

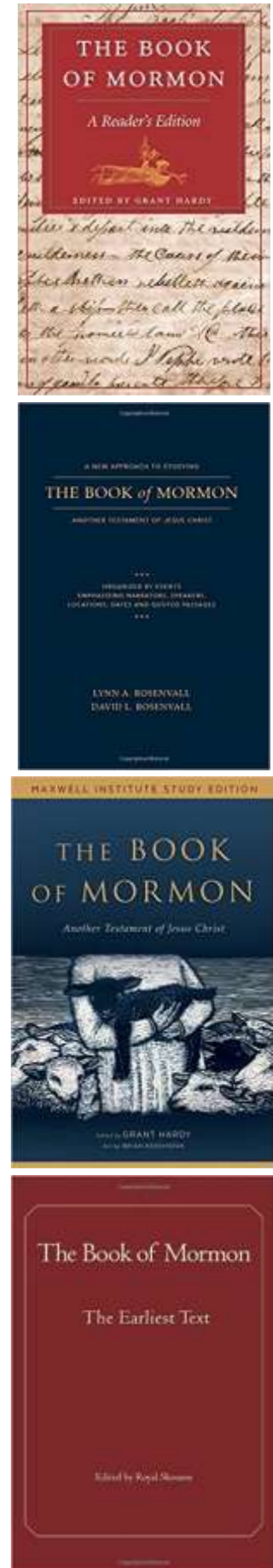


The Book of Mormon

Introductory

Study Resources

- The Book of Mormon: A Reader's Edition Paperback – November 14, 2005 by Grant Hardy (Editor)
- A New Approach to Studying the Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ Paperback – August 1, 2017 by Lynn A. Rosenvall (Author), David L. Rosenvall (Author)
- The Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ, Maxwell Institute Study Edition Paperback – December 31, 2018 by Grant Hardy (Author), Brian Kershishnik (Illustrator)
- The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text Hardcover – September 22, 2009 by Royal Skousen (Editor), Joseph Smith (Translator)



Seer Stones - video

video





One of Joseph Smith's seer stones

In Joseph Smith's day, some individuals claimed that they had a gift to "see," or receive divine or supernatural messages, through seer stones. These beliefs came from the Bible and from European cultural traditions brought to early America by immigrants. Joseph Smith and his family accepted these beliefs, and Joseph occasionally used stones he located in the ground to help neighbors find missing objects or search for buried treasure.

(<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/history/topics/seer-stones?lang=eng>)

When Joseph Smith received the golden plates in 1827, he also received a translation instrument with them, “two stones in silver bows” used by “seers’ in ancient or former times” ([Joseph Smith—History 1:35](#)). This instrument was referred to in the Book of Mormon as the “interpreters.” During the translation of the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith apparently used both of these instruments—the interpreters and his seer stone—interchangeably. They worked in much the same way, and the early Saints sometimes used the term “Urim and Thummam



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How long did it take Joseph Smith to transcribe the plates?

- One of the most amazing facts about the Book of Mormon is that it took Joseph Smith only about **sixty-five working days** to translate a book that, in the current edition, is 531 pages long. Historical details about the time it took to translate the book are remarkably well preserved, and they are corroborated by the independently consistent statements of numerous witnesses.
- Almost all of the Book of Mormon as we now have **it was translated between 7 April and 30 June 1829**. Before that, from 12 April to 14 June 1828, Joseph had translated the 116 pages that Martin Harris lost when he borrowed them to show to members of his family. In addition, during March 1829, Joseph translated “a few” pages—~~with his wife, Emma, acting as scribe~~—before he was commanded to “stop for a season.”
- (John W. Welch, professor of law at Brigham Young University’s J. Reuben Clark Law School and president of the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS).

