

The Right to Informed Consent

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I believe that members and investigators deserve to have all the facts and information on the table to be able to make a fully informed and balanced decision as to whether or not they want to **commit their hearts, minds, time, talents, income, and lives to Mormonism**. Anything less is an obstruction to the free agency of the individual.

”



The Search for a Physical World

The investigation begins with the Book of Mormon's claims of vast civilizations, sprawling cities, and epic battles involving millions. Such history should leave a significant footprint.

The first step is to examine the archaeological and geographical record for any corroborating evidence.

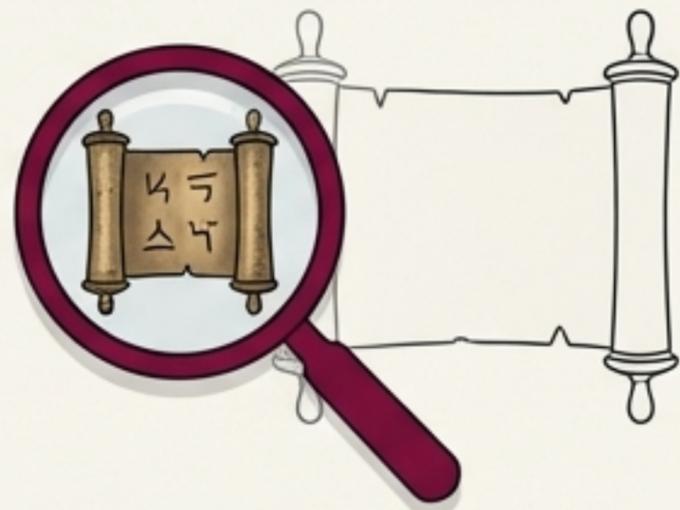
There is absolutely no archaeological evidence to directly support the Book of Mormon... Why? – CES Letter

Apologetic “Evidences” Fall Short of Scientific Consensus

Apologists point to a handful of supposed archaeological “hits.” However, these claims wither under scrutiny.

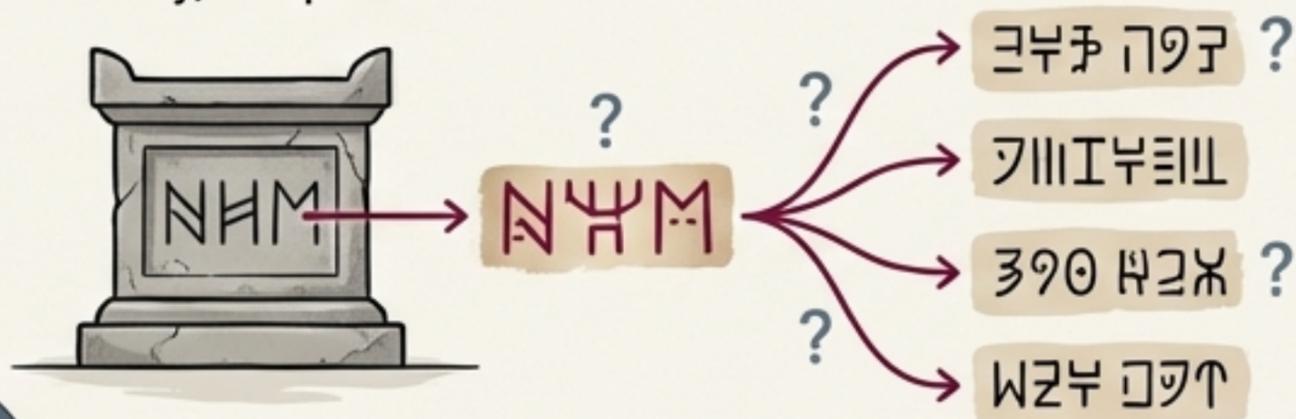
Claim: Metal Plates

Reality: Known examples are tiny scrolls with few characters, unlike the massive text of the Book of Mormon.



