life because it faithfully records and interprets life situations in the long history of religious peoples, and simply and effectively presents a revelation of how God works with man.

Why is this volume of scripture called the Book of Mormon? The answer is simple. It may be deduced from the title page of the book. Of this title page Joseph Smith recorded the following:

Said title page is not by any means a modern composition, either of mine or of any other man who has lived or does live in this generation. Therefore, in order to correct an error, which generally exists concerning it, I give below that part of the title-page of the English version of the Book of Mormon, which is a genuine and literal translation of the title-page of the original Book of Mormon as recorded on the plates:

THE BOOK OF MORMON.

An account written by the hand of Mormon, upon Plates, taken from the Plates of Nephi.¹

Two more paragraphs written by Moroni, Mormon's son, follow, but we do not need them for our purposes here. It is evident that a person by the name of Mormon was responsible for the choice of considerable subject matter in the Nephite scripture. We shall find out presently that other men were responsible for certain parts of the Book of Mormon also, but that Mormon was its supreme literary figure, or, shall we say, editor. Hence the volume is named after him. Moreover, he was the last great commander-in-chief of the Nephite armies and an even greater prophet.

¹ DHC 1:71.
The Structure of the Book of Mormon

In order to explain the rather complex structure of the Book of Mormon, we shall cast it into four logical divisions and then proceed to analyze each. The fourfold division is as follows:

I. The Small Plates of Nephi
These contain the independent and unabridged work of nine writers: Nephi, Jacob, Enos, Jarom, Omni, Amaron, Chemish, Abinadam, and Amaleki. They cover a period of about four hundred and seventy years: from 600 B.C. to 130 B.C. In the current edition this part of the Book of Mormon contains a little more than one hundred and thirty-one printed pages. These plates pleased Mormon so much that he included them with the plates containing his abridgment of the large plates of Nephi (Words of Mormon 1:3–11).

II. Mormon’s Explanatory Notes
These contain editorial remarks by Mormon explaining his previous work of abridging the large plates of Nephi (Words of Mormon 1:3), the reason for the presence of the small plates of Nephi among his records (Words of Mormon 1:3–4, 6–7, 10–11), his intention to continue the abridgment of the large plates of Nephi (Words of Mormon 1:5, 9), and some historical data. This material was written about A.D. 385, a short time before Mormon’s death in battle, and contains about two printed pages in the current edition.

III. The Literary Labors of Mormon
The literary work of Mormon includes the abridgment of the large plates of Nephi and many commentaries on them, followed by a short history of his life and times. The greater part of the Book of Mormon comes under this heading. This division contains about three hundred and thirty-eight printed pages.

IV. The Literary Labors of Moroni
Moroni’s literary accomplishments consist of an addition to the record of the last days of the Nephite nation begun by his father Mormon, an abridgment of the plates of Ether containing an account of the Jaredite nation, and, finally, a section containing miscellaneous teachings, letters, and historical items. A total of about fifty printed pages is found in this division.
In the discussions of the first three divisions, reference has been made either to the small plates of Nephi or to the large plates of Nephi. An explanation of these sets of plates is due the reader. The small plates of Nephi were made by Nephi, the son of Lehi, for the special purpose of recording the more spiritual and religious side of Nephite history. The large plates contained a fuller account of Nephite history, particularly secular affairs. Unfortunately, for purposes of identification, both sets of plates were named after Nephi. The experienced reader of the Book of Mormon, however, usually has little difficulty in determining which set of plates is meant in a given context.