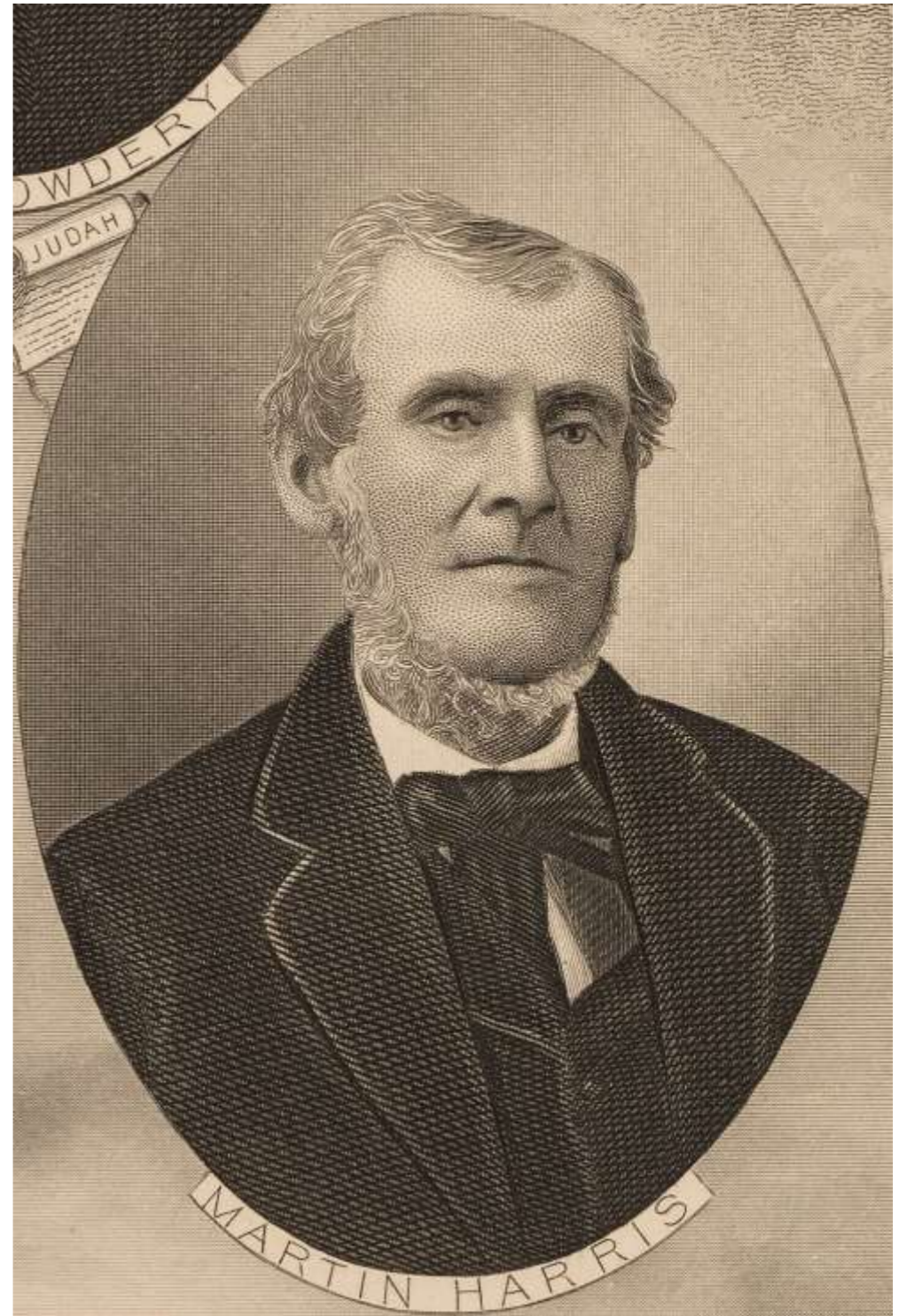
Three Witnesses

June 1829



Martin Harris

- “By aid of the Seer Stone, sentences would appear and were read by the Prophet and written by Martin, and when finished he would say ‘written;’ and if correctly written, the sentence would disappear and another appear in its place; but if not written correctly it remained until corrected, so that the translation was just as it was engraven on the plates, precisely in the language then used” (CHC 1:29).



“Just as sure as you see the Sun shining, Just as sure am I that I stood in [p.4] the presence of an Angel of God ... and saw him hold the Gold Plates in his Hands.”

“Gentlemen, do you see that hand? Are you sure you see it? Are your eyes playing a trick or something? No. Well, as sure as you see my hand so sure did I see the angel and the plates.”

