Addressing the Evidence for the LDS Church

I wanted to address the evidence out there that is in favor of the LDS church. It turns out that someone has already searched through the writings of Jeff Lindsay, Dan Peterson, and other apologists, and compiled a list of such evidence, found at ldssmile.com: 44 Reasons Why The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is True. Similar lists can be and have been produced for other churches (ex: Catholics, Seventh-day Adventists, and Muslims).

This document is meant to be a companion piece to the The Mormon Challenge (page numbers given here refer to that version). As I have already addressed some of the 44 reasons in that edition, and for the sake of brevity, I won't be re-addressing those points (hence the gaps in the numbering). In doing it this way, I hope to encourage the reader to read both documents, and not just this one. In a few instances here, I rely on critics of church. I will discuss some of those sources as needed.

3) Nahom – Was it just blind luck that the rare place name Nahom in the Book of Mormon, identified as the place where Ishmael was buried, turns out to correspond to an ancient burial site right where the Book of Mormon says it is? Jeff Lindsay

As far as the word goes, Joseph could easily have gotten the name Nahom from the book of Nahum in the Bible. This is rather a moot point.

It is true that after scanning place names and words throughout the general region south-southeast of Jerusalem for about 1600 miles, apologists have found the word NHM carved onto altars, which could match the Book of Mormon location Nahom. As it turns out, the origin of NHM has been found (according to Jeff Lindsay's site). NHM was not originally Nahom. In Lehi's time, it was originally Nihm, the name of a tribe. The word Nihm eventually became NHM, and we can't now say that NHM comes from the word Nahom. The article revisits this in #28.

The current name of the location is Nehem. One exmormon recounts his time visiting the site as a believing Mormon. It is continued on the next page.

> "I did my undergraduate studies in the Middle East. I speak Arabic. I lived in Yemen. I visited several of the the so-called "NHM" sites while I was still an active/believing member, including sites near Marib like the Bar'an temple, Jidran and Ruwaiq mountains, among other ruins in the region and all over the country, as well as sites in Oman like Dhalkuut.

I was excited to visit these places and see them for myself as they constituted what is literally the only piece of supposed evidence for Book of Mormon historicity. What I found was pretty underwhelming, nothing at all like what is described, and somewhat faith shattering. This video grossly misrepresents the NHM “evidence,” to the point of deception, leveraging sensationalism and sound effects to construct pseudoevidence.

Short version, point by point, every single "correlation" in this video is misrepresented.

Nehem is NOT a burial site, it's a vast mountain range. And the ruins referenced in the video are in a completely different location that is NOT in Nehem. Moreover the ruins themselves are not at a specific site, but scattered all over the place, thousands of such sites, all over the country. Going back to Nehem, it doesn't match with the text of the BOM, which describes them as following a path along the coast of the Red Sea. About 140 miles of impassable mountain range separates Nehem from the coast.

To put this in context, this is what the area looks like: http://bit.ly/2s3WAOQ

BOM doesn't say anything about turning east and passing through 140 miles of nasty mountains before getting to Nahom. It says they turned east AFTER getting to Nahom, suggesting it would be near the coast somewhere. I really can't emphasize enough how nasty the Nehem area is. Lehi slept in a tent? Good luck hauling tents over those mountains. Zero sense for a long list of reasons. Go over there and see Nehem for yourself, of all potential places for them to travel to, it is literally the worst! An impossible location.

And then getting into the language, the H and M characters in Nehem the place DO NOT match with the NHM on the altars, nor do they match with the NHM in the hebrew word "nacham" that's being referenced as a potential "word play" with the word "mourn" in the text of the BOM. There are about 4 distinct arabic letters/sounds which get clumsily described as H in English, but in the original language these are distinct letters as different as A and Z. The word "nachom" in hebrew is completely different than "nahom." Just as different as "nazom".

So you have some burial sites, literally thousands of them scattered all over the country, everywhere, found a tombstone at one location (not in Nehem) which bears the 3 characters NHM (which also don’t match the NHM characters used in the place name Nehem), and the Nehem location is completely at odds with the BOM text in terms of terrain and geography, but somehow all this is a correlation?”

mormondiscussions.com

4) Scriptures Written on Gold Plates – “What is more, although the Prophet’s critics found his claim of angelic visits and gold plates ridiculous, we now know that the writing of religious texts on metal plates (sometimes on gold), was an authentic ancient practice. Indeed, the ancient practice now is known to have occurred at precisely the era and place from which Book of Mormon peoples came. In fact, with the Copper Scroll and other materials from the Dead Sea, we have an almost exact parallel: like the ancient Nephite plates, these materials were sealed up in a hillside just prior to military disaster, to preserve them for a future time.” – LDS.org

As written, this point makes it seem like metal plates were unique to 600 B.C. Israel. If you read the source that lds.org provides, metal plates sometimes date back to 2900 B.C. or earlier, and ranged from Europe to Far East Asia, thus spanning millennia and continents. It is difficult to know how many of these plates were found before 1823. Joseph did not need to hear about them, as the idea is intuitive, hence the pervasiveness of the practice. What would be well-preserved for a long time? Metal. A few things are certain:

A) The idea of enscribing words into a plate of gold is found in the Bible, though it should be emphasized that it is a single plate:

> Exodus 39:30 – "And they made the plate of the holy crown of pure gold, and wrote upon it a writing, like to the engravings of a signet, AHOLINESS TO THE LORD."

B) Joseph moved to the Palmyra area in 1816. In 1821, "plates of brass" made the front page of a Palmyra newspaper, among other artifacts dug up in the Erie Canal. The paper loosely classified the artifacts, presuming that some were aboriginal and that the plates of brass were possibly European. From the front page of the Sept. 19, 1821 edition of *Western Farmer*, a Palmyra newspaper:

> "At a point 11 miles west of Schenectady, in the town of Florida, several curious things have been disinterred : partly aboriginal and partly European. To the former belong the following articles : Human Skeletons … Teeth … Arrowheads…. Under the latter head may be classed certain other things recently found, such as … the blade of a large knife … several plates of brass, which probably belonged to cartouch boxes."
>
> fultonhistory.com/newspapers/Palmyra Western Farmer pic

C) According to the gospel topics essay, Joseph "used a seer stone to look for lost objects and buried treasure." He or any of his treasure-seeking friends would have seen this front page article of their town's newspaper and become excited by it. As demonstrated on p. 25 of The Mormon Challenge, Joseph was inclined to one-up the acts of others. How do you one-up plates of brass? Golden plates? The plates of brass in the article may have referred to something more akin to dinner plates, but as the article does not specify, readers may have assumed otherwise.

7) River Laman – How does one account for the recent discovery of a plausible candidate for the River Laman, continuously flowing into the Red Sea as the Book of Mormon indicates, in spite of the repeated claims of critics that no such river exists? Reference

Minor rivers do flow into the Red Sea. Rivers usually accompany valleys, providing potential matches. The critics were wrong.

8) Reform Egyptian – "The Book of Mormon claims to have been written in "reformed Egyptian" (Morm. 9:32). Most who have studied the subject conclude that this signifies writing the Hebrew language in modified Egyptian characters. In recent years, we have learned that several ancient documents were written in precisely that fashion." – LDS.org

This point is misleading from what has actually been found. Here is the source. I will respond in three parts.

A) – Hebrew scripture:

In most of the cases mentioned by the source, the Semitic writings in Egyptian involved magical incantations, or simply used Egyptian numbers. In other cases, a few *secular* texts have been found in south Israel which intermingled the two scripts, which are both still recognizable as Hebrew and Egyptian (this is important). The only mentioned case where Hebrews recorded their *holy word* in Egyptian involved a paganized version of a psalm, which was found in Egypt, dating to the 2nd century B.C.