The Book of Mormon is divided into fifteen parts, all of which are called books with the exception of one, which, as was indicated in Division II, is a two-page editorial containing, among other things, an explanation of how the foregoing small plates of Nephi came into Mormon's collection and of their relation to the abridgment that follows. The fifteen parts of the Book of Mormon in their respective divisions are shown here:

I. The Small Plates of Nephi
1. First Book of Nephi
2. Second Book of Nephi
3. Book of Jacob
4. Book of Enos
5. Book of Jarom
6. Book of Omni

II. Mormon's Explanatory Notes
7. The Words of Mormon

III. The Literary Labors of Mormon
8. Book of Mosiah
9. Book of Alma
10. Book of Helaman
11. Third Nephi
12. Fourth Nephi
13. Book of Mormon (Mormon 1–7)

IV. The Literary Labors of Moroni
13. Book of Mormon (Mormon 8–9)
14. Book of Ether
15. Book of Moroni
It should be observed that the small plates of Nephi with their six books would not have become an integral part of the Book of Mormon except for a strange turn of events when the Prophet Joseph Smith was engaged in the work of translation. He first translated Mormon's abridgment of the book of Lehi which, in point of time, covered about the same period as the small plates of Nephi (see explanation in the first edition of the Book of Mormon). The one hundred and sixteen pages of this translation, our readers will remember, were finally obtained by Martin Harris and shown by him to his wife and others. The manuscript got out of Harris's possession, which occurrence caused the prophet great mental anguish and distress. The Urim and Thummim were taken from him, and only after much prayer and supplication were they restored by a divine messenger. Joseph was commanded not to retranslate the abridgment which Mormon had made of the book of Lehi from the large plates of Nephi. In its place the prophet was instructed to translate the small plates, which would have greater spiritual value. At the same time this procedure would foil the enemies of the prophet who had altered the words of the manuscript (see D&C 10:10-46).

It will be perceived that the Book of Mormon is, in a very real sense, a library of books. These books were, to be sure, composed principally by Mormon and Moroni as abridged works; nevertheless, behind each abridgment lay a voluminous source-book in the large plates of Nephi.

Now, let us examine the books of each of the above divisions in some detail.

**The Small Plates of Nephi**

**First Nephi**

The first book of Nephi contains twenty-two chapters. The attention of the reader is called to the caption and brief summary of contents at the head of Chapter 1:
THE FIRST BOOK OF NEPHI:
HIS REIGN AND MINISTRY

An account of Lehi and his wife Sariah, and his four sons, being called, (beginning at the eldest) Laman, Lemuel, Sam, and Nephi. The Lord warns Lehi to depart out of the land of Jerusalem, because he prophesieoth unto the people concerning their iniquity and they seek to destroy his life. He taketh three days’ journey into the wilderness with his family. Nephi taketh his brethren and returneth to the land of Jerusalem after the record of the Jews. The account of their sufferings. They take the daughters of Ishmael to wife. They take their families and depart into the wilderness. Their sufferings and afflictions in the wilderness. The course of their travels. They come to the large waters. Nephi’s brethren rebel against him. He confoundeth them, and buildeth a ship. They call the name of the place Bountiful. They cross the large waters into the promised land, and so forth. This is according to the account of Nephi; or in other words, I, Nephi, wrote this record.

That part of the caption reading “His Reign and Ministry” would indicate that Nephi, the author, was a king. This fact, however, is not discovered in Nephi’s writings until one reaches 1 Nephi 10:1. The brief summary of the contents of the book was evidently written by Nephi after he had completed the body of the text. Nephi’s habit of writing summaries or useful explanations may have set the precedent followed by many later Nephite historians. Jacob, Nephi’s brother, is the only other historian mentioned in the small plates of Nephi to follow the precedent, but that is because the other six writers wrote so little.

What was Nephi’s purpose in writing this book? His intent, as the following passage from the book testifies, was primarily spiritual:

And it mattereth not to me that I am particular to give a full account of all the things of my father, for
they cannot be written upon these plates, for I desire the room that I may write of the things of God.

*For the fulness of mine intent is that I may persuade men to come unto the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, and be saved.*

Wherefore, the things which are pleasing unto the world I do not write, but the things which are pleasing unto God and unto those who are not of the world.

Wherefore, I shall give commandment unto my seed, that they shall not occupy these plates with things which are not of worth unto the children of men.