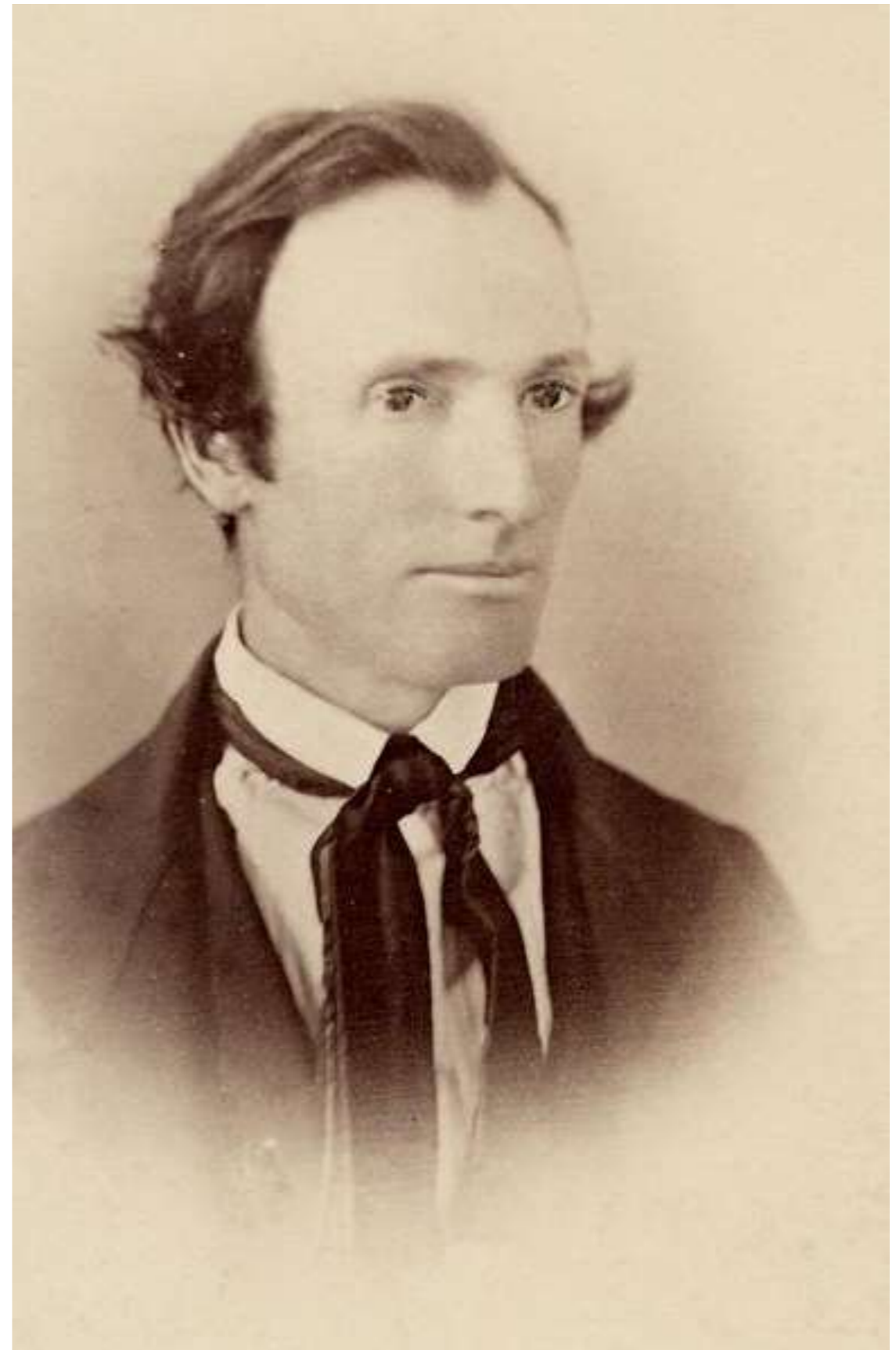
—Martin Harris

William Pilkington Affidavit, April 3, 1934, 4–6, typescript, CHL; published in Vogel, Early Mormon Documents, 2:355–356; Morris, A Documentary History of the Book of Mormon, 403.

Statement of William M. Glenn to O. E. Fischbacher, May 30, 1943, Cardston, Alberta, Canada, cit. Deseret News, October 2, 1943; published in Anderson, Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses, 116, 120n.28.

Oliver Cowdery

Before an audience of approximately two thousand, including non-members of the Church, Cowdery bore witness of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, the restoration of the Aaronic and Melchizedek priesthoods, and the divine calling of Joseph Smith. “I beheld with my eye and handled with my hands the gold plates from which it was translated. I also beheld the Interpreters. That book is true.” (Journal of Reuben Miller, 1848, and MS 21 (20 August 1859): 544. [See originals.] Edward Bunker was still talking in 1894 of the “powerfull testimony” he heard Oliver Cowdery give at Winter Quarters in 1848. See Larson and Larson, Diary of Charles Lowell Walker, 2:774.)