The Israelites were extremely nationalist, especially when it came to their religion, and wrote their scripture in Hebrew. Their nationalism took a heavy blow after their removal from Jerusalem (after Lehi's time), after which Aramaic eventually became prevalent (jewishencyclopedia.com). Note that the pagan psalm was written centuries after the Jews were taken captive. If the writers of that text lived in Egypt and paganized a psalm, would they have cared about not writing their holy scripture in Hebrew?

In contrast, Lehi and his family had orthodox beliefs. Hebrew is already a condensed script, with no vowels present. It is a stretch to say that orthodox Israelites wrote in the script of their enemies for the purpose of brevity. Not only their script, but Nephi specifies that they are writing in the language of their

enemies. “Language” is a broader term than “writing,” or “letters.” It would be strange for Nephi to say “language,” and to not mean the actual words of the Egyptian language. If we were to say, “Let’s do our report in the language of Arabic,” we would mean Arabic words, not English words in Arabic letters.

In addition, not only are the Nephites writing in Egyptian, but the Book of Mormon claims that a great compilation of Jewish scripture in pre-captivity Jerusalem itself – the brass plates – were written in the language of the Egyptians, their enemies (Mosiah 1:4). This is still extremely unlikely.

B) – The Letters:

The source tries to equate reformed Egyptian with the modified Egyptian characters known as the demotic script, which was a cursive form of Egyptian writing which dates back to the early 7th century B.C. Or perhaps the source is implying that if one group could modify Egyptian, another could as well.

As to a direct relation between the demotic script and the Book of Mormon script, we have examples of both. We have the Book of Mormon letters in an 1844 church-sponsored advertisement for the Book of Mormon, and in a copy of the Anthon transcript, which matches the characters in the advertisement. From Encyclopedia of Mormonism, regarding that copy:

> “Even if the document is not the original, it almost certainly represents characters either copied from the plates in Joseph Smith's possession or copied from the document carried by Harris.”
>
> byu.edu

No connection or resemblance has been found between those characters and Egyptian hieroglyphics, including demotic. For example:

> “I have to say that I am at a loss to see any conceivable connection with hieroglyphics (or even with Demotic, for that matter).”
>
> ciphermysteries.com

The source is not LDS, but in no case can one find any LDS scholar claiming that there is a connection between those characters and either Hebrew or Egyptian.

Not only is the lack of connection a problem for the theory in point 8, it is also problematic for the truth claims of the LDS church. We can trace our letters back millenia. For example, the source of many of our letters can easily be seen in this Greek papyrus from 2400 years ago (the Greek papyrus at the end of the webpage). We don't know from which portion of the Book of Mormon text the characters came, but even if it was Mormon's writings and not Nephi's, it is unreasonable to assume that the scrupulous record-keeping Nephites altered their script beyond recognition between Mormon's and Nephi's time. It is also unreasonable to require someone to believe that Nephi, or the Jews with the brass plates, who knew what Egyptian looked like, would then come up with letters bearing no resemblance to Egyptian and call them Reformed Egyptian.

C) – Why Reformed Egyptian?

As implied elsewhere, someone undertaking the task of fabricating the Book of Mormon would, in all likelihood, do some amount of research. Joseph Smith knew of Dr. Samuel Mitchell, as Joseph sent the "Anthon characters" to him (History of the Church, Volume 1, page 20). *Archaeologia Americana* was an 1820 publication which published some of Dr. Mitchell's ideas. *View of the Hebrews* also refers to the book. If Joseph were to peruse *Archaeologia Americana*, he'd find references on pages 253, 256, 259, 340, 349, and 350 that ancient Americans wrote in hieroglyphics, a word which has always been very strongly associated with ancient Egyptian writing. If Joseph was trying to make his work fit with such references, he might have claimed that his ancient Americans used a writing derived from Egyptian hieroglyphs. In addition, Dr. Mitchell, in *Archaeologia Americana*, speculates that the human race came from the Americas. Joseph Smith taught that the Garden of Eden was in Missouri.

10) Pace of Translation – "The title page of the Book of Mormon declares that it was to come forth "by the gift and power of God." Recent evidence and scholarship indicates that this is exactly what would have had to happen. In addition, the evidence indicates that the translation and dictation of the book were accomplished in roughly 63 working days—a torrid pace that, with neither rewrites nor corrections, produced nearly 8.5 pages (of our current English edition) daily." – LDS.org

FAIR gives 14 months between the first manuscript and the end of translation, and that was several years after the coming book was first mentioned. This provides ample opportunity for Joseph to become familiar with the story to the point where he could dictate it. The apologists insist that the book was dictated word-for-word, and if Joseph's seer stone story *were* true, *this would be the case*. However, a word-for-word dictation makes the textual errors more problematic.

One possible version of events: Joseph produced a rough draft beforehand (and in producing it, or co-producing it, he became intimately familiar with it). When scribes or witnesses were present who weren't in on it (probably everyone except Oliver, though others have been persuaded to lie for him before), he used the seer stone to make a show of receiving divine aid. During these times, he dictated it semi-accurately, while being particular about the wording here and there (hence the evidence of it being a word-for-word dictation), brushing up on the story between sessions (Note: while apologists have to stick with the word-for-word seer stone theory, other people don't). When it was he and Oliver alone, gifted with an empty house, they could use the rough draft for transcription, with Joseph reading aloud while Oliver wrote. Some sections would have been more difficult to memorize (2 Nephi). These sections could have been produced during their alone times. In fact, 1 and 2 Nephi were likely written at the end of the whole process (deseretnews.com), during which time Oliver was the main scribe. Joseph could also have been reading from a manuscript when there was a curtain between himself and Martin Harris. His ability to do all of this will be discussed in #11.

Is the author of the article implying that the the original was never corrected? This goes against the fact that there were major grammar mistakes removed from almost every chapter. There are still contradictions and other mistakes in the text.

Dan Peterson and Royal Sousen indicate that Joseph did not know what the upcoming text was going to be as he was dictating (which would be evidence that there was no rough draft). They base this on the fact that in the original manuscript, Joseph orignally wrote "Chapter" at the beginning of 2 Nephi. "Chapter" was crossed out and "2 Nephi" was written in. To them, this is evidence that Joseph did not know that he had reached a new book. A simple alternate explanation is that after the "Amen" in 1 Nephi 22, Oliver assumed they had reached a new chapter and wrote "Chapter" out of habit, and was corrected.

They wonder why Joseph spelled words out loud, speculating that he couldn't pronounce certain names. Joseph's spelling out of words could have been for the sake of the scribe.

They bring up how Joseph asked Emma if Jerusalem had walls. They use this as evidence that Joseph didn't know enough to compose the Book of Mormon. The Bible mentions twenty times that Jerusalem has walls. In their example, Joseph tells Emma, "O, I thought I was deceived." Why would Joseph think that he was deceived by the words appearing on the stone? Early church leaders really emphasized how unlearned Joseph was. Was Joseph trying to play up such a role? In any case, Emma's account was given fifty years after the fact, as will be discussed in the next point.

11) Joseph Being Unlearned – Further, there is no evidence at all that Joseph Smith did any scholarly research, or even that he read very much, before the Book of Mormon appeared [A]. In fact, he may not even have owned a Bible at the time of translation [B]. Joseph Smith had spent the bulk of his time as a youth cutting trees, burning brush, clearing rocks, and plowing [C]. He had received at most a few months of formal schooling [D]. His mother later recalled that, even into his late teens, "he seemed much less inclined to the perusal of books than any of the rest of our children [E].

His wife Emma reports that, in the late 1820s, Joseph 'could neither write nor dictate a coherent and well worded letter, let alone dictate a book like the Book of Mormon. … The larger part of this labor [of translation] was done [in] my presence and where I could see and know what was being done. … During no part of it did Joseph Smith have any [manuscripts] or book of any kind from which to read or dictate except the metalic [sic] plates which I knew he had.' 'If,' she said, 'he had had anything of the kind he could not have concealed it from me.' [F]

And, she added, writing to her son: '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 would 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.' [G]

I've added the letters A-G to the above paragraphs as reference points. I won't respond to them in that exact order, but I'll indicate when evidence or points I present has bearing on one of those individual points.