(1 Nephi 6:3–6)

Attention ought also to be called to another passage in which Nephi declares in a somewhat different way his purpose in writing the book. He says:

Nevertheless, I have received a commandment of the Lord that I should make these plates [small plates], for the special purpose that there should be an account engraven of the ministry of my people.

Upon the other plates [large plates] should be engraven an account of the reign of the kings, and the wars and contentions of my people; wherefore these plates are for the more part of the ministry; and the other plates are for the more part of the reign of kings and the wars and contentions of my people.

Wherefore, the Lord hath commanded me to make these plates for a wise purpose in him, which purpose I know not. (1 Nephi 9:3–5; cf. Words of Mormon 1:3–7)

We see that Nephi’s purpose in writing was to bring men to God by telling them the “good news” of the ministry. He also knew that God wanted him to write on the small plates for a wise purpose, which was unrevealed at the time. We, of course, know what the “wise purpose” was. It was discussed in connection with the disappearance, from the hands of Martin Harris, of the one hundred and sixteen pages of translated matter of the book of Lehi.
While 1 Nephi—and 2 Nephi as well—may be called autobiography in the loose sense of the term, it would, perhaps, be better to call these books "Nephi's Memoirs" (see 1 Nephi 10).

The contents of 1 Nephi may be examined according to the following scheme of analysis:

I. History of the Nephites from the time they leave Jerusalem until they build a ship to leave for the promised land (1 Nephi 1–17).

   A. Lehi predicts destruction of Jerusalem and departs into the wilderness with his family. His sons Nephi, Sam, Laman, and Lemuel return to Jerusalem in order to obtain the brass plates containing Hebrew scriptures. Having obtained them Lehi predicts their preservation (1 Nephi 1–5).

   B. Nephi's intent in writing his record. He writes what is pleasing to God (1 Nephi 6).

   C. Lehi's sons again return to Jerusalem and bring back Ishmael and his family. Nephi's brethren rebel against him. Lehi's dream of the tree, the river, and the iron rod.

   D. Nephi describes two sets of records, both of which are named after him. One set deals with the ministry, the other with secular history (1 Nephi 9).

   E. Prophecies and spiritual experiences of Lehi and Nephi. The Babylonian captivity, Israel's dispersion and gathering, the Spirit of the Lord, the Savior and his ministry, the vision of the promised land, the Savior's eventual appearance to the Nephites, final downfall of the Nephites, the Gentile nations, the great and abominable church, the Bible and Book of Mormon, the mission of John the Revelator. Nephi interprets his father's dream (1 Nephi 10–15).


II. The Nephites sail for the promised land. Nephi's records, prophecies, and teachings (1 Nephi 18–22).

B. Nephi quotes Isaiah 48–49 and expounds them (1 Nephi 20–22).

The spiritual core of 1 Nephi will be found in 1 Nephi 10–15. The outstanding character in the book is, of course, Nephi. His father is a great man, but in the midst of affliction Lehi fails to meet the test his son passes (1 Nephi 16:20–25). The high spirituality, zeal, and courage of Nephi as a young man win our admiration and affection. His brothers Laman and Lemuel, on the other hand, are rebellious, materialistic, and selfish. They typify the thorn in the flesh which characterized the role of their descendants for the Nephite nation in later times.

Second Nephi

Second Nephi contains thirty-three chapters; its total text is, however, only about eight printed pages greater than that of 1 Nephi. Nephi also wrote a summary at the head of the book as in his earlier record, except that it was much shorter. The text of the summary follows:

An account of the death of Lehi. Nephi’s brethren rebel against him. The Lord warns Nephi to depart into the wilderness. His journeyings in the wilderness, and so forth.

Second Nephi may be logically divided into three parts, as the following analysis shows:

I. Teachings, blessings, and death of Lehi. The eventual separation of his family (2 Nephi 1–5).

A. Lehi speaks of the land of promise and of Jerusalem’s destruction. His final blessings on his sons and grandchildren. The psalm of Nephi (2 Nephi 1–4).