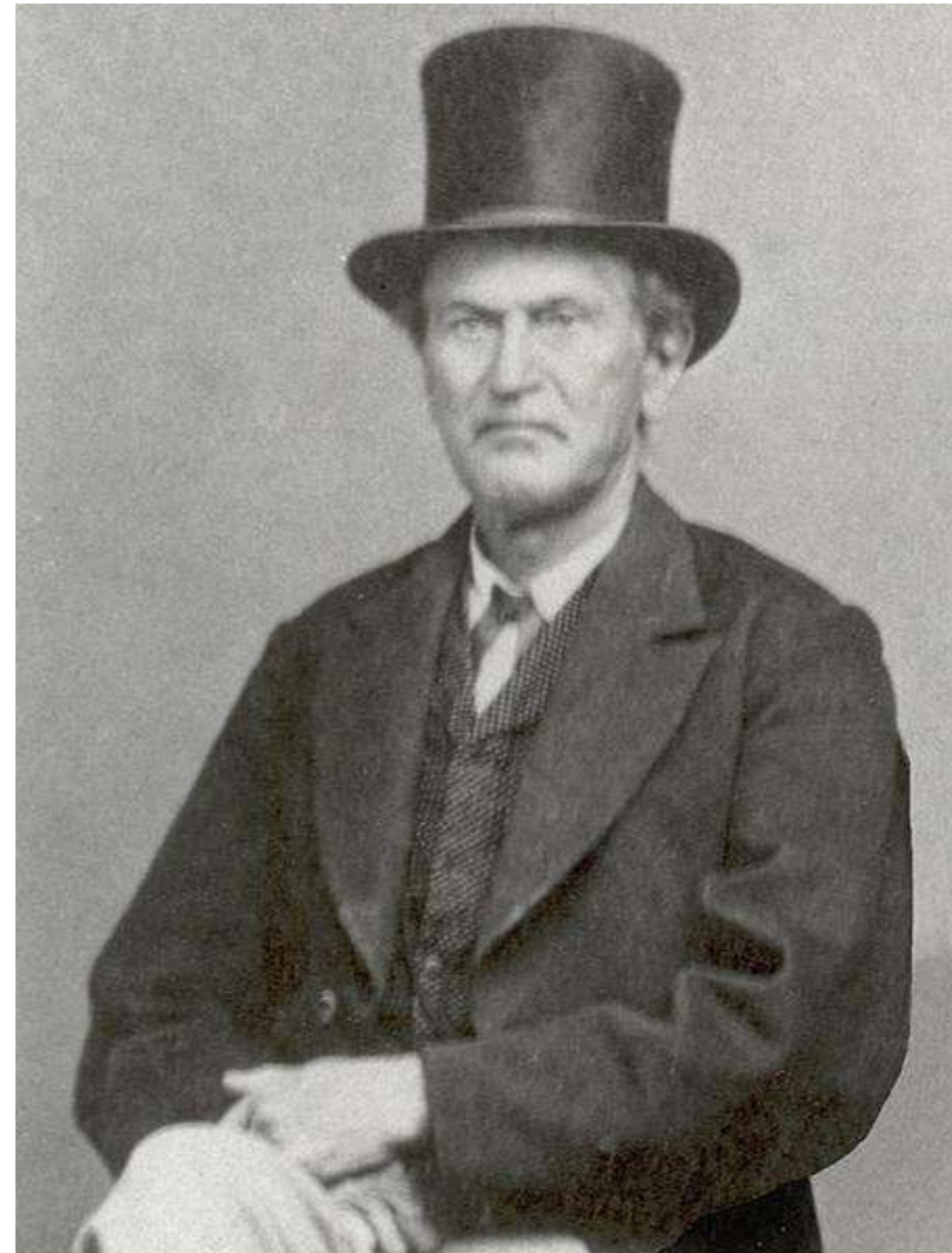
“It was a clear, open beautiful day, far from any inhabitants, in a remote field, at the time we saw the record, of which it has been spoken, brought and laid before us, by an angel, arrayed in glorious light, ascend out of the midst of heaven. Now if this is human juggling—judge ye.”

—*Oliver Cowdery*

Oliver Cowdery's Letter to Cornelius C. Blatchley, November 9, 1829; published in Morris, A Documentary History of the Book of Mormon, 375.

