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What Plates Came from Cumorah?

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Abstract: Provides a description of the various sets of plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated and includes a serviceable diagram of the plates.

What Plates Came from Cumorah?

By Kenneth S. Bennion

THE "Plates of Laban" . . . "Large Plates" . . . "Small Plates" . . . "book that is sealed" . . . From where did these and other records come? Did Joseph Smith receive all of them from the Angel Moroni? Are their translations all to be found in the Book of Mormon?

Book of Mormon students may be confused by references to the different kinds of plates. Young readers are especially troubled to keep these original sources of the Book of Mormon in mind. Let us see whether we can simplify the matter.

On the opposite page is a diagram prepared by Don Mortensen of the Audio-visual Center, Brigham Young University. It has been adapted to Sunday School needs, and is reprinted here by permission of Brigham Young University, owner of the copyright.

A brief study of the chart will help us to understand more clearly the whole Book of Mormon picture.

The first records mentioned in the Book of Mormon were the Brass Plates of Laban. They contained the history of the Jews from the time of Adam down to the days of King Zedekiah, about 600 B.C. Lehi found upon these plates a genealogy of his fathers. The history found upon the Brass Plates corresponds generally, for that period of time, with the Old Testament. Without them, Lehi and his people would have had no record of the Lord's dealings with His chosen people. Therefore, as the colony entered the wilderness, it was necessary that they carry with them these plates. That is why God commanded Nephi and his brothers to return to Jerusalem and get them.

When Lehi and his family arrived in their Promised Land, they prepared plates of gold and kept two records—a record of their spiritual or religious history, and another of their political history. Later, both histories were kept on the same plates.

The Large Plates of Nephi are shown next on the chart. They contained the Books of *Lehi*, *Mosiah*, *Alma*, *Helaman*, *Third and Fourth Nephi*, and the first seven chapters of *Mormon*. All of these records were later abridged by Mormon, the abridgments being included in the Gold Plates delivered to Joseph Smith by Moroni. The Book of *Lehi* was the first to be translated, but the translation was stolen. Therefore, this translation does not appear in the Book of Mormon. (See extreme right diagram representing the Book.)

Next comes Mormon's abridgment of the Large Plates of Nephi (with the exception of the Book of *Lehi*). Included in this section are Chapters one to seven of Mormon's own writings. This material is found on pages 460 to 472.

In the days of Mosiah, the Nephite king and proph-

et, a party of explorers sent out by Limhi found and brought back 24 gold plates. These plates, which had been engraved by the Prophet Ether, contained the history of the Jaredites. They were translated by Mosiah, the seer, and were later abridged by Moroni, son of Mormon, and last historian of the Nephites. This section of the Book of Mormon contains Chapters eight and nine of the writings of Mormon. Here we find, also, the original writings of Moroni.

The final two chapters of Mormon's writings, Moroni's abridgment of Jaredite history, his comments about that people, and his own book are found in the Book of Mormon, pages 472 to 522.

The Prophet Joseph received, also, plates that were sealed, which were not to be opened or translated at that time. You will recall that the "learned man" to whom Martin Harris took the translation declared, "I cannot read a sealed book"—thus fulfilling ancient prophecy.¹

Please note again the entire diagram on the opposite page. First we have the Brass Plates of Laban, corresponding to a part of the Old Testament. Next are indicated both the large and the small plates of Nephi. All the large plates, containing seven books, were abridged by Mormon. Finally, we have the Book of *Ether* (Jaredite history), together with the Book of *Moroni*.

It is interesting to note that perhaps not even one hundredth part of the records preserved by the Nephites are to be found in the Book of Mormon. The untranslated material, including the sealed plates, comprise the major portion of the gold plates deposited by Moroni in the Hill Cumorah.

In the very beginning of the history of God's children on earth, Adam and his sons kept records,² as did those who followed after them. Lehi and his family also kept records.³

As our own pioneers moved westward into a new land and a new life, they were encouraged to keep records, particularly diaries or "journals." These records are now of great worth to us. In wards and branches throughout the Church we are asked to keep records. Some secretaries (historians) are much more careful than others. They "magnify their calling." It should be our task to keep all records to the best of our ability, for out of the books we are to be judged.

We are indebted to Brigham Young University for this chart that so graphically clarifies for us the sources of the Book of Mormon.

¹See *Isaiah* 29:11.

²*Moses* (Pearl of Great Price) 6:5.

³*1 Nephi* 1:1-3.