D) It is true that Joseph had a few months of formal schooling. Outside of that, his father was a teacher, as told by Lucy Mack Smith. In other words, Joseph probably had informal schooling. From Lucy's journal:

> "[W]e took our 3 oldest children went to Sharon and hired a farm of my father which My husband cultivated in the summer season and in the winter he taught school …"
>
> ~Lucy Mack Smith, 1811
>
> josephsmithpapers.org - Luck Mack Smith History

There is a confirmation of sorts that Joseph was homeschooled. From an interview with one of Joseph's neighbors, published in the Millennial Star:

> "Joe was quite illiterate. After they began to have school in their house, he improved greatly."
>
> books.google.com - Millennial Star, Volume 44

William McLellin, an apostle who left the church, gave an account of Joseph's intelligence. Though written later in his life, McLellin was involved with the Whitmerites and Strangites. As these groups still believe in the Book of Mormon, it is unlikely that McLellin was trying to discredit the book with this quote:

> "[Joseph] attended my High school during the winter of 1834. He attended my school and learned science all winter. I learned the strength of his mind as <to> the study and principles of science. Hence I think I knew him. And I here say that he had one of <the> strongest, well balanced, penetrating, and retentive minds of any <man> with which <whom> I ever formed an acquaintance, among the thousands of my observation. Although when I took him into my school, he was without scientific knowledge or attainments."
>
> deseretnews.com

E) As far as Lucy's given quote goes, that Joseph wasn't as inclined to the perusal of books, the author leaves out the rest of her quote, that Joseph was far more given to deep study than the rest of her children (as opposed to simple "perusal").

C) Perhaps Joseph's parents were well aware of his whereabouts during his youth. During his twenties, Joseph seemed to have plenty of time for treasure-seeking ventures. Who can say how else he spent his time?

A) There is no direct evidence that Joseph did scholarly research, but there is evidence that he was able to do so, and that the requisite sources were, or could have been, around him. We learn from a *BYU Studies* article that there were libraries and booksores in Joseph's vicinity:

> "Moreover, if Joseph had wished to explore the literary materials of the day, it would have been unnecessary to travel the five miles to Manchester when in Palmyra, only two miles distant, there were several bookstores and at least one library, the contents of which he would have been free to peruse. . . . As early as 1819, and occasionally thereafter, book auctions were held in Palmyra. . . . The availability of bookstores and libraries in Palmyra, together with the fact that the Smith family regularly obtained the Palmyra Register and later the Wayne Sentinel from the newspaper office which doubled as a bookstore, would have mitigated the need to travel nearly three times the distance to acquire literary materials from the Manchester area"
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> byustudies.byu.edu

On page 83 of a pro-Mormon book, *Science, Religion, and Mormon Cosmology*, we learn that "the contents of these various libraries are no longer preserved."

Through various Palmyra newspapers, we have insight into some of the books and ideas in Joseph's direct vicinity. In *The Changing World of Mormonism*, Jerald and Sandra Tanner, critics of the church, have informed us of the following (page numbers refer to their work, given here). Note: going back to the *BYU Studies* article, the Smith family regularly obtained the *Wayne Sentinel* newspaper.

> P. 112: "According to the Wayne Sentinel (January 26, 1825 edition), the Westminster Confession and Catechisms was being sold at the Wayne Bookstore." Note: As shown on page 38 of the Mormon Challenge (extended edition), this work appears to have directly influenced the theology in the Book of Mormon.
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> p. 126: "An article published in the Palmyra Herald on February 19, 1823, said that one group of people might have 'crossed the Pacific Ocean, and made settlements in North America' and that the 'descendants of Japheth might afterwards cross the Atlantic, and subjugate' the first group. The article goes on to state: 'What wonderful catastrophe destroyed at once the first inhabitants, with the species of the mammoth, is beyond the researches of the best scholar and greatest antiquarian.'" Note: Such a passage could have sparked Joseph's imagination in regards to the story of the Nephites or especially the Jaredites.
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> "Furthermore, the following was published in the Wayne Sentinel on October 11, 1825: 'Those who are most conversant with the public and private economy of the Indians, are strongly of opinion that they are the lineal descendants of the Israelites, and my own researches go far to confirm me in the same belief' (Wayne Sentinel, October 11, 1825, as photographically reprinted in Larry Jonas, Mormon Claims Examined, p.45)."
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> p. 482 "The Wayne Sentinel—a newspaper printed in the neighborhood where Joseph Smith grew up— published these statements concerning tobacco three years before Joseph Smith gave the Word of Wisdom: 'It is really surprising that a single individual could be found, who, after experiencing the distressing sensations almost invariably produced by the first use of tobacco, would be willing to risk their recurrence a second time: ... Tobacco is, in fact, an absolute poison ...'"

B) In both the Joseph Smith History and in his 1832 vision account, Joseph talks about searching and studying the scriptures. So, whether or not Joseph owned a Bible, he did have access to one. Perhaps he borrowed whatever Bible he studied out of as a teenager. It is also likely that the Palmyra library contained one.

F) Emma Smith's assertion that Joseph could not dictate a well-worded letter was given 50 years after the fact (see footnote 5 of the LDS essay). As she was involved with the RLDS church, her statement could be inherently biased. For example, she says that Joseph "could neither write nor dictate a coherent and well worded letter." In this letter, written by Joseph Smith in 1829, we see that her statement wasn't entirely accurate. Even if Emma was correct, the 1830 Edition of the Book of Mormon wasn't exactly well-worded, as there were major grammar mistakes in almost every chapter. It should be noted that both in the above letter, and in the 1830 Edition of the Book of Mormon, we find the *same* poor English grammar: "a going," instead of "going."

In that same interview, Emma blatantly lies about polygamy. If she lied here, is it possible she stretched the truth about other matters that were in her interest? Her son, Joseph Smith III, was the leader of the RLDS church, which held to the Book of Mormon just as strongly as their counterparts in Utah.

> Q. What about the revelation on polygamy? Did Joseph Smith have anything like it? What of spiritual wifery?
>
> A [(Emma)]. There was no revelation on either polygamy, or spiritual wives. There were some rumors or something of the sort, of which I asked my husband. He assured me that all there was to it was that, in a chat about plural wives, he had said, "Well, such a system might possibly be, if everybody was agreed to it, and would behave as they should; but they would not; and besides, it was contrary to the will of heaven." No such thing as polygamy, or spiritual wifery, was taught, publicly or privately, before my husband's death, that I have now, or ever had, any knowledge of.
>
> Q. Did he not have other wives than yourself?
>
> A. He had no other wife but me; nor did he to my knowledge ever have….
>
> Q. Was there nothing about spiritual wives that you recollect?
>
> A. At one time my husband came to me and asked me if I had heard certain rumors about spiritual marriages, or anything of the kind; and assured me that if I had, that they were without foundation; that there was no such doctrine, and should never be with his knowledge, or consent. I know that he had no other wife or wives than myself, in any sense, either spiritual or otherwise.
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> centerplace.org (RLDS website, part of the quote is also chronicled by FAIR)

G) As far as Joseph picking up right where he left off, Emma didn't keep the pages hidden from Joseph. He could have looked at them before the new session, or he could have simply remembered where they had left off. Again, the source for this information is less than completely reliable.

Summary) Though Joseph had years to work on the story, his dictation in the presence of witnesses (if they can be trusted) is still an impressive feat. Humanity has a long list of remarkable achievements, and given the following, it is quite possible for someone to deliver a story with which they are familiar.

- Brian Greene: could multiply 30-digit numbers at age 5.
- Truman Henry Safford: could square 18 digit numbers at age 10.
- Gregory R. Smith: entered college at age 10, first nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize at age 12.
- Kim Ung-Yong: took physics at a university age 4, Ph.D in physics by age 11.
- Chao Lu: recounted pi to 67,890 digits from memory at age 23.
- Sho Yano: started college at age 9, graduated summa cum laude at age 12.
- Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart: first musical compositions at age 5.