David Whitmer

- “I will now give you a description of the manner in which the Book of Mormon was translated. Joseph Smith would put the seer stone into a hat, and put his face in the hat, drawing it closely around his face to exclude the light; and in the darkness the spiritual light would shine. A piece of something resembling parchment would appear, and under it was the interpretation in English. Brother Joseph would read off the English to Oliver Cowdery, who was his principal scribe, and when it was written down and repeated to brother Joseph to see if it was correct, then it would disappear, and another character with the interpretation would appear. Thus the Book of Mormon was translated by the gift and power of God, and not by any power of man.” (An Address to All Believers in Christ,p 12)



“I saw [the Nephite artifacts] just as plain as I see this bed (striking his hand upon the bed beside him), and I heard the voice of the Lord, as distinctly as I ever heard anything in my life.”

“I was not under any hallucination, nor was I deceived! I saw with these eyes and I heard with these ears!”

—*David Whitmer*

Report of Elders Orson Pratt and Joseph F. Smith, Millennial Star, 40 (December 9, 1878): 772.

Memoirs of Joseph Smith III, cit. Mary Audentia Smith Anderson, Joseph Smith III and the Restoration (Independence, MO. 1952), pp. 311–312; published in Anderson, Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses, 88, 92n.33.

- The combined testimonies of the Three and Eight Witnesses of the Book of Mormon provide powerful evidence of the Restoration.
- **The Three Witnesses said** they beheld the angel Moroni, who showed them the gold plates and other Nephite artifacts. They also heard a voice from heaven, declaring the truth of the Book of Mormon's translation.
- **In contrast, the Eight Witnesses** viewed and handled the plates without any accompanying divine manifestations.
- Throughout their lives, none of these eleven men ever denied their testimonies, which have been published in every edition of the Book of Mormon since 1830. Despite the consistency of the witnesses' testimonies, some have questioned the reality of their experiences—especially the vision shown to the Three Witnesses.
- Warren Parrish, while apostatizing from the Church in 1838, claimed that Martin Harris “has come out at last, and says he never saw the plates ... except in vision” (emphasis added).
- Stephen Burnett, another dissenter, similarly represented Harris as saying that the three witnesses only saw the plates “in vision or imagination” (emphasis added).
- And John Murphy once interpreted David Whitmer as saying that his testimony was based only on spiritual “impressions.”
- In these and other cases, individuals have chosen to emphasize the visionary nature of the Three Witnesses' shared experience in a way that questions its actual occurrence in reality.
- **The witnesses themselves, however, openly refuted such insinuations.** Harris once declared, “No man ever heard me in any way deny ... the administration of the angel that showed me the plates.” Whitmer likewise responded to Murphy's statement by saying that what he had seen “was no Delusion” and that he had “never at any time, denied that testimony or any part thereof, which has so long since been published” in the Book of Mormon.
- <https://knowwhy.bookofmormoncentral.org/knowwhy/did-the-book-of-mormon-witnesses-really-see-what-they-claimed>



- *video — <https://knowwhy.bookofmormoncentral.org/knowwhy/did-the-book-of-mormon-witnesses-really-see-what-they-claimed>*

Eight Witnesses

- Christian Whitmer
- Jacob Whitmer
- Peter Whitmer, Jun. (age 19 in 1829)
- John Whitmer
- Hiram Page
- Joseph Smith, Sen. (age 59 in 1829)
- Hyrum Smith
- Samuel H. Smith
- Unlike the Three Witnesses, the Eight testified that they both saw and handled the plates. Another difference is that the Eight testified that they were shown the plates by Joseph Smith rather than by an angel as had the Three Witnesses. (average age of witnesses was age 30)

Hiram Page

- Hiram Page, another of the Eight Witnesses, was whipped in Jackson County, Missouri, in 1833 for his profession of Mormonism. He left activity in the Church in 1838 and in 1847 wrote to William McLellin:
- “As to the Book of Mormon,” he affirmed: it would be doing injustice to myself and to the work of God of the last days, to say that I could know a thing to be true in 1830, and know the same thing to be false in 1847. To say my mind was so treacherous that I had forgotten what I saw. To say that a man of Joseph’s ability, who at that time did not know how to pronounce the word Nephi, could write a book of six hundred pages, as correct as the Book of Mormon, without supernatural power. And to say that those holy angels who came and showed themselves to me as I was walking through the field, to confirm me in the work of the Lord of the last days—three of whom came to me afterwards and sang an hymn in their own pure language. Yea, it would be treating the God of heaven with contempt to deny these testimonies, with too many others to mention here.
- Steven C. Harper, "Evaluating the Book of Mormon Witnesses" in Religious Educator 11, no. 2 (2010): 37-50. <https://rsc.byu.edu/archived/evaluating-book-mormon-witnesses>
- Hiram Page to William McLellin, May 30, 1847, in Ensign of Liberty, January 1848, 63