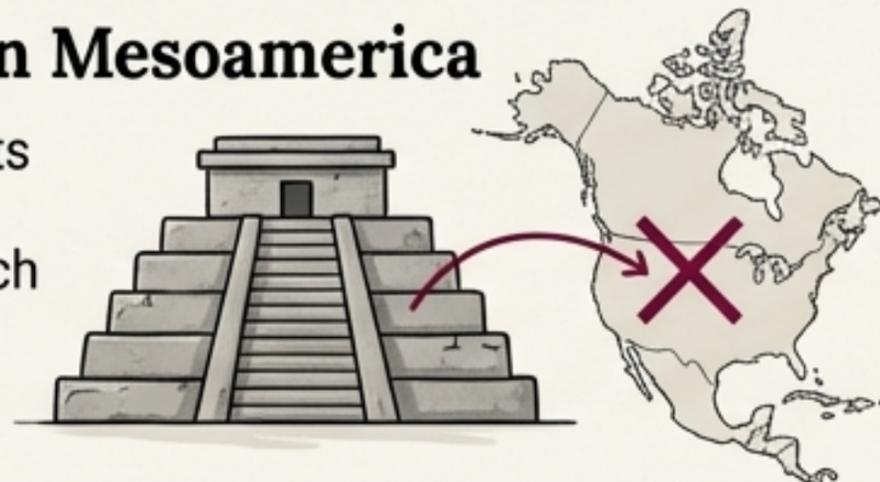
Claim: Altar at “Nahom” (NHM)

Reality: A three-letter root in a language without written vowels could match dozens of words. This is a claim of possibility, not proof.



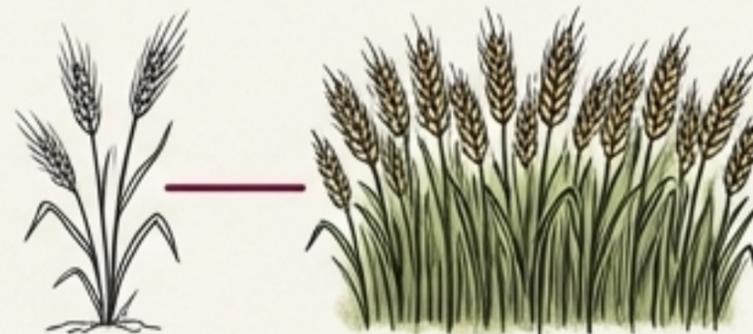
Claim: Cement in Mesoamerica

Reality: This contradicts the church's historical “Heartland” model, which placed events in North America.



Claim: Barley in the Americas

Reality: A “little barley” was found, but it wasn't cultivated in the abundance described in the Book of Mormon.