People in others faiths also claim their books are beyond explanation. The Qu'ran:

"The central miracle of Islam was, and remains the Quranic revelation. To this day no one has put forward a defensible explanation of how an unlettered caravan merchant of the early seventh century might have been able, by his own devices, to produce a text of such inimitable beauty, of such capacity to stir emotion, and which contained knowledge and wisdom which stood so far above ideas current among mankind at that time. The studies carried out in the West which try to determine the 'sources used by Muhammad', or to bring to light the psychological phenomenon which enabled him to draw inspiration from his 'subconcious', have demonstrated only one thing; the anti- Muslim prejudice of their authors."

twf.org, Roger du Pasquier, Unveiling Islam, pg 53

"How words do such task with a whole book, literary masterpiece, historical document, religious and philosophical scripture, ethical code, and judicial compendium, is unreal. Colossal complexity of such task is unimaginable. Human intellect, especially in the 7th century, is simply not fit for such task. It would take supercomputer technologies to calculate data of such magnitude. It is not without reason that Quran challenges humanity to produce a book like this…. So far, the challenge has not been accepted, and no one has been able to refute the mathematical miracle of the Quran. Will you dare."

youtube.com at 5:48-6:39:

"How would an illiterate man 1400 years ago give us pinpoint accurate scientific description that could only be seen in the electronic microscope 60 years ago. Dr. Keith Morsett I have no doubt that this is the creator of Man, God, revealing that to Prophet Muhammad. Peace be upon him."

"Descriptions of the human embryo in the Qu'ran cannot be based on scientfic knowledge in the 7th century. The only reasonable conclusion is that these descriptions were revealed to the prophet Muhammad from God."

youtube.com at 7:45-8:15

Surah 10:37-38 from the Qur'an challenges anyone to produce a like work.

> Surah 10:37 – "And it was not [possible] for this Qur'an to be produced by other than Allah , but [it is] a confirmation of what was before it and a detailed explanation of the [former] Scripture, about which there is no doubt, from the Lord of the worlds."
>
> Surah 10:38 – "Or do they say [about the Prophet], 'He invented it?' Say, 'Then bring forth a surah like it and call upon [for assistance] whomever you can besides Allah , if you should be truthful.'"

About the Urantia Book:

> "So generally, let's say it's a mysterious process, and there were many parts of it. , there was materializations, very likely, and some combinations of these where people did automatic writing, but the text itself is not a product of automatic writing, and if you examine the literary quality of this, and I'm an editor and a book publisher, it's impossible for somebody to channel something with perfect grammar and perfect use of vocabulary that's consistent for 2,000 pages. It just can't happen. It can't come through the human mind that way. So that's why most of us consider it to be sort of a miraculous appearance."
>
> youtube.com at 9:52-10:33

12) Sacred Texts – How did Joseph Smith know about ancient practices regarding preservation of sacred texts?

This is a repetition of number 4. If any new concept is implied here, perhaps the author is referring to cases, like at the Hill Cumorah, where artifacts have been found in stone boxes. The concept is also intuitive. People hiding stuff underground in boxes, chests, etc. for preservation is a worldwide practice. If someone wants the box to last longer, for better preservation, make it out of something which lasts longer, such as stone.

13) Different Authors – "In recent years, rigorous statistical analysis strongly indicates that neither Joseph Smith nor any of his known associates composed the English text of the Book of Mormon. In fact, research suggests that the book was written by numerous distinct authors" – LDS.org

Did Joseph write it alone? Even if he wrote it alone, if he is borrowing from Jonathan Edwards here and some other unpublished minister there, or Paul here and Isaiah there, it would only make sense that different portions have differing styles. Some people's styles also change given the day and their current mood.

14) Moses – Why do other ancient documents support the Book of Mormon's idea that the ancient Joseph prophesied of Moses and Aaron? – Jeff Lindsay

A) In the same chapter, Genesis 50, Joseph Smith adds himself and his father into an Old Testament passage (v. 33). This is the same prophecy he refers to in 2 Nephi 2, in which he compares his relationship with a spokesman, Sidney Rigdon, to the relationship between Moses and Aaron as they freed the Israelites (even though Joseph was a powerful orator on his own). In Genesis 50, Joseph mentions Moses and Aaron by name.

On rare occasion, a targum (Jewish scripture in Aramaic, originally passed down orally) was written as early as the first century A.D, though this was still centuries after they were originally told. After being told orally for so long, many Targum verses began to differ significantly from the written accounts. It turns out that in just one of these targumim (not two, as Lindsay claims), Joseph of Egypt tells of Moses, Miriam, and Aaron delivering the slaves from Egypt. The rest of the passage differs from the JST (and the JST doesn't mention Miriam).

For centuries, rabbis had the chance to glorify the heroes of their legends, and one rabbi, in one of the traditions, may have inserted Moses, Aaron, and Miriam into a prophecy, in order to aggrandize the story. If that prophecy had been real, why would the scribes of the written traditions remove it from the story? That account wasn't present in a single tradition of the era that was passed via writing. If that prophecy had been real, it is a wonder that every Israelite slave in Egypt wasn't naming their children Moses, Aaron, and Miriam in hopes of fulfilling it.

B) Apologists herald one case where an ancient passage is similar to Joseph Smith's writings, and omit a large number of cases where the ancient manuscripts call Joseph's claims into serious question. An anonymous author (link to his site) has chronicled all of such cases from the New Testament into spreadsheets here and here. His own summary of his work, found on his site:

> "In summary, the JST fails to correct all 350 of the scribal alterations and mistranslations, fails to correct all 48 of the verses added by scribes, and actually alters and adds to many of these scribal alterations and additions. Additionally, the JST includes a made up word, mistranslates several Greek and Aramaic words, and fails to correct a mistranslated Greek word…
>
> Apologists have recognized the inaccuracy of the JST. The common defenses that they put forward are that the changes to the KJV in the JST are merely Joseph's musings, or are revealed doctrines being added to the text rather than a restoration of the text to its original form, and/or that the JST was never finished and so it can't be examined for accuracy. These arguments are without merit…" (author goes on to explain why)

Here is an example from the Old Testament. In the King James Bible, there is a translation error in Isaiah 9:1. The text reads:

> "Nevertheless the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation, when at the first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and afterward did more grievously afflict her by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations."

This error has since been corrected by most versions of the Bible. Texts such as the NLT, NLV, and Luther Bible have corrected "did more grievously afflict her" to read something closer to "will honor," which means something completely different than "grievously afflict." In both the JST and the Book of Mormon, (2 Nephi 19:1), Joseph fails to correct the error. Instead, he adds an error, turning "the sea" into "the Red Sea" (see p. 22 of The Mormon Challenge).

FAIR claims that the JST wasn't supposed to be a restoration of the ancient text. One reason is that Joseph says that he could have given a "plainer translation" of Malachi (D&C 128:18), inferring that he used a broad definition of translate. What FAIR doesn't fully incorporate in their theory is that "a restoration" of the original would have been in Hebrew or Greek, not English. In translating from those languages, one could choose plainer or more sophisticated English, and Joseph indeed could have chosen to render Malachi more plainly. This also applies to times when Joseph translated a passage in multiple different ways. Joseph *did* seek to restore the original meaning, as evidenced by the Lord calling the JST a translation (Ex: 1, 2, and 3), "[His] words," and the "fulness of the scriptures." FAIR mentions that "suffer us" in the JST's "Lord's Prayer" is a Hebraism. Joseph likely picked it up from Matthew 8:21,31, Luke 9:59, or Acts 21:39.