Emma Smith

Died: April 30, 1879, Nauvoo House, Nauvoo, IL

Children: Joseph Smith III, Alexander Hale Smith, Julia Murdock Smith

Spouse: Lewis C. Bidamon (m. 1847–1879), Joseph Smith (m. 1827–1844)

Parents: Isaac Hale, Elizabeth Lewis Hale

Emma Smith With son David Hyrum. Photograph, unknown photographer, 1845. (Courtesy Community of Christ Library-Archives, Independence, MO)



**Emma Smith, 1879 interview by son
Joseph Smith III, *Saints Herald***

- Question. What of the truth of Mormonism?
- Answer. I know Mormonism to be the truth; and believe the Church to have been established by divine direction. I have complete faith in it. In writing for your father I frequently wrote day after day, often sitting at the table close by him, he sitting with his face buried in his hat, with the stone in it, and dictating hour after hour with nothing between us.
- Question. Had he not a book or manuscript from which he read, or dictated to you?
- Answer. He had neither manuscript nor book to read from.
- Question. Could he not have had, and you not know it?
- Answer. If he had had anything of the kind he could not have concealed it from me.
- Question. Are you sure that he had the plates at the time you were writing for him?
- Answer. The plates often lay on the table without any attempt at concealment, wrapped in a small linen tablecloth, which I had given him to fold them in. I once felt of the plates, as they thus lay on the table, tracing their outline and shape. They seemed to be pliable like thick paper, and would rustle with a metallic sound when the edges were moved by the thumb, as one does sometimes thumb the edges of a book.

- Question. Where did father and Oliver Cowdery write?
- Answer. Oliver Cowdery and your father wrote in the room where I was at work.
- Question. Could not father have dictated the Book of Mormon to you, Oliver Cowdery and the others who wrote for him, after having first written it, or having first read it out of some book?
- Answer. Joseph Smith (and for the first time she used his name direct, having usually used the words, "your father" or "my husband") could neither write nor dictate a coherent and well-worded letter, let alone dictate a book like the Book of Mormon. And, though I was an active participant in the scenes that transpired, and was present during the translation of the plates, and had cognizance of things as they transpired, it is marvelous to me, "a marvel and a wonder," as much so as to anyone else.

- Question. I should suppose that you would have uncovered the plates and examined them?
- Answer. I did not attempt to handle the plates, other than I have told you, nor uncover them to look at them. I was satisfied that it was the work of God, and therefore did not feel it to be necessary to do so;
- Major Bidamon here suggested: Did Mr. Smith forbid your examining the plates?
- Answer. I do not think he did. I knew that he had them, and was not specially curious about them. I moved them from place to place on the table, as it was necessary in doing my work.
- Question. Mother, what is your belief about the authenticity, or origin, of the Book of Mormon?
- Answer. My belief is that the Book of Mormon is of divine authenticity - I have not the slightest doubt of it. I am satisfied that no man could have dictated the writing of the manuscripts unless he was inspired; for, when acting as his scribe, your father would dictate to me hour after hour; and when returning after meals, or after interruptions, he could at once begin where he had left off, without either seeing the manuscript or having any portion of it read to him. This was a usual thing for him to do. It would have been improbable that a learned man could do this; and, for one so ignorant and unlearned as he was, it was simply impossible.
- (*"Last Testimony of Sister Emma," Saint's Herald, Vol. 26, No 19 p. 289. (1 October 1879)*)

References/Sources for study


JosephSmithPapers

Home | josephsmithpapers.org | ABP | Google Earth | Grants | blog | Wikimedia Commons | Research | Bible Hub | Hebrews Inst.

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The First Vision Podcast Released

January 5, 2020 | Joseph Smith Papers Project

The Joseph Smith Papers announces today the release of *The First Vision: A Joseph Smith Papers Podcast*. This six-part miniseries from the Joseph Smith Papers Project explores the history and legacy of Joseph Smith's first vision. The podcast will be available beginning January 5, 2020. Series host Spencer W. McBride, PhD, interviews historians and other scholars in a documentary-style podcast about this pivotal event in the history of the Restoration. Released in the bicentennial year of Joseph Smith's first vision, the podcast

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Oliver Cowdery statements as one of Three Witnesses

[In other languages](#)

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Oliver Cowdery statements as one of Three Witnesses

Book of Mormon Central



Did the Book of Mormon Witnesses Really See What They Claimed?



