



# The Book of Mormon's Time Problem

An Investigation into **Anachronisms** and the Book's **Origins**

Based on Mormon Stories Podcast | LDS Discussions, Ep. 1609

# The Keystone of the Faith

The LDS Church has explicitly framed the Book of Mormon as the 'keystone' of its religion. In architecture, if the keystone falls, the entire arch collapses. This presentation examines the evidence within the text itself to test that foundational claim.

*"Either the Book of Mormon is everything it claims to be, or it's the biggest fraud perpetrated on the earth."*

- Gordon B. Hinckley



# The Litmus Test for Authenticity

An anachronism is an item, idea, or event that is out of its proper time period.

A single, verifiable anachronism is enough to prove a document is not historically authentic. It doesn't matter if everything else is correct; one impossible detail reveals its true origin.



It only takes one.

# Level 1: What's in the Text That Shouldn't Be?

The Book of Mormon is filled with animals, plants, and technologies that were common in 19th-century America but are completely absent from the archaeological record of the Americas between 600 BC and 400 AD.

## Animals

-  Horses
-  Cattle
-  Sheep
-  Goats
-  Elephants

## Technology

-  Steel Swords
-  Chariots
-  Metal Smelting
-  Brass Plates

## Crops

-  Wheat
-  Barley

These findings are validated by leading non-Mormon experts, including the late Dr. Michael Coe of Yale University, the world's foremost authority on Mesoamerican archaeology.

# Level 2: What's Missing That Should Be There?

The text is as revealing for what it omits as for what it includes. The author shows no awareness of the actual flora, fauna, and cultural staples that were central to ancient Mesoamerican life during the Book of Mormon time period.

**MISSING**



Indigenous animals central to Mesoamerican diet and cosmology.

**MISSING**



The basis of the Mayan currency system and a vital trade commodity.

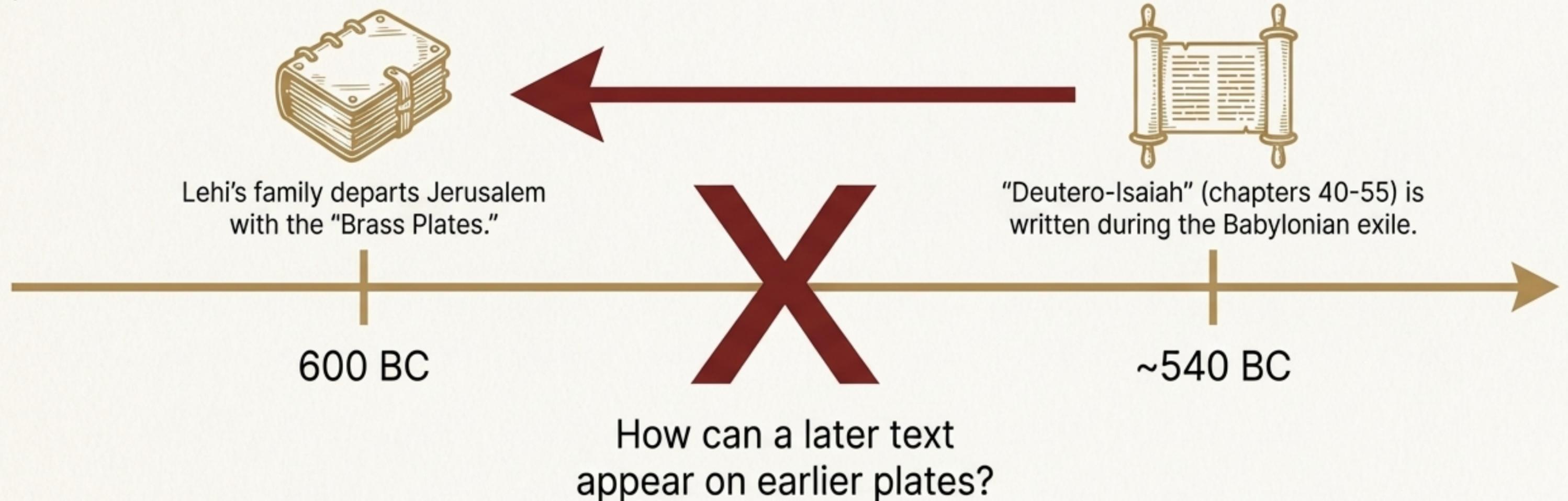
**MISSING**



A functional writing system (Hebrew, Egyptian, or otherwise) among the civilizations described.

