

# BRIEF EXPLANATION ABOUT THE BOOK OF MORMON

*This explanation was first published in the 1920 edition (here with an underlined addition)*

The Book of Mormon is a sacred record of peoples in ancient America and was engraved upon metal plates. Sources from which this record was compiled include the following:

1. *The Plates of Nephi*, which were of two kinds: the small plates and the large plates. The former were more particularly devoted to spiritual matters and the ministry and teachings of the prophets, while the latter were occupied mostly by a secular history of the peoples concerned (1 Nephi 9.2–4). From the time of Mosiah, however, the large plates also included items of major spiritual importance.
2. *The Plates of Mormon*, which consist of an abridgment by Mormon from the large plates of Nephi, with many commentaries. These plates also contained a continuation of the history by Mormon and additions by his son Moroni.
3. *The Plates of Ether*, discovered by Limhi's people (Mosiah 8.9–12), which present a history of the Jaredites. This record was abridged by Moroni, who inserted comments of his own and incorporated the record with the general history under the title “book of Ether.”
4. *The Plates of Brass* brought by the people of Lehi from Jerusalem in 600 BC. These contained “the five books of Moses, . . . and also a record of the Jews from the beginning, . . . down to the commencement of the reign of Zedekiah, king of Judah; and also the prophecies of the holy prophets” (1 Nephi 5.11–13). Many quotations from these plates, citing Isaiah and other biblical and nonbiblical prophets, appear in the Book of Mormon.

The Book of Mormon comprises fifteen main parts or divisions, known, with one exception, as books, usually designated by the name of their principal author. The first portion (the first six books, ending with Omni) is a translation from the small plates of Nephi. Between the books of Omni and Mosiah is an insert called the Words of Mormon. This insert connects the record engraved on the small plates with Mormon's abridgment of the large plates.

The longest portion, from Mosiah through Mormon chapter 7, is a translation of Mormon's abridgment of the large plates of Nephi. The concluding portion, from Mormon chapter 8 to the end of the volume, was engraved by Mormon's son Moroni, who, after finishing the record of his father's life, made an abridgment of the Jaredite record (as the book of Ether) and later added the parts known as the book of Moroni.

In or about the year AD 421, Moroni, the last of the Nephite prophet-historians, sealed the sacred record and hid it up unto the Lord, to be brought forth in the latter days, as predicted by the voice of God through His ancient prophets. In AD 1823, this same Moroni, then a resurrected personage, visited the Prophet Joseph Smith and subsequently delivered the engraved plates to him.