Post contributed by BMC Team
June 20, 2019
KnoWhy #521



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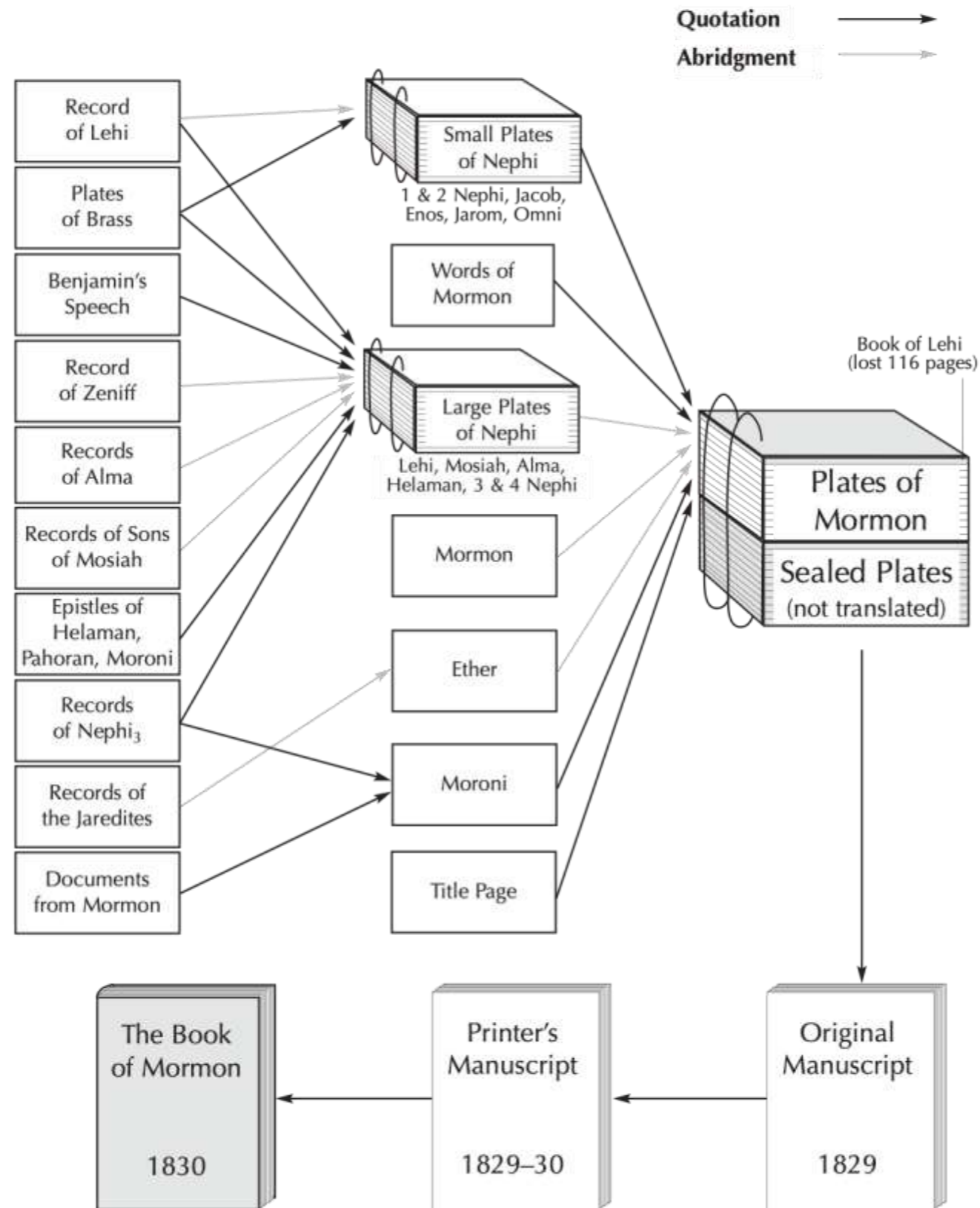
**Book of Mormon
Translation**