16) Cultural Differences – And research shows that the book does not seem to fit the culture of early 19th-century America. There is little of the military romanticism of Joseph Smith's America. Instead, we see grimly realistic portrayals of war's devastation and suffering. And in the story of the Gadianton robbers we have a detailed, realistic portrayal of a prolonged guerrilla struggle—lacking any trace of fife and drum, uniforms, or parades—published well over a century before the guerrilla theorists of the 20th century put pens to paper. – LDS.org

The warfare in the Book of Mormon is actually very similar to the warfare in *The Late War* (see p. 43 of The Mormon Challenge). Also, guerilla tactics were used in

the French and Indian War and the Revolutionary War. In this case, not only was Joseph able to know about guerilla tactics, he likely did know about them.

17) Hebraic Roots – Why does the Book of Mormon contain numerous language structures pointing to Hebraic roots? (See, for example, the Hebraic conditionals that were in the original Book of Mormon manuscript, wherein "if … then … " clauses are written as "if … and …" – perfectly good Hebrew but awkward English. That wasn't part of Joseph's dialect of English, nor part of the King James Bible, so how would an unschooled forger be able to come with that sophisticated Hebraism? These were later replaced with more proper English "if … then …" clauses in the 1837 edition of the Book of Mormon.) – Jeff Lindsay

Apologists say that using "if…and" instead of "if…then" is a Hebraism, as in Hebrew, they used one symbol (waw) to mean both "and" and "then," among other things. It can mean either. Notice that waw can also mean *now*, *while*, *when*, *because*, *although*, *but*, "*in order that,* " "*and then*," "*so then*," *consequently*, *even*, *namely*, "*that is*," *also*, *especially*, *with*, and can also serve as a tense changer. This means that if apologists can search through Joseph's bad grammar and find any case where any of those words appear to be mixed up, they can claim they found a Hebraism. Their argument is problematic, as translating waw into "and," when the writers meant it as "then," would be a blatant mistranslation. Would God send mistranslations via Joseph's seer stone? Some bibles and Hebrew translations have contained such errors, which more recent translations have corrected.

Joseph was giving an oral dictation (at times at least) and often spoke in long run-on sentences. The longest of such run-on sentences is 389 words long (3 Nephi 21:1-7). Such sentences fit with an oral dictation, but don't fit well with the idea of enscribing something in metal. With such sentences, and with bad grammar, apologists have found something that appears to be a pseudo-Hebraism.

In a few of their examples, Joseph could have lost his train of thought and said "and" instead of "then." The rest of their examples are clustered in one spot: Helaman 12:13-21. In this cluster, and in other examples, three "then clause" *are* present without the "and," you just have to keep reading for them, as they are run-on sentences (Oliver added punctuations after the dictation). They resemble the following sentence: "*If* God tells me to do this *and* it happens, and *if* God tells me to do that *and* it happens, *(then) behold,* believe God." A similar run-on style is found in D&C 122:5-7, which says "if" 14 times before the "then" clause.

It would be extremely problematic to their theory if Nephi wrote in the language of the Egyptians (implying more than just script, see p. 5), and not Hebrew.

In the article, the points numbered 19, 23, 24, 30, 31, 35, 36, 37 rehash the same argument: that the organization and doctrine of the LDS church matches that which is found in the Bible.

The problem here is that the LDS church does not match the Bible as well as some other churches. The New Testament does not say anything about the prophet (or president) leading the church. In the New Testament, a prophet is simply someone who has the spirit of prophecy, and who testifies of Christ (Revelation 19:10). Other churches follow these teachings more closely (such as the Seventh-day Adventists).

There is no office of patriarch in Christ's New Testament church (an evangelist is a missionary, not a patriarch). In Timothy 3, bishops and deacons *are* mentioned – that each should have one wife. Early LDS bishops had multiple wives, and deacons have no wives.

Other churches do a slightly better job at following the New Testament structure (such as the Seventh-day Adventists and the New Apostolic Church, with 20 million and 11 million members respectively).

As far as apostles go, the Bible strongly indicates in Acts 1:22 that an apostle is a special witness of Christ's resurrection. This is why they stopped appointing apostles. A couple of the first apostles were replaced with others who were also witnesses, and that was that. The New Testament never says that the office of apostle must be a continuing trait of the church, but simply says that the church was built on the foundation of apostles (they were there at the beginning). The Seventh-day Adventist church seems to be running very well without them.

In contrast, the LDS church does have apostles, but giving them that title contradicts the Acts 1:22 requirement that they be special witnesses to Christ's resurrection (if special witness simply means a testimony via the Holy Ghost, then most members are "special" witnesses). As revealed by Brigham Young:

> "We have not seen the person of the Father, neither have we seen that of the Son; but we have seen the children of the Father, and the brethren of the Savior who are in every way like them in physical appearance and organization."
>
> ~Brigham Young, Journal of Discourses, Volume 11, p. 42
>
> Quote also found on fairmormon.org

As far as LDS doctrine goes regarding faith, works, and the trinity, other churches are aligned with the LDS church in these matters, while still others simply interpret the Bible differently.

26) Nephi's slaying of Laban – Nephi's slaying of Laban and the justification given to him by the Lord for doing so can now be seen as instruction that focused on the culture of Nephi's era. LDS.org

"The needs of many outweigh the needs of a few" is a concept that has existed in many times and cultures. The concept is even found in the New Testament:

> John 11:50 – "Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not."

The wording in John is similar enough to 1 Nephi 4:13 that the influence of one passage on the other is clear.

> 1 Nephi 4:13 – "It is better that one man should perish than that a nation should dwindle and perish in unbelief."

27) Christopher Columbus – 1 Ne. 13:12 is a passage generally applied to Christopher Columbus. But as Daniel Peterson points out:

Many have been accustomed to see in Columbus merely an adventurer seeking to open trade routes to the East Indies. But with the recent publication of Columbus's private Book of Prophecies, we see how accurate the Book of Mormon's description of him is. He said he was guided by the Holy Spirit, and he was eager not only to spread Christianity but to fulfill biblical prophecies. Among his favorite passages were John 10:16, with its reference to 'other sheep,' and the passages of Isaiah concerning the people on the 'isles of the sea.' These are the very passages that the Book of Mormon applies to itself. LDS.org

Columbus did believe that he was inspired in his voyage. He wrote as much in his book, the "Book of Prophecies." According to theinsider.org, his book was famous, though I don't know where they got that bit of info. It wasn't translated into English until after Joseph's time, but there was hundreds of years of opportunity for the idea to reach northeast America. Was Columbus' belief common knowledge in early America? This is unknown. Joseph would only have to hear the rumor once for the exciting idea behind it to stick in his mind.

Even if it wasn't common knowledge, it is not at all an incredible assumption for Joseph to make, especially when 2 Nephi claims that God leads every one of those who come to the New World. According to 2 Nephi 1:6:

> 2 Nephi 1:6 – "Wherefore, I, Lehi, prophesy according to the workings of the Spirit which is in me, that there shall none come into this land save they shall be brought by the hand of the Lord."

In Joseph's time and location, such a prophecy sounds plausible and profound, as of all the immigrants, Joseph was most familiar with the pilgrims and puritans who found religious freedom in America. The prophecy doesn't hold up very well considering the wide array of people, good and evil, who have entered the Americas since then. The Nazis who fled to Argentina, for example.

28) Lehi in the Desert – Daniel Peterson goes on and states:

In his 1952 essay "Lehi in the Desert," Hugh Nibley illuminated Lehi's land journey from Jerusalem by placing it along the coast of the Arabian peninsula. 27 Since that time, Latter-day Saint scholars and explorers have refined our understanding of that route through actual visits and systematic surveys of the area, enabling us to identify likely Book of Mormon locations in Arabia. 28 The Book of Mormon account of Lehi's Arabian sojourn is remarkably accurate to numerous specific geographic conditions, but no scholar in the 19th century, let alone Joseph Smith, could have known of it. LDS.org

This is mostly a repetition of numbers 3 and 7. Lehi's family traveled eastward from Nahom and eventually came to the land of Bountiful. It is true that if you go eastward from the past location of the tribe "Nihm" and scan the 2500 miles of Oman and Yemen coastline, you will find places containing fresh water (and hence vegetation), mountains, and seaside cliffs.