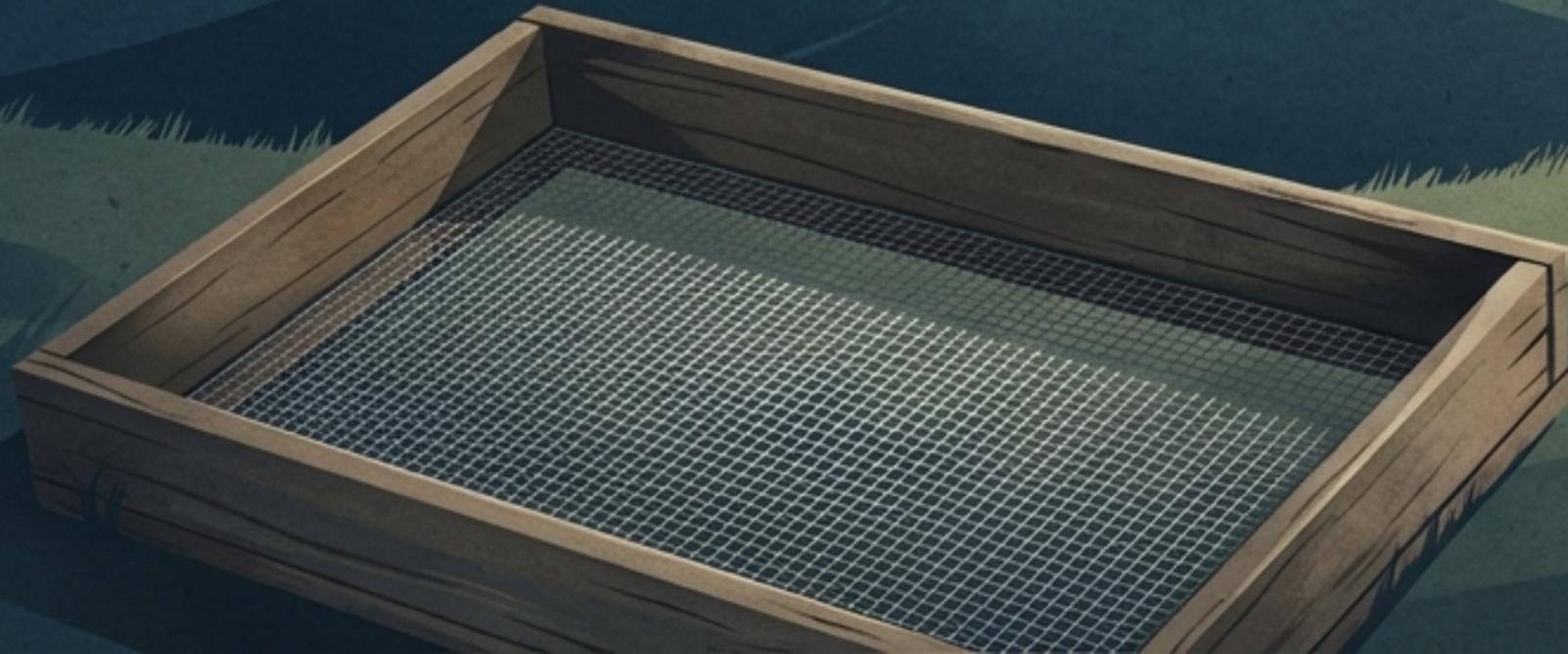


The true test of compelling evidence is scientific consensus. Not a single credible, non-Mormon archaeologist uses the Book of Mormon as a serious guide to ancient American history.

An Archaeologically “Clean” Hill

The Hill Cumorah in New York is the stated site of the final battle where hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of Nephites and Lamanites were slain. The archaeological record is silent.

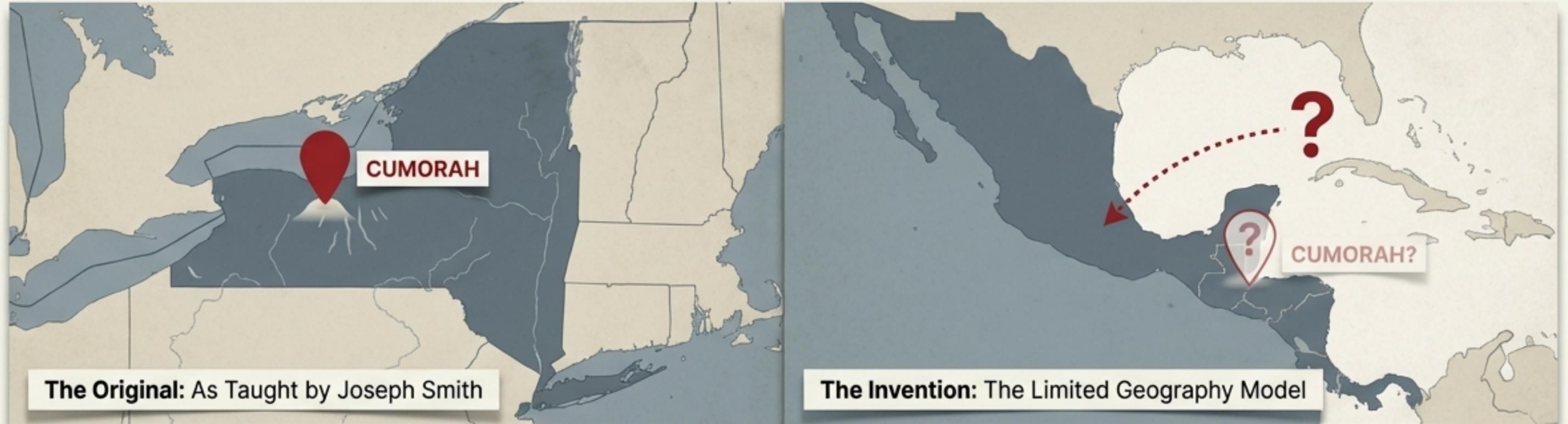
> “Archaeologically speaking, it is a **clean hill**. No artifacts, no walls, no trenches, no arrowheads. The area immediately surrounding the hill is similarly clean... This is not the place of Moroni’s last stand. We must look elsewhere for that hill.”