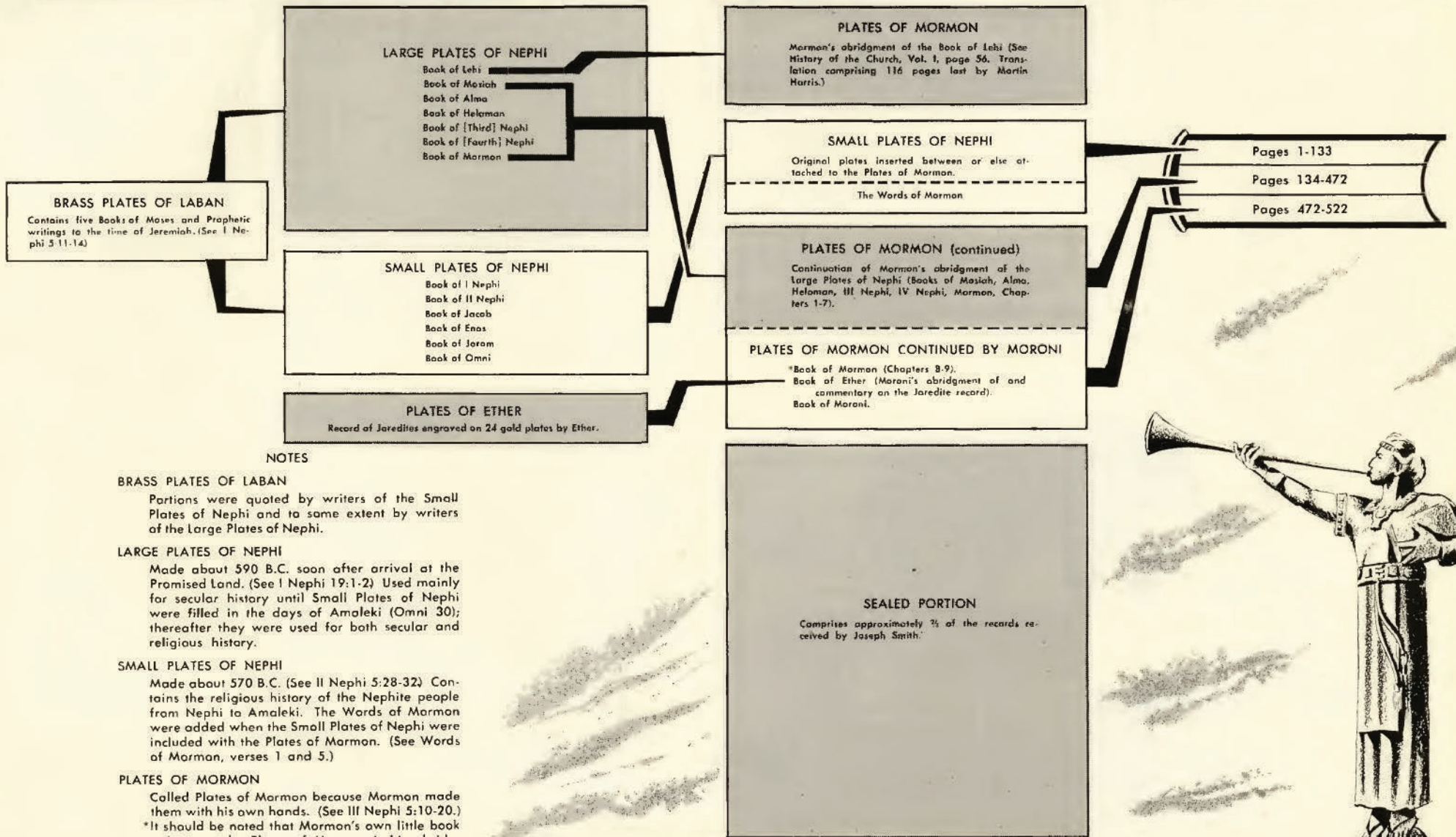
COMPILATION OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

PLATES BROUGHT FROM JERUSALEM

SOURCE MATERIALS USED BY MORMON AND MORONI

PLATES RECEIVED BY JOSEPH SMITH FROM MORONI

BOOK OF MORMON IN ITS PRESENT TRANSLATED FORM



NOTES

BRASS PLATES OF LABAN

Portions were quoted by writers of the Small Plates of Nephi and to some extent by writers of the Large Plates of Nephi.

LARGE PLATES OF NEPHI

Made about 590 B.C. soon after arrival at the Promised Land. (See 1 Nephi 19:1-2) Used mainly for secular history until Small Plates of Nephi were filled in the days of Amaleki (Omni 30); thereafter they were used for both secular and religious history.

SMALL PLATES OF NEPHI

Made about 570 B.C. (See 2 Nephi 5:28-32) Contains the religious history of the Nephite people from Nephi to Amaleki. The Words of Mormon were added when the Small Plates of Nephi were included with the Plates of Mormon. (See Words of Mormon, verses 1 and 5.)

PLATES OF MORMON

Called Plates of Mormon because Mormon made them with his own hands. (See 3 Nephi 5:10-20.) *It should be noted that Mormon's own little book written on the Plates of Mormon is his abridgment of the more extensive account of his life and times that he wrote earlier on the Large Plates of Nephi. (See Mormon 1:4, 2:17-18, 5:9.)

THE DIAGRAM DIMENSIONS ARE NOT REPRESENTATIVE OF TRUE SIZES OF PLATES

THE LOS ANGELES TEMPLE ANGEL MORONI STATUE