29) King Benjamin's Address – Daniel Peterson states:

King Benjamin's classic address in Mosiah 2–5 occupies roughly 11 pages in the current English edition, which means that Joseph Smith may have dictated this doctrinally rich text of nearly 5,000 words in a little more than one day. Recent research shows that the sermon is intimately linked with the ancient Israelite Feast of Tabernacles and the Day of Atonement, as well as

with archaic treaty and covenant formulas and early Near Eastern coronation festivals. 36 Even the physical setting of the speech—delivered while the king stood upon a tower (see Mosiah 2:7)—is ritually appropriate to the occasion. But the Prophet Joseph Smith could not have learned this from the English Bibles or any other books available to him

The source of Peterson's argument is found at ldsseminary.files.wordpress.com.

In the Book of Mormon, King Benjamin gathers everyone at the temple and gives a speech from a tower, in which he announces his successor, preaches repentance, exhorts obedience, preaches charity, and warns of evil monarchs. Apologists have been able to find small snippets across the Old Testament of some of those elements (some are clustered in Leviticus 25-26), some loosely linked with the Day of Atonement, some loosely linked with the Feast of Tabernacles, some loosely linked with the Shavuot, and some linked with a jubilee year. There are a lot of Jewish holidays, and many biblical passages can be related to one or another. On which holiday was King Benjamin's speech? The Shavuot? The Day of Atonement? They take place during different seasons.

The author of the "44 Reasons" article claims that Joseph could not have known that the speech-giver stood upon a tower, but this is contradicted by his source. In the source's given parallels, he says that Benjamin stood on a tower, as did Ezra (in Nehemiah 8:4).

Even though Joseph could have gotten *all of this* from the Bible, which, given the cluster in Leviticus 25-26 is quite possible, none of the elements of King Benjamin's speech are novel concepts. If a random minister gives a generic Christian speech about repentance, obedience, and charity, (from a raised platform if he's trying to reach a large audience, similar to Ezra's pulpit of wood), someone could search through the Bible and find similarities between his speech and various parts of the Bible. This is hardly evidence of an ancient work.

We also see that Joseph borrows from Jonathan Edwards Sr. in this passage (Mosiah 3:19). As Edwards put it, "They are enemies to God in their affections. There is in every natural man a seed of malice against God." In Mosiah 4:30, Joseph uses the phrase "thoughts, words, and deeds," which was used in The Confession of Faith 33:1, a work present in Palmyra (see p. 9 of this document). Joseph had Presbyterian-leaning family members, and was likely familiar with their literature, *The Confession of Faith*. Did Joseph also borrow from Leviticus 25-26, as he did from Paul (Ether 12:6-22 vs Hebrews 11)?

32) Baptism for the dead – If Joseph Smith just made up the idea of vicarious baptism for the dead, why do numerous ancient documents validate the LDS claim that this was an authentic early Christian practice?

Lindsay's website has been updated with an explanation for this point:

> "The Pastor of Hermas, an early Christian work that apparently refers to Christian baptism for the dead, may seem like an obscure work to us, but that doesn't mean Joseph did not know about it. In fact, it now appears that he did have access to it, at least by 1844, since we know he donated a copy of William Hone's Apocryphal New Testament to the Nauvoo Library in 1844, and that book contained the Pastor of Hermas and some other early Christian writings…. Sometimes we Latter-day Saints are too quick to assume that Joseph couldn't have known about something in early Christian literature. Be careful about that assumption."

Lindsay goes on to talk about Joseph not being a bookworm (see pp. 9-10 of this document).

Without knowledge of that work, Joseph still could have extrapolated the concept of baptism for the dead from 1 Cor. 15:29. Why would someone be baptized for the dead? Answer: if the dead weren't baptized yet.

Interesting note (source): Every religion has it's own apologetics and explanations to fit evidence with their worldview. Given the evidence, the Corinthians *were* performing such baptisms (hence the scripture). Other Christian sects today believe that Paul wasn't sanctioning the practice of baptism for the dead (hence his use of the word "they"), but that he was simply trying to use their own arguments against them, in order to argue for resurrection.

33 & 34) Temple/Temples to Early Christians – At a time when all Christian churches taught that temples were no longer needed, how did Joseph so effectively restore the ancient temple concept on his own? If the Temple is not meant to be part of true Christianity, why does the Bible teach that it was important to early Christians? Why does it prophecy that it will be important in the future?

The New Testament teaches over and over that our physical bodies are temples and that the people of the church "are the spiritual temple of God." (see 1 Corinthians 3:17, 2 Corinthians 6:16, Ephesians 2:20-22). The New Testament is not silent regarding man-made structures designated as temples:

> Acts 7:48 – "Howbeit the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet,"

Regarding Joseph's restoration of the temple concept, FAIR concedes that Joseph borrowed the endowment ceremony from Freemasonry, and that there is no connection between Freemasony and Solomon's temple.

38 & 39) Alma 7:10 predicts that Jesus "shall be born of Mary, at Jerusalem which is the land of our forefathers." Is this a mistake? Everyone knows that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, not in Jerusalem. But it is now plain from modern evidence that Bethlehem could be, and indeed was, regarded anciently as a town in the "land of Jerusalem." – Reference

Dead Sea Scrolls – A recently released text from the Dead Sea Scrolls, for example—a text claiming origin in Jeremiah's days (and therefore in Lehi's)—says that the Jews of that period were 'taken captive from the land of Jerusalem.' – Reference

These points are simply a defense against an old anti-Mormon argument.

The Dead Sea Scrolls do not otherwise confirm the JST or the Isaiah verses in 2 Nephi, though rumors have been spread indicating otherwise.

"I was invited to stay for lunch and visit with the missionaries. I did a great deal of listening and learned much. One of the most interesting conversations revolved around a young couple who were being taught by the missionaries but who were not progressing. 'They're golden people,' one elder said, 'ripe and ready for membership in the Church. They just won't commit to be baptized.' …. After a long pause, one elder spoke up: 'Have you given them the Scrolls Discussion?' The first elder responded: 'No, do you think this would be a good time for the Scrolls Discussion?' 'Sounds like a perfect time to me,' the second came back. Now I had never heard of the Scrolls Discussion. I was dying to know what it was so I blurted out: 'What's the Scrolls Discussion?' The second elder looked quizically at me and said: 'Surely, Brother Millet, you've heard of the Scrolls Discussion?' I indicated that I had not. 'The Scrolls Discussion,' he said, 'involves showing the people how the Dead Sea Scrolls prove the truthfulness of the Church!' I asked: 'How do you do that?' 'Well,' he replied, 'as you know, the Dead Sea Scrolls contain information about a group of Christians out in the deserts of Judea.' I said: 'No, they don't. The Dead Sea Scrolls were written by a group of hyperreligious Jews.' He said: 'Oh, I didn't know that.' Then the elder followed up: 'Well, you do know that they had three presiding high priests at the head of their church.' I indicated that the leaders of their group were Aaronic priests, not Melchizedek. He went on: 'Well, there's much doctrine within the Dead Sea Scrolls that proves our church to be true.' I commented that the Scrolls were interesting historical documents but did very little for us doctrinally. This exchange went on for about ten minutes, the elder providing what he thought to be airtight 'proofs' and me trying to gently let him know that most of what he understood about the Dead Sea Scrolls was simply untrue. I could see the frustration in his eyes. He breathed a sigh and then concluded the conversation with: 'Well, I'll just say this–the Scrolls Discussion has always worked perfectly for me!' I thought then (and have since) about all the people who may have come into the Church as a result of what they learned in the famous Scrolls Discussion. I shuddered."