- John E. Clark, Director,
BYU New World Archaeological Foundation

The Cumorah Dilemma: A Tale of Two Hills

Faced with a lack of evidence in New York, apologists proposed a “Limited Geography Model” with a second Hill Cumorah in Mesoamerica. This move contradicts a century of prophetic teaching.



Quote from Joseph Fielding Smith (*Doctrines of Salvation*):

“The prophet Joseph Smith himself is on record, definitely declaring the present hill called Cumorah to be the exact hill spoken of in the Book of Mormon... It is difficult for a reasonable person to believe that such men as Oliver Cowdery, Brigham Young... and many others, could speak frequently of the spot... and not be corrected by the prophet if that were not the fact.”

The need to invent a second Cumorah is a tacit admission that the evidence doesn't match the foundational story.

Echoes of Home: A 19th Century New York Map

Many names and places in the Book of Mormon bear a striking resemblance to locations in the region where Joseph Smith lived and traveled. While not definitive proof, the pattern suggests a familiar source of inspiration.





The Search for an Intellectual World

If the Book of Mormon is not rooted in the ancient American landscape, perhaps its origins can be found in the intellectual landscape of 19th-century America. The investigation now turns from the soil to the sources, examining the ideas, themes, and literary styles prevalent in Joseph Smith's time.

A 'Serious Menace' to the Book of Mormon's Origin

Years before the Book of Mormon, Reverend Ethan Smith's *View of the Hebrews* (1823) popularized the idea that Native Americans were descended from the lost tribes of Israel. The parallels were so striking that LDS General Authority B.H. Roberts studied them in secret.



>[Are there] many things in the former book that might well have suggested many major things in the other? Not a few things merely... but many. And it is this fact of many things... that makes them so serious a menace to Joseph Smith's history..."

- B.H. Roberts, LDS General Authority & Historian

The core issue is the shared 'meta-narrative'—the **Mound Builder Myth** of a **civilized, light-skinned race destroyed by a savage, dark-skinned one**—which was a common trope in Joseph Smith's environment.

A Product of a Prevailing Literary Style

The Book of Mormon's Jacobean English and war-focused narrative were not unique. Other popular books from Joseph Smith's era used the same "Bible fanfiction" style to tell American stories.

The *Late War* (1819)

An American history textbook written in King James style. It uses the phrase "and it came to pass" 84 times.

Late War: "...chief warrior, whom they called **Tecumseh**... and they did pursue **Tecumseh**, and slew him."



Book of Mormon: "...a man whose name was **Teancum**... and they did pursue **Teancum**, and slew him."

The *First Book of Napoleon* (1809)

Contains dozens of short phrases that appear in the opening pages of the Book of Mormon.

Napoleon: "upon the face of the earth... it came to pass... the land of their inheritances... their gold and their silver..."



Book of Mormon: "upon the face of the earth... it came to pass... the land of his inheritance... and his gold, and his silver..."