B. Nephi leads Zoram, Sam, Jacob, Joseph, and friends away from his older brethren. He manufactures weapons and teaches his people how to construct buildings and work with metals. A temple completed. Nephi appointed king over his people. Lamanites cursed with dark skin. Priests and teachers consecrated (2 Nephi 5).

II. The teachings of Nephi’s brother Jacob (2 Nephi 6–10).
A. Jacob exhorts his people and cites prophecies of Isaiah (2 Nephi 6).
B. A quotation of Isaiah 50–51 (2 Nephi 7–8).
C. Atonement and sufferings of the Savior foreseen. Where no law is given there is no punishment. The results of sin. The coming of Christ. The gathering of Israel. The land of promise to have no kings. Those who fight against Zion shall perish (2 Nephi 9–10).

III. Nephi’s quotations from Isaiah, together with commentaries and teachings based largely on that prophet (2 Nephi 1–33).
A. Nephi delights in words of Isaiah. Law of Moses to prove to his people the coming of Christ. Jacob a witness of the Redeemer (2 Nephi 11).
B. Nephi quotes Isaiah 2–4 (2 Nephi 12–4).
C. Nephi’s comments on Isaiah. The dispersion and gathering of Israel, the time of the Messiah’s advent, the coming of Christ to the Nephites, the final destruction of the Nephites, the days of the Gentiles. A quotation from Isaiah 29 concerning predicted coming forth of Book of Mormon. Latter-day churches, misleading precepts of men, the Gentiles and the Bible, the gathering in one of God’s word. Converted Gentiles to be numbered with God’s people. Lamanites and Jews eventually to believe in Gospel (2 Nephi 25–30).
D. Nephi teaches concerning the Savior’s baptism, the straight and narrow way, of angels, the Holy Ghost. His parting testimony to all men (2 Nephi 31–33).

What was Nephi’s purpose in writing his second book? We may be sure that it was similar to that expressed in 1 Nephi:

And I engraved that which is pleasing unto God.
And if my people are pleased with the things of God they will be pleased with mine engravings which are upon these plates. (2 Nephi 5:32)

Our understanding of Nephi’s purposes in writing is somewhat broadened by the following words:

As the Lord God liveth, there is none other name given under heaven save it be this Jesus Christ, of which I have spoken, whereby man can be saved.
Wherefore, for this cause hath the Lord God promised unto me that these things which I write shall be kept and preserved, and handed down unto my seed, from generation to generation, that the promise may be fulfilled unto Joseph [who was sold into Egypt], that his seed should never perish as long as the earth should stand.

Wherefore, these things shall go from generation to generation as long as the earth shall stand; and they shall go according to the will and pleasure of God. (2 Nephi 25:20–22)

Observe also these words of Nephi in his concluding chapter:

And now, my beloved brethren, and also Jew, and all ye ends of the earth, hearken unto these words and believe in Christ; and if ye believe not in these words believe in Christ. And if ye shall believe in Christ ye will believe in these words, for they are the words of Christ, and he hath given them unto me; and they teach all men that they should do good. (2 Nephi 33:10)

The careful reader of 2 Nephi will be pleased with Nephi's regard for the teaching and testimony of his younger brother Jacob, who was also a witness of the Redeemer (2 Nephi 11:3). Of the thirty-three chapters in the book, five are devoted to Jacob's teaching and his quotations from the book of Isaiah.

The tone of 2 Nephi is very spiritual. The general public understands very little about its quotations from Isaiah, but the commentaries of both Jacob and Nephi help us to understand their spiritual significance. Nephi's prophecies concerning the latter days, as well as his other teachings, are of unusual interest and benefit to us at the present time (2 Nephi 25–32). We call the reader's attention to the forceful manner in which Nephi affirms the truth of his writings in 2 Nephi 33.