~Robert L. Millet, Professor of Ancient Scripture at BYU

rsc.byu.edu

The JST (the Inspired Version) chronicles many changes between the original manuscripts and the King James Bible. Nephi's version of Isaiah indicates still other changes. One would think that if those changes really occurred, some would show up in a newly found manuscript of the text that's one thousand years older than any previous manuscript. From a BYU masters thesis in 1961:

"Latter Day Saints were hopeful that these Isaiah scrolls would bring some supportive evidence for the Book of Mormon. The Dead Sea Isaiah scroll, which dates probably from the second century B.C., predates by one thousand years what was previously considered to be the oldest surviving text of the Old Testament."

"Included also in the comparison is the Inspired Version."

"After a thorough investigation of the matter... this writer found no noteworthy instances of support for the Book of Mormon claims."

scholarsarchive.byu.edu

The BYU publication, *Progress in Archaeology*, provides further confirmation that the Dead Sea Scrolls don't help LDS claims.

"After reading the Scrolls very carefully, I come to the conclusion that there is not a line in them that suggests that their writers knew the Gospel as understood by Latter-day Saints. In fact, there are a few passages that seem to prove the contrary....

We should be especially interested in the light the Isaiah scroll throws on the problem of the Isaiah text in the Book of Mormon. I have compared in some detail the text of the scroll with its parallels in the Book of Mormon text. This tedious task has revealed that the scroll seldom agrees with the departures of the Book of Mormon text from that of the conventional Masoretic text of Isaiah and consequently the Authorized Version.... The Isaiah scroll is of relatively little use to Latter-day Saints as showing the antiquity of the text of Isaiah in the Book of Mormon.... What then do I see as valuable in the Scrolls? It should be understood that they have great value to the scholar in matters pertaining to Hebrew spelling, grammar, and paleography."

imgur.com – Progress in Archaeology

40) Chiasmus

The Book of Mormon has multiple examples of this ancient literary structure/technique. Alma 36 being a good example.

Chiasmus is a form of Hebrew poetry found in the Bible and in the Book of Mormon. In 1820, *Sacred Literature* was published by John Jebb in London. It talks in length about chiasmus (epanodos) in the Bible, describing it as an inverted parallelism. Jebb sites an example from the New Testament:

> "And why do ye transgress the commandment…
>
> Honour thy father…
>
> And he who revileth father…
>
> Whosoever shall say to his father…
>
> Must also honour his father…
>
> Thus have ye nullified the commandment, &c."
>
> ~Reverend John Jebb, quoting Matthew
>
> unz.org - Sacred Literature p. 245

FAIR questions whether Joseph had knowledge of chiasmus. Response: That is unknown. There was plenty of religious activity and discussion in that time period. Even if New York libraries didn't carry *Sacred Literature*, there was seven years' time for a priest or minister to bring a personal copy of the book or knowledge of its contents over from London. We don't know whether or not anyone helped Joseph write the Book of Mormon or if he heard about chiasmus himself. It is also likely that the chiasmus came about by imitating the Bible's style.

When analyzing the extended chiasms of the Book of Mormon, the constructors will skip large portions of text which they cannot use. They select the elements which fit into their pattern while ignoring the repetitions of the same elements which don't fit. For example, "deliver" occurs six times in Alma 36. Two of them fit into the pattern and the other four aren't mentioned in the diagram. The word "pain(s)" appears five times, two of which fit into the pattern. The other three are skipped over. In such a story where a person compares himself before an event with himself after, it makes sense that there are contrasting elements which appear to match each other on both sides of the event (limbs were paralyzed vs. limbs receiving strength, sought to destroy the church vs. sought to bring people to repentance). Thus Alma 36 appears to be an extended chiasm.

One branch of Mormonism, the Strangites, holds *The Book of the Law of the Lord* to be ancient scripture. The book was published in 1851.

> "Be it known unto all nations, kindreds, tongues and people, to whom this Book of the Law of the Lord shall come, that James J. Strang has the plates of the ancient Book of the Law of the Lord given to Moses, from which he translated this law, and has shown them to us. We examined them with our eyes, and handled them with our hands. The engravings are beautiful antique workmanship, bearing a striking resemblance to the ancient oriental languages; and those from which the laws in this book were translated are eighteen in number, about seven inches and three-eights wide, by nine inches long, occasionally embellished with beautiful pictures.
>
> And we testify unto you all that the everlasting kingdom of God is established, in which this law shall be kept, till it brings in rest and everlasting righteousness to all the faithful."
>
> SAMUEL GRAHAM, SAMUEL P. BACON, WARREN POST, PHINEAS WRIGHT, ALBERT N. HOSMER, EBENEZER PAGE, JEHIEL SAVAGE.
>
> strangite.org - The Book of the Law of the Lord

They believe the chiasmus present in their book serves as proof of its authenticity.

> "Thou shalt not TAKE the NAME of the Lord thy God in VAIN:
> Thou shalt not USURP dominion
> as a RULER; for the NAME of the Lord thy God
> is great and glorious ABOVE ALL OTHER NAMES:
> he is ABOVE ALL,
> and is the ONLY TRUE God;
> the ONLY JUST and upright King
> OVER ALL:
> he ALONE hath the RIGHT
> to RULE; and in his NAME, only he to whom he granteth it:
> whosoever is not chosen of him, the same is a USURPER, and unholy:
> the Lord will not hold him guiltless, for he TAKETH his NAME in VAIN."
>
> strangite.org - Chiasmus

Is chiasmus proof of the Book of Mormon's authenticity?

41) Names in the Book of Mormon – Jershon, for instance, designates a place that was given to the people of Anti-Nephi-Lehi as a "land … for an inheritance" (Alma 27:22). In Hebrew, Jershon means "a place of inheritance." – LDS.org

A) These names are given at Lindsay's site. Most of the names he provides are very similar to biblical names (p. 44 of The Mormon Challenge). If you take the hundreds of names in the Book of Mormon and line them up with the thousands of names in every ancient tongue (example, 2200 B.C. Akkadian, which if matched with the Jaredites, doesn't fit with a 10,000 B.C. group in America – see point 43), you will find additional pseudo-matches. I will focus on those names that match Hebrew, don't have matches in the Bible, and whose resemblance isn't a stretch.

Alma - Norman Golb, points out that although one interpreter thought that an ancient Jewish name was Alma, "*the scientific edition* of the Nahal Hever papyri transcribes the term as **Allima**," which "reflects the Aramaic term meaning 'the strong one.'" Lindsay does not mention this. Source

Jershon –One of many potential translations of the Hebrew term "yaresh" (pronounced yah-raysh) is "to inherit." Saying that *yah-raysh* sounds like *jersh* is a bit of a stretch. Other possible translations of "yaresh" are "to seize, dispossess, take possession of,… disinherit, occupy, impoverish, to be an heir." Many place names in the Bible end with –on, so apologists see a connection there as well, though Joseph, who was heavily influenced by the Bible, could have easily picked up on that. The real problem with their theory is that the land was called Jershon *before* the Nephites gave it up (Alma 22:21), so it wasn't like they named it Jershon because they gave it away.



Cumorah - komer means priest. Apologists speculate that "kemorah" could mean Priesthood, though only the word "komer, not "kemorah," is found in Hebrew. In the 1830 edition it was called the Hill Camorah. FAIR discusses the likelihood that Joseph could have also gotten the name "Camorah" from Captain Kidd stories, as Captain Kidd traveled to the Camora isles (as the Comoros isles were called then). The capital city of Camora is and was Moroni (founded in the 10th century). Camora is a much closer match to Camorah than "komer." The most that FAIR concedes is that it isn't unreasonable to assume that Joseph, a treasure hunter, was familiar with the stories. FAIR points out that the probable source of

the Kidd stories only mentions his visit to island Joanna (one of the Camora isles). Was that enough for Joseph to explore a map and pick up Moroni and Camora?