The Unstable Theological Foundation

The most compelling evidence for the Book of Mormon's 19th-century origins may not be what's missing from archaeology, but what was changed within the text itself. The book's core doctrine—the nature of God—was not fixed. It evolved along with Joseph Smith's own theology.



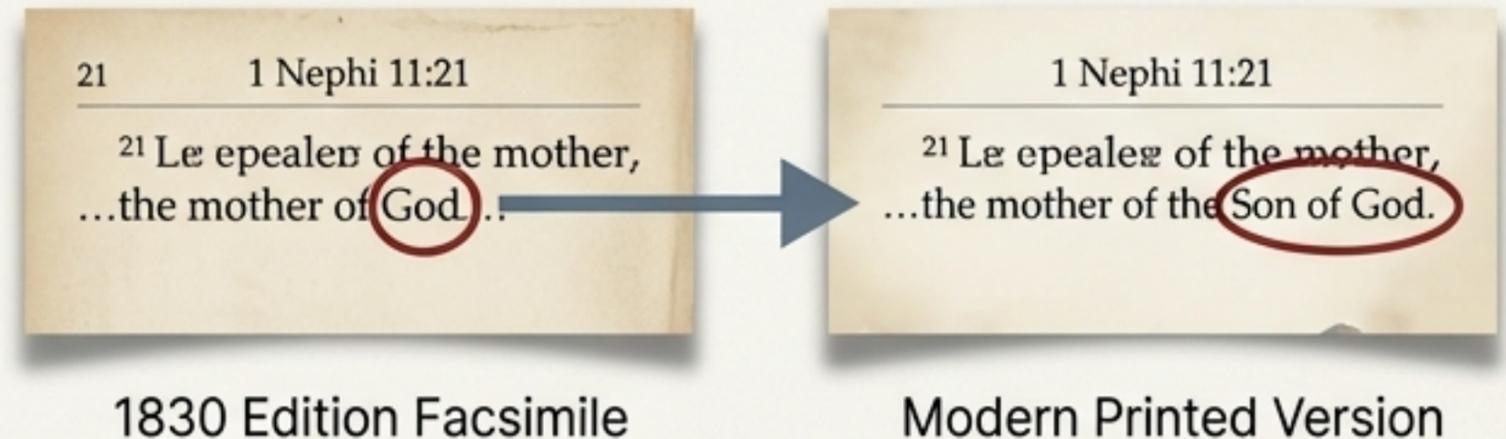
One God, Then Two: An Evolving Doctrine

The original Book of Mormon and Joseph Smith's earliest accounts reflect a "modalist" view of God, consistent with 19th-century Protestantism, where God, Jesus, and the Holy Ghost are one being. This was later changed to reflect his new doctrine of three separate beings.

First Vision

- **1832 Account:** "I saw *the Lord* and he spake unto me saying Joseph my son thy sins are forgiven thee." (One being)
- **1838 Official Account:** "I saw *two Personages...*"

Book of Mormon Textual Changes



An ancient text translated by the "gift and power of God" should not require significant theological updates to match the changing beliefs of its translator.

“He would have said what everybody wanted to hear.”

“If [Joseph Smith] were lying, then he would have said what everybody wanted to hear. He would have said, ‘I saw God and God and Jesus are one being’... That’s what people wanted to hear. That’s what they would have believed. And yet he didn’t say that.”