**Jacob**

The book of Jacob is the third largest in the small plates of Nephi, containing seven chapters. The summary or superscription at the head of the book was probably written by Jacob and reads:
The words of his preaching unto his brethren. He confoundeth a man who seeketh to overthrow the doctrine of Christ. A few words concerning the history of the people of Nephi.

Jacob speaks of the plates upon which he wrote in terms of his own name, as the following words testify:

These plates are called the plates of Jacob, and they were made by the hand of Nephi. (Jacob 3:14)

The summary of his book is not sufficiently detailed to give us a good idea of the content of the record. For that reason we shall analyze the book at greater length. Because of the miscellaneous nature of its teachings it is somewhat difficult to discover logical division points, but perhaps the following scheme will prove useful:

I. Transfer of sacred records, death of Nephi, and teachings of Jacob (Jacob 1–4).

A. Nephi transfers sacred records to his brother Jacob. Nephi anoints a man to be king. Love of people for Nephi. Jacob and Joseph consecrated priest and teachers. Death of Nephi (Jacob 1).


II. Jacob quotes and interprets writings of prophet Zenos (Jacob 5–6).

A. Zenos’s allegory quoted. Israel compared to tame olive tree. Gentiles likened to branches of wild olive tree (Jacob 5).

B. Jacob expounds in part the allegory of Zenos. Pruning of the vineyard. A warning (Jacob 6).

III. A Nephite dissenter. Plates delivered to another (Jacob 7).

A. Sherem, an apostate, teaches false doctrine (Jacob 7:1–4).

B. Sherem attempts to shake Jacob’s faith. Displeasure of God manifested. Reformation among Nephites (Jacob 7:5–23).
C. Nephites attempt to reclaim Lamanites but to no avail. Recourse to armies and fortifications. Jacob delivers records to his son Enos (Jacob 7:24–27).

The book of Jacob is notable for its defense of the home and family. In Jacob 2–3 we find one of the finest vindications of the sacredness of marriage ties in all scripture. Jacob is a great champion of woman. He may be compared with Malachi in this respect. Only the words of the Savior are more impressive in placing woman in her rightful place in the eyes of God and man.

The reader will notice Jacob’s parting words, “Brethren, adieu.” This is to be contrasted with Nephi’s “Amen” at the end of each of his books. The solemn and sincere nature of Jacob may be judged from the following:

And it came to pass that I, Jacob, began to be old; and the record of this people being kept on the other plates of Nephi, wherefore, I conclude this record, declaring that I have written according to the best of my knowledge, by saying that the time passed away with us, and also our lives passed away like as it were unto us a dream, we being a lonesome and solemn people, wanderers, cast out from Jerusalem, born in tribulation, in a wilderness, and hated of our brethren, which caused wars and contentions; wherefore, we did mourn out our days. (Jacob 7:26)

That Jacob’s intent in writing was similar to Nephi’s may be deduced from Jacob 1:2–8.

**Enos, Jarom, Omni**

Each of the remaining books in the small plates of Nephi contains only one chapter. The book of Enos was written by a single person by that name. The same may be said of the book of Jarom. However, the concluding book of Omni is the production of five writers: Omni, Amaron, Chemish, Abinadom, and Amaleki. The first four wrote a total of eleven verses; Amaleki was responsible for the remaining nineteen verses. We have called attention to the fact that none of these three books contains a summary of
contents at its head as do the books written by Nephi and Jacob. The brevity of the records accounts for this lack.

The book of Enos, despite its small size, is one of the most interesting books in the Nephite record. In the first eighteen verses we find Enos’s description of his great soul’s hunger to find God and to receive a remission of sins. Moreover, he desired a promise from the Almighty that he would preserve the Nephite scriptures in the event his people fell into transgression. We may call his account “Enos’s wrestle before God.” It is one of the finest descriptions of personal religion in scripture. When on a hunt he knelt in prayer:

And my soul hungered; and I kneeled down before my Maker, and I cried unto him in mighty prayer and supplication for mine own soul; and all the day long did I cry unto him; yea, and when the night came I did still raise my voice high that it reached the heavens.