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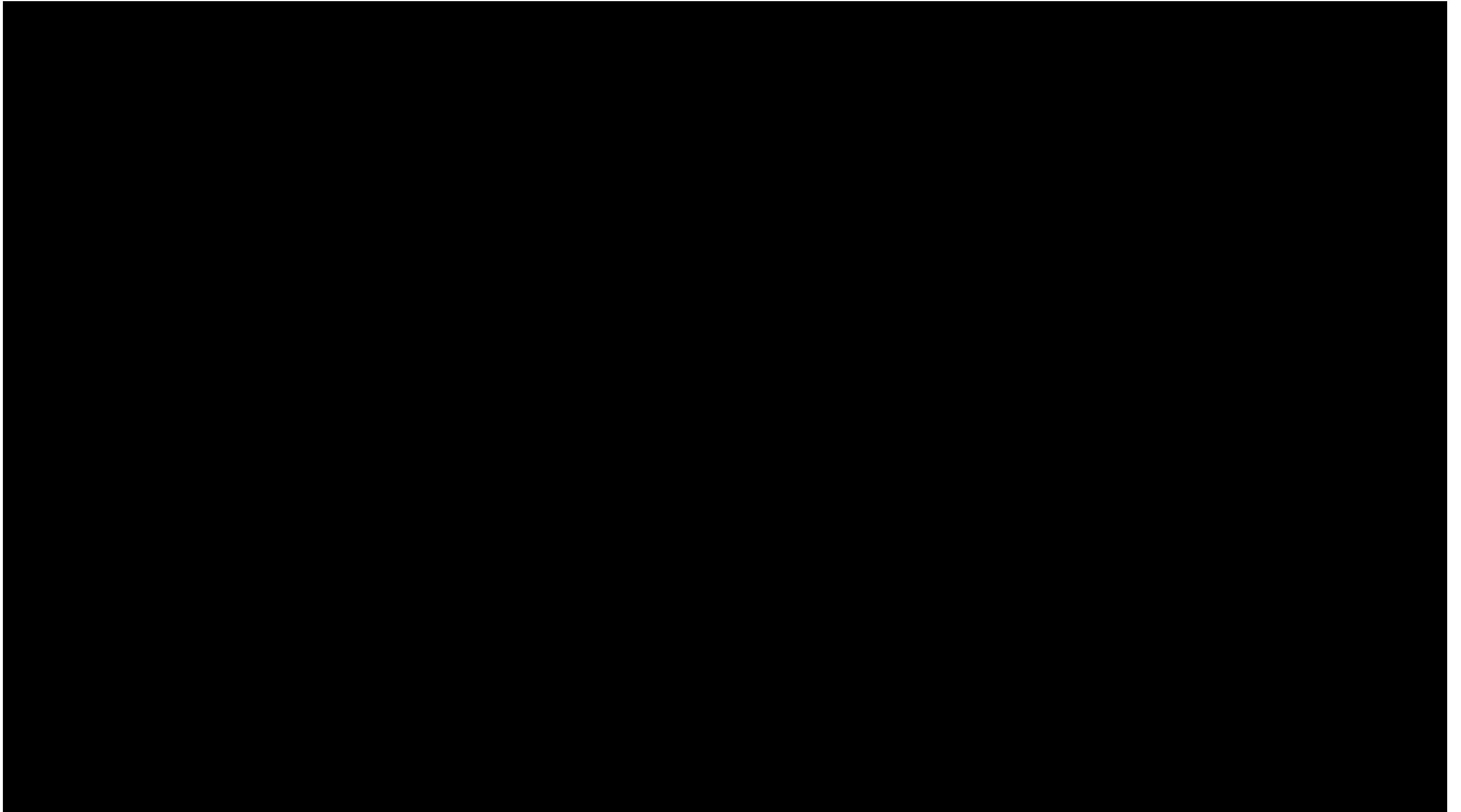
Joseph Smith said that the Book of Mormon was “the most correct of any Book on earth & the keystone of our religion & a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts than by any other Book.”¹ The Book of Mormon came into the world through a series of miraculous events. Much can be known about the coming forth of the English text of the Book of Mormon through a careful study of statements made

“One of the Three Witnesses,” *Deseret Evening News*, Dec. 13, 1881, 4. Here Martin Harris uses the term “Urim and Thummim” to refer to the interpreters found with the plates.

Book of Mormon Plates and Records



The Story of the Book of Mormon: The Plates of Mormon video



<https://bookofmormoncentral.org/blog/7-short-videos-to-kick-off-your-book-of-mormon-come-follow-me-study>