— Brad Wilcox, LDS General Authority

**BUT IN HIS EARLIEST WRITTEN ACCOUNT
OF THE FIRST VISION, HE DID.**

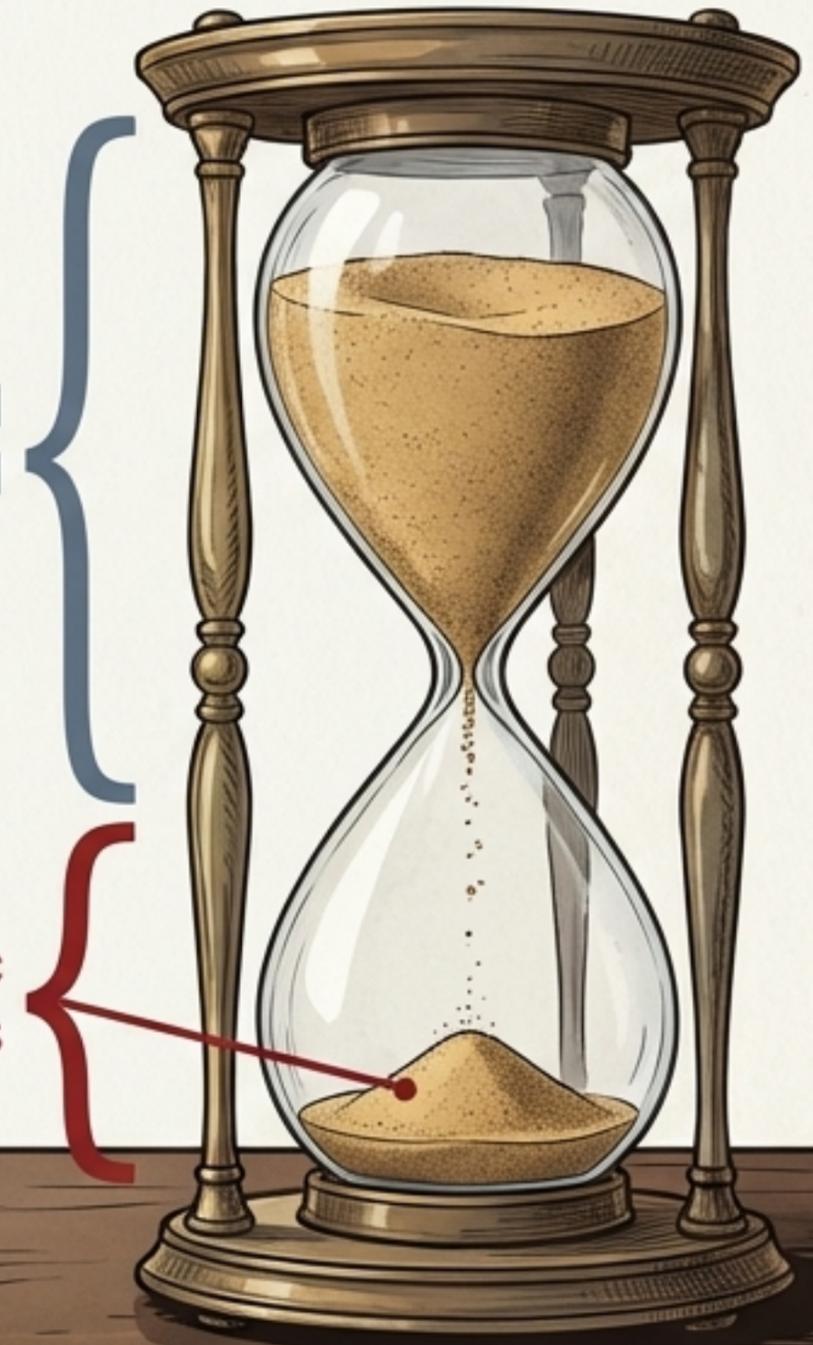
Re-evaluating the “Miraculous” Timeline

A common defense of the **Book of Mormon** is that Joseph Smith, an uneducated farm boy, could not possibly have produced such a complex book in just **65-75 days**.