# Level 3: Quoting a Book That Didn't Exist Yet

The Book of Mormon quotes extensively from Isaiah chapters 40-55. Modern biblical scholarship confirms these chapters (known as "Deutero-Isaiah") were written by a different author *after* Lehi's family supposedly left Jerusalem in 600 BC with the brass plates.



# An Ancient Text in 17th-Century English

The Book of Mormon contains over 27,000 words copied directly from the 1611 King James Version (KJV) of the Bible. Crucially, it also copies the KJV's unique translation errors. This firmly dates the Book of Mormon's composition to *after* the KJV was published and widely available.

## 3 Nephi 13

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

## Matthew 6

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

# Level 4: A 19th-Century Worldview

The Nephites—supposedly Hebrews preserving their culture—immediately abandon core Jewish customs like Passover and circumcision. Instead, they adopt a belief system that mirrors 19th-century American Protestantism, performing baptisms and preaching about "Jesus Christ" by name, hundreds of years before his birth.



# An Artifact of Impossibility

The "Plates of Brass," a central element of the Book of Mormon's origin story, contains a cluster of anachronisms. Each attribute of the plates points to a modern creation, not an ancient reality.



## Content

Contains the "Five Books of Moses" before scholars agree they were compiled into their final form.



## Language

Written in Egyptian, whereas the source texts were written in Hebrew.



## Format

Bound as a "codex" (book form), a technology not widely used for another 1,000 years. Records were kept on scrolls.



## Physics

The text described would require over 800 metal plates, making them impossibly heavy for one person to carry away.



# The Author's Theological Fingerprint

The Book of Mormon's doctrine is a perfect reflection of Joseph Smith's beliefs at the time of its writing. It contains none of his later, most unique theological developments, which would surely be included in "the fullness of the everlasting Gospel."

## **IN the Book of Mormon (JS Theology, c. 1829)**

- One God (Trinitarian/Binitarian view where Father and Son are one being).
- Standard Protestant concepts like heaven and hell.

## **MISSING from the Book of Mormon (Later JS Theology)**

- Plurality of Gods & Humans becoming Gods.
- Temple Endowments & Eternal Marriage.
- Baptism for the Dead.
- Three Degrees of Glory.
- The Melchizedek Priesthood.

# A Century of Internal Doubt

These are not new concerns invented by modern critics. As early as 1922, LDS General Authority and historian B.H. Roberts secretly compiled a comprehensive study of these and other anachronisms, which he labeled “potentially deadly” problems for the Book of Mormon’s historicity. He presented his findings to the Church’s First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve.

***“[These problems] can’t be set aside by a wave of the hand... they are here to be reckoned with.”***



# Addressing the Defenses: Loan-Shifting

Apologetic responses often require abandoning the book's own claims. For example, "loan-shifting" suggests that when Joseph Smith said "horse," he really meant "tapir." This contradicts the witness accounts of a "tight," word-for-word translation from God via the seer stone.

If the seer stone could provide unique, untranslatable names like "Zarahemla" and "Rameumptom," why couldn't it provide the correct name for an animal?



# The Cumulative Case: Death by a Thousand Cuts

While apologists attempt to explain away individual issues in isolation, the sheer volume and scope of the anachronisms form an

**overwhelming body of evidence.**

The problem isn't one or two discrepancies; it's that the entire textual, theological, and physical fabric of the book points to a single time and place:

**19th-century America.**



# Where the Evidence Leads

The anachronisms are not minor details; they are foundational elements woven into the Book of Mormon's narrative. The combined evidence from archaeology, biblical scholarship, textual analysis, and theology points decisively to a **19th-century origin**. This understanding is essential for informed consent.

## THE CLAIM

An ancient record translated by the gift and power of God.

## THE EVIDENCE

A 19th-century text containing the ideas, language, and worldview of its time.

# Continue Your Own Investigation

This presentation is a summary of a deep and well-documented field of study. For primary sources, in-depth analysis, and to hear directly from experts, please explore these resources.



- **Mormon Stories Podcast:** Anachronisms in the Book of Mormon (Ep. 1609)



- **LDSDiscussions.com:** Comprehensive Essays on Mormon Truth Claims



- **Mormon Stories Podcast:** Interview with Dr. Michael Coe (Yale University)



- **Shannon Caldwell Montez:** Research on B.H. Roberts' Studies of Book of Mormon Problems