And there came a voice unto me, saying: Enos, thy sins are forgiven thee, and thou shalt be blessed.

And I, Enos, knew that God could not lie; wherefore, my guilt was swept away.

And I said: Lord, how is it done?

And he said unto me: Because of thy faith in Christ, whom thou hast never before heard nor seen. And many years pass away before he shall manifest himself in the flesh; wherefore, go to, thy faith hath made thee whole. (Enos 1:4–8)

Enos received promises from God to the effect that if his people fell into transgression and the Lamanites were spared, the latter would eventually come to a knowledge of the sacred records of the Nephites. The remainder of the book tells of his efforts in prophesying among the people, of the wickedness of Nephites and Lamanites alike, and, finally, of his testimony that he should find rest with the Redeemer in the mansions of his Father. Enos died in about 420 B.C.

The book of Jarom is the shortest book in the Nephite record, containing only fifteen verses. Jarom, the son of Enos, deals with the shortcomings of the Nephites, their observance of the law of Moses, their skill and fine workmanship in wood and metals, and
the diligence of their prophets, priests, and teachers. A reference to the murderous Lamanites is also made. The last date indicated in this record is 361 B.C. This book contains some writing of considerable value to the student, but does not have the high personal religious interest one finds in the book of Enos.

The book of Omni is named after the first of its five writers. Omni speaks of himself as a "wicked man," who had not kept the statutes and commandments of the Lord as he ought to have done. He also speaks of war and bloodshed, because of various clashes with the Lamanites during his lifetime. He delivered the sacred records into the hands of his son Amaron about 317 B.C. Apparently Amaron wrote the five verses credited to him on the very day, some thirty-eight years later, that he delivered the plates to his brother Chemish. Amaron says little of importance except that the more wicked Nephites had been destroyed in accordance with Lehi's dictum: "Inasmuch as ye will not keep my commandments ye shall not prosper in the land" (see Omni 1:6; cf. 2 Nephi 1:20). Chemish wrote one verse only and transmitted the plates to Abinadam, who wrote two verses. He tells of contention between the Nephites and Lamanites, and of the fact that he knows of no additional revelation or prophecy to be written. Amaleki, the son of Abinadam, writes of several interesting and important events in the remainder of the book. First of all, he tells of the elder Mosiah, who was warned of the Lord to flee into the wilderness with as many others as would hearken to him. They were led by revelation and finally discovered the Mulekites, who were called the people of Zarahemla. The two peoples united together under Mosiah, who was made their king. Secondly, Mosiah translated writings found on a large stone which was brought to him. I believe that Mosiah did this by means of the Urim and Thummim or "interpreters" in his possession. The engravings on the stone told of one Coriantumr and the slain of his people. He had been discovered by the Mulekites and lived with them for the "space of nine moons." Book of Mormon students will recognize Coriantumr as the last king of the Jaredite people, who were destroyed through great civil wars (see Ether 15).

The third important matter of history told us by Amaleki concerns a group of people under the leadership of a stubborn man who led them into the wilderness in an endeavor to find the land
of Nephi from whence Mosiah had fled. Strife arose, and all but fifty were slain. An expedition led by another man departed into the wilderness to pursue the search for the ancestral lands (Omni 1:27–29). Amaleki had a brother among these adventurers and writes that he never heard of him again. In the book of Mosiah (Mosiah 9–22) we learn in greater detail of these people and are there told that the name of their leader was Zeniff. Since Amaleki had no descendants, he left the sacred records in the hands of King Benjamin, the son of Mosiah.

In the last verse of the book of Omni, Amaleki tells us that the small plates were filled:

And I am about to lie down in my grave; and these plates are full. And I make an end of my speaking.
(Omni 1:30)

One is impressed by the great differences in personality and character of the various writers in the small plates of Nephi. The piety and highly religious character of Nephi is an interesting contrast to that of the rather rough and ready but tight-lipped Omni.