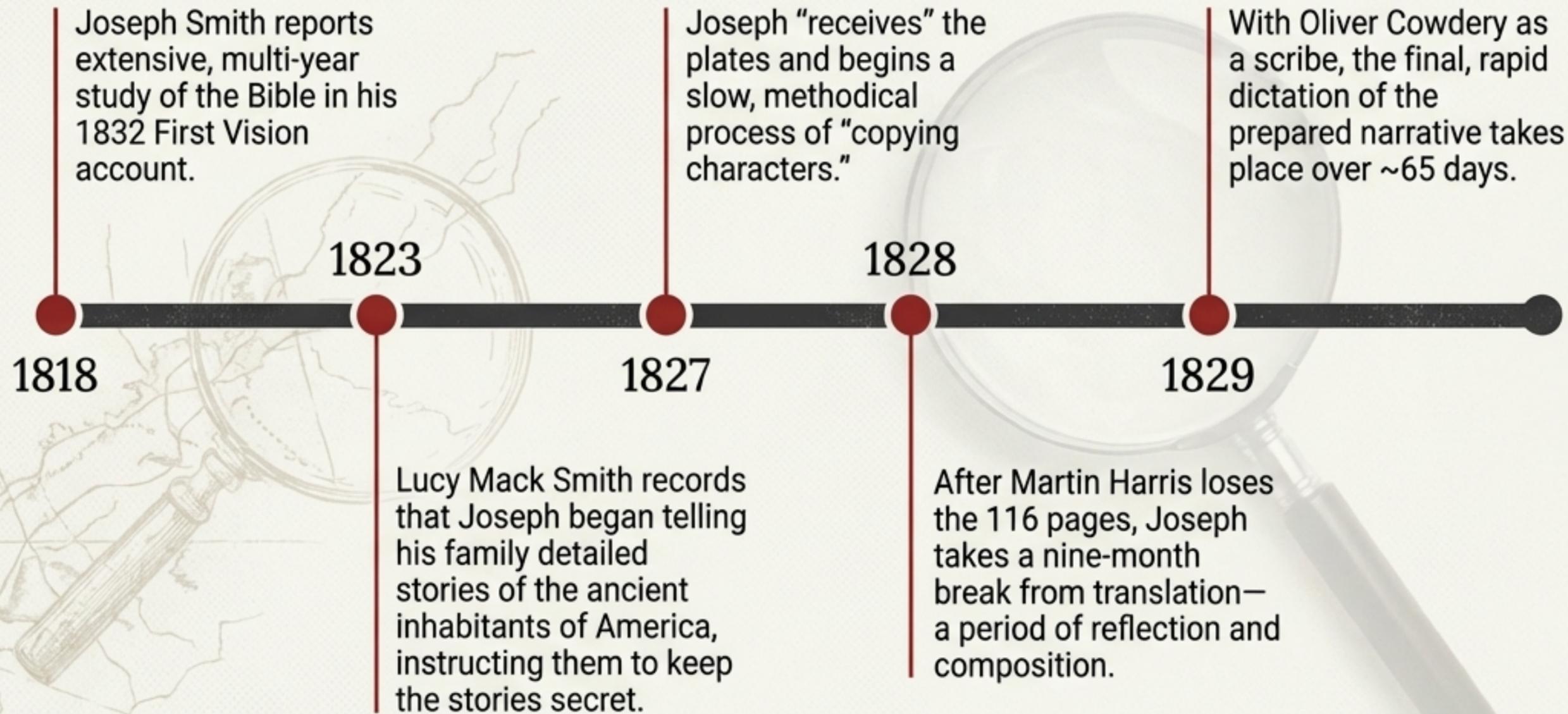
This claim, however, is misleading. It focuses only on the final dictation period, ignoring **years of development and preparation**.

The Unacknowledged Preparation Period

The Apologetic Timeline: 65-75 Days



Not 65 Days, But 11 Years of Composition



The "miracle" was not a creation from nothing, but **the final performance of a story developed over more than a decade.**

An Artifact of Its Time and Place

The investigation for an ancient Book of Mormon finds an empty landscape. An investigation for a 19th-century book finds a world rich with sources, influences, and motives.

- The **archaeology** points to 19th-century New York, not ancient America.
- The **ideas** reflect the popular myths and literary styles of Joseph Smith's day.
- The **theology** evolves in lockstep with its 19th-century author.



*The evidence suggests a straightforward conclusion. As one historian noted, it is not a miracle that Joseph Smith wrote the Book of Mormon; it is that no one **but** Joseph Smith could have written it.*