Chronological structure and symbolism in the small plates of Nephi

Based on the analysis of year-related expressions
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Table 1: Analytical categories of *Book of Mormon* narratives

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Sets of plates

    The small plates of Nephi

    The plates of Mormon

    The plates of Moroni

Major divisions in the sets of plates

    Books

    Words

Narratives in the major divisions

    Narratives that include year-related expressions

    All other narratives

Table 2: Analytical divisions within *Book of Mormon* narratives

General narrative language

Narrative-links for year-related expressions

     Prepositions = A

     Verbs = B

     Conjunctions

     Participles

     Adverbs = C

Year-terms as the essential components of year-related expressions

     Express singular *year* = D

     Express plural *years* = E

     Implied singular *year*

     A general definition of the noun *year*

          A lengthy interval of time "contrived" by a group of people for their own purposes, measured by the observations or other procedures they have adopted, and modified from time to time as they have seen fit. [Webster 1828: summary]

Table 3: Time-related adjectives

Time-term

> A time in which a year-term did exist, does exist or will exist relative to one or more persons mentioned in the associated narrative

Era names

> The meaning of *era*

> "A system of chronological notation, characterized by the numbering of years from some particular point of time" [Oxford English Dictionary]

Nephite eras

> The "Lehi era" counts years from the time Lehi left Jerusalem

> The "Judges era" counts years from the start of the reign of the judges

> The "NC era" counts years from the sign of the Messiah's birth

Table 4: Synopsis of Nephite era names

The Lehi era

      Long name: "from the time that Lehi left Jerusalem" (Jacob 1:1)

      Short name: "since Lehi left Jerusalem" (3 Nephi 2:6)

      Other name: "from the time Lehi left Jerusalem" (Mosiah 29:46)

      Personalized time: "from the time we left Jerusalem" (2 Nephi 5:28)

The Judges era

      Long name: "of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi" (Alma 1:1)

      Short name: "of the reign of the judges" (Alma 1:33)

      Other name: "of the judges" (Alma 16:9)

      Personalized time: "of the reign of Alma in the judgment seat" (Alma 1:2)

The NC era

      Long name: "since the sign was given of the coming of Christ" (Moroni 10:1)

      Short name: "from the coming of Christ" (3 Nephi 3:1)

      Other name: "from this period which the sign was given or from the coming of Christ" (3 Nephi 2:8)

      Personalized time: "after the coming of Christ" (Words of Mormon 1:2)

Table 5: Optional components of year-related expressions

Time-term

A time in which a year-term did exist, does exist or will exist relative to one or more persons mentioned in the associated narrative

Long name of an era = G

Short name of an era

Other name of an era

Personalized time = H

Omitted time = X

Number-term

A definite or general quantity or quantitative position for a year-term

Ordinal number = O

Cardinal number = P

Referenced number = R

General number = S

Absent number = Z

Table 6: Chronological-expressions and analytical types

Narrative-link types: A = preposition; B = verb; C = adverb

Year-term types: D = express singular *year*; E = express plural *years*

Time-term types: G = long name; H = personalized time; X = omitted time

Number-term types: O = ordinal; P = cardinal; R = referenced; S = general; Z = absent

Text No.	Reference	Chronological-expression	Narrative -link	Year -term	Time -term	Number -term
	First Nephi					
1	1:4	*of* the first year of the reign of Zedekiah, king of Judah	A	D	H	O
2	1:4	*in* that same year	A	D	X	R
3	10:4	*yea*, even six hundred years from the time that my father left Jerusalem	C	E	H	P
4	15:13	*of* many years	A	E	X	S
5	17:4	*of* many years	A	E	X	S
6	17:4	*yea*, even eight years	C	E	X	P
7	17:20	*for* these many years	A	E	X	R
8	17:21	these many years … *have suffered*	B	E	X	R
9	18:17	*in* years	A	E	X	Z
10	19:8	*in* six hundred years from the time my father left Jerusalem	A	E	H	P
11	22:26	*of* many years	A	E	X	S
	Second Nephi					
12	5:28	thirty years *had passed …* from the time we left Jerusalem	B	E	H	P
13	5:34	forty years *had passed*	B	E	X	P
14	16:1	*In* the year that king Uzziah died	A	D	H	R
15	17:8	*within* threescore and five years	A	E	X	P
16	24:28	*In* the year that king Ahaz died	A	D	H	R
17	25:19	*in* six hundred years from the time that my father left Jerusalem	A	E	H	P
	Jacob					
18	1:1	fifty and five years *had passed …* from the time that Lehi left Jerusalem	B	E	G	P
19	4:4	*had …* many hundred years before his coming	B	E	H	R
20	7:1	some years *had passed*	B	E	X	S
21	7:7	*shall come* many hundred years hence	B	E	H	R
	Enos					
22	1:8	many years *pass …* before he shall manifest himself in the flesh	B	E	H	S
23	1:25	an hundred and seventy and nine years *had passed …* from the time that our father Lehi left Jerusalem	B	E	H	P
	Jarom					
24	1:5	two hundred years *had passed*	B	E	X	P
25	1:13	two hundred and thirty and eight years *had passed*	B	E	X	P
	Omni					
26	1:3	two hundred and seventy and six years *had passed*	B	E	X	P
27	1:3	two hundred and eighty and two years *had passed*	B	E	X	P
28	1:5	three hundred and twenty years *had passed*	B	E	X	P
	Words of Mormon					
29	1:2	*is* many hundred years after the coming of Christ	B	E	H	R

Table 7: Year-term letter patterns in the small plates of Nephi

Year-term types: D = express singular *year*; E = express plural *years*

Letter-sets in the major divisions:

First Nephi	(D)	1:4
	(E)	10:4; 15:13; 17:4, 20-21; 18:17; 19:8; 22:6
Second Nephi	(E)	5:28, 34
	(D)	16:1
	(E)	17:8
	(D)	24:28
	(E)	25:19
Jacob	(E)	1:1; 4:4; 7:1, 7
Enos	(E)	1:8, 25
Jarom	(E)	1:5, 13
Omni	(E)	1:3, 5
Words	(E)	1:2

Letter-group in the small plates: (DEDEDE)

Table 8: Narrative-link letter patterns in the small plates of Nephi

Narrative-link types: A = preposition; B = verb; C = adverb

Letter-sets in the major divisions:

First Nephi	(A)	1:4
	(C)	10:4
	(A)	15:13; 17:4
	(C)	17:4
	(A)	17:20
	(B)	17:21
	(A)	18:17; 19:8; 22:6
Second Nephi	(B)	5:28, 34
	(A)	16:1; 17:8; 24:28; 25:19
Jacob	(B)	1:1; 4:4; 7:1, 7
Enos	(B)	1:8, 25
Jarom	(B)	1:5, 13
Omni	(B)	1:3, 5
Words	(B)	1:2

Letter-groups in the small plates: (ACACA) (BABAB)

Table 9: Time-term letter patterns in the small plates of Nephi

Time-term types: G = long name; H = personalized time; X = omitted time

Letter-sets in the major divisions:

First Nephi	(H)	1:4
	(X)	1:4
	(H)	10:4
	(X)	15:13; 17:4, 20-21; 18:17
	(H)	19:8
	[X]	22:6
Second Nephi	(H)	5:28
	(X)	5:34
	(H)	16:1
	(X)	17:8
	(H)	24:28; 25:19
Jacob	(G)	1:1
	(H)	4:4
	(X)	7:1
	(H)	7:7
Enos	(H)	1:8, 25
Jarom	(X)	1:5, 13
Omni	(X)	1:3, 5
Words	(H)	1:2

Letter-groups and -sets in the small plates: ((HXHXH)[X](HXHXH)) (G) (HXHXH)

Reversible letter-group: the letter pattern is the same whether read forward or backward

Balanced letter-group: the number of letter-sets on either side of the central letter-set is the same

Table 10: Number-term letter patterns in the small plates of Nephi

Number-term types: O = ordinal; P = cardinal; R = referenced; S = general; Z = absent

Letter-sets in the major divisions:

First Nephi	(O)	1:4
	(R)	1:4
	(P)	10:4
	(S)	15:13; 17:4
	(P)	17:4
	[R]	17:20-21
	'Z'	18:17
	(P)	19:8
	(S)	22:6
Second Nephi	(P)	5:28, 34
	(R)	16:1
	(P)	17:8
	(R)	24:28
	(P)	25:19
Jacob	(P)	1:1
	(R)	4:4
	(S)	7:1
	(R)	7:7
Enos	(S)	1:8
	(P)	1:25
Jarom	(P)	1:5, 13
Omni	(P)	1:3, 5
Words	(R)	1:2

Letter-groups and -set in the small plates: (O) ((R)(PSP)[R](PSP)(R)) (PRP) (RSR) (SPR)

Table 11: Era and number contexts in the small plates of Nephi

Era contexts

      Combine era names into semantic groups for the eras

      Identify the specific events when years in the eras began to be numbered

      Symbolize chronological settings for *Book of Mormon* narratives

Number contexts

      Combine number names into numerical sets that have Set-sums

      Identify specific astronomical or calendrical intervals that were numbered

      Symbolize chronological settings for *Book of Mormon* narratives

Table 12: Chronological symbolism in First and Second Nephi

Example 1:   All definite number names (1 Nephi 1:4; 10:4; 17:4; 19:8)

Set of cardinal numbers: 1, 1, 600, 8, 600

Set-sum: 1+1+600+8+600 = 1,210

41 average synodical months: 1,210.7541 days

Example 2:   All definite number names and larger, computed, referenced number names
(1 Nephi 1:4; 10:4; 17:4; 17:20-21; 19:8)

Set of cardinal numbers: 1, 1, 600, 8, 10, 10, 600

Set-sum: 1+1+600+8+10+10+600 = 1,230

45 average sidereal months: 1,229.4747 days

Example 3:   All definite number names that occur with personalized time-terms
(1 Nephi 1:4; 10:4; 19:8; 2 Nephi 5:28; 25:19)

Set of cardinal numbers: 1, 600, 600, 30, 600

Set-sum: 1+600+600+30+600 = 1,831

62 average synodical months: 1,830.8965 days

67 average sidereal months: 1,830.5512 days

Example 4:   All definite number names (2 Nephi 5:28, 34; 17:8; 25:19)

Set of cardinal numbers: 30, 40, 65, 600

Set-sum: 30+40+65+600 = 735 = (2x365) +5

Egyptian and Mesoamerican "vague" solar years: each 360+5 days

Example 5:   All definite number names and stated, referenced number names in brass plates
(2 Nephi 5:28, 34; 16:1; 17:8; 24:28; 25:19; 2 Kings 15:2; 16:2)

Set of cardinal numbers: 30, 40, 52, 65, 16, 600

Set-sum: 30+40+52+65+16+600 = 803 = (2x365) +73

Mesoamerican "vague" solar year: 5x73 = 365 days

Mesoamerican synodic period of Venus: 8x73 = 584 days

Mesoamerican "Calendar Round": 52x365 = 73x260 = 18,980 days

Example 6:   All cardinal number names that occur with omitted time-terms
(2 Nephi 5:34; 17:8)

Set of cardinal numbers: 40, 65

Set-sum: 40+65 = 105 = 365-260

Mesoamerican "vague" solar year: each 260+105 days