Apologists have found a couple examples of Book of Mormon names in Ancient Mesoamerica. Adherents to the Great Lakes location theory would disagree with the importance of these finds, but it is true that of the hundreds of Book of Mormon names, Kish (which is also a biblical name) could match Kix in the Olmec culture (according to a Mormon archaeologist's translation of a Mayan record). Xul could also match Shule in the Book of Mormon or Shual in the Bible. In both cases, two consonant sounds with one vowel in between isn't much of a coincidence. The location Lamanai, which sounds like "Lamanite" (Lahman is also a biblical name), is found in Belize, though the name comes from Lama-anayin, meaning "submerged crocodile." These names might carry a little more weight if Joseph had made them up, but most are simply variations of biblical names. The examples in Point B are unbiblical, making them more significant.

B) Lindsay doesn't mention a couple other close matches. Kishkiminetas and Oneida were indigenous names which closely match the Book of Mormon names Kishkumen and Onidah. FAIR concedes that Kishkiminetas and Oneida were actually place names in Joseph's general vicinity (a river and a town). Did Joseph borrow these names from his general region?

In another more blatant case of Joseph borrowing from his vicinity, FAIR discusses a revelation, in which three people, including Wilford Woodruff, say that Joseph talked about an ancient Lamanite named Onandagus. Onondaga is the name of an Indian group in the direct vicinity of Palmyra, and the name of a county only two counties away from Palmyra. It turns out that the closest name matches (by far) were likely known by Joseph.

C) When one leaves just names behind on one side and starts comparing the thousands of words in one language with thousands of words from another, the chance of unrelated false cognates goes way up. A true false cognate is where two words from two languages have the same sound and meaning, without having a historical connection to each other. For example, in English and Japanese, can/kan, kill/kiru, and occur/okiru all have the same meaning, and by complete coincidence. Another example: the Mbabaram word for dog is dog, though their word comes from a completely different origin. A list of other examples.

Uto-Aztecan is a group of 30 languages. After comparing the thousands of words from *thirty* languages to the thousands of words from most of the Middle Eastern languages, apologists have found matches between the Uto-Aztecan family (from a land far away from the Great Lakes models) to words in Canaanite/Hebrew, Aramaic, Arabic, Ethiopian, Akkadian, and Egyptian. If there was a real connection between the Book of Mormon people and Native Americans, far more connections should be found between Hebrew (or Egyptian) and the various languages of the different groups of natives. It would be similar to how easy it is to see the close relationship between Latin and its progeny (Spanish, French, Portuguese, Romanian, etc), where there are thousands of close cognates. Many of the matches between the thirty Uto-Aztecan languages and Middle Eastern are not so close (such as trying to equate qədaal with kutaC). Many are similar, as should be expected when involving thirty languages on just one side. An interesting phenomenon has developed here in the way that members look to these language similarities as proof of the Book of Mormon, as *View of the Hebrews* came first (p. 33 of The Mormon Challenge). Imagine that Plato wrote hundreds of pages giving evidence for Atlantis. A few years later, a fellow Grecian (let's call him Homer) writes a story which takes place on Atlantis and fits with Plato's evidence. Hundreds of years later, more evidence is found confirming Plato's theories, and a large population heralds it as evidence that Homer's story is true. While not proven wrong, the Homerists certainly aren't proven right, as Plato's theories came first. Now imagine that Homer's text contains significant inconsistencies. Imagine that DNA evidence comes about which somehow strongly indicates that Atlantis never existed.

The Uto-Aztecans would stretch the Lehites from the Northeastern United States (as indicated by Christ in D&C) to Mexico. As explained in the Mormon Challenge, this invalidates the church's small group theory, with which they try to get around DNA problems. Even without that stretch occuring, the western United States was already inhabited with Siberians, invalidating God's promise to Lehi of preserving the land for his people.

42) Olive Tree – Daniel Peterson states: - The allegory of the olive tree in Jacob 5 shows a clear knowledge of olive cultivation far beyond what Joseph Smith, growing up in the American Northeast, could have possessed. But it is

As the New Testament allegory discussed olive trees and grafting, it likely that evangelists also discussed the practice, while preaching from the New Testament. Maintaining a vineyard isn't a lost art. The olive tree allegory in Jacob 5 appears to pull from two places in the Bible. It begins by likening Israel to a single olive tree and is similar to Romans 11:16-24, which talks mainly about a single olive tree and includes the practice of grafting. Then, it becomes similar to Isaiah 5:1-7, which talks about a whole vineyard.

> Romans 11:24 – "For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?"
>
> Jacob 5:3 – "For behold, thus saith the Lord, I will liken thee, O house of Israel, like unto a tame olive tree, which a man took and nourished in his vineyard; and it grew, and waxed old, and began to decay."
>
> Isaiah 5:4 – "What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?"
>
> Jacob 5:41 – "What could I have done more for my vineyard?"

43) Easter Island Inhabitants – Easter Island's population had 10% Native American DNA, and some European as well.

A) While true, the Native American and European DNA isn't traced back to Nephite times. In fact, as no Native American DNA (in Easter Island) can be traced back to the time of Hagoth, this actually conflicts with LDS leaders' claims that Polynesians are Lamanite descendants.

> "By considering the distribution of local ancestry tracts of eight unrelated Rapanui, we found statistical support for Native American admixture dating to AD 1280–1495 and European admixture dating to AD 1850–1895."[1]
>
> cell.com

The Polynesians, or at least a couple groups of them, have been dubbed the "Vikings of the Pacific" (examples here and here). The Native American admixture likely occurred when Polynesians visited South America. They may have returned with some natives. They apparently even left some of their own DNA behind. According to ncbi.nlm.nih.gov, there is evidence that they brought Polynesian chickens to South America. Then, "after having arrived in South America, some of them may have returned to Polynesia, including Easter Island, not only taking the sweet potato and bottle gourd, etc., but also some native Americans with them." The chicken remains also date back to 1300-1400 A.D.

Side Note: Along with the Proclamation of the Apostles, Joseph also held that the Lehites and Jaredites were the main inhabitants of the Americas. From the Wentworth Letter:

> "In this important and interesting book the history of ancient America is unfolded, from its first settlement by a colony that came from the Tower of Babel at the confusion of languages to the beginning of the fifth century of the Christian era. We are informed by these records that America in ancient times has been inhabited by two distinct races of people. The first were called Jaredites and came directly from the Tower of Babel. The second race came directly from the city of Jerusalem about six hundred years before Christ. They were principally Israelites of the descendants of Joseph. The Jaredites were destroyed about the time that the Israelites came from Jerusalem, who succeeded them in the inheritance of the country. The principal nation of the second race fell in battle towards the close of the fourth century"
>
> josephsmithpapers.org Note: If an island was inhabited by 8 groups of people, one wouldn't make the statement that the the island was inhabited by two groups.

Joseph, in the same letter, requests that it be published in its entirety, without censorship. Ironically, the LDS church censors the letter in a 2011 (and still current) manual, removing the above passage.

44) Many critics have claimed that there is no possible way that you could have so many large cities as has been recounted in the Book of Mormon. However there has been a big discovery in terms of these "Hidden cities".

As Professor Kennedy states:

'It's what I call 'hidden cities,' " says professor Kennedy, "I use the term because these were very big places. There were more people, we now know, in Cahokia across from St. Louis, than there were in London or Rome. There were major population centers in what now are Nashville, Cincinnati, Pittsburgh, and St. Louis. There were tens of thousands of architectural consequences that are now hidden behind our junk and our architectural achievements.' Reference

The "hidden cities" evidence implies that the Hopewell Indians match the Nephite civilization. As stated in The Mormon Challenge, FAIR soundly refutes the Hopewells as a match in these five pages: (one, two, three, four, five).

That being said, the "big discovery" of hidden cities occurred before Joseph's time. They are discussed in *View of the Hebrews* (see the excerpt on the next page), which taught that Israelites came to America and divided into two tribes (p. 33 of The Mormon Challenge).

"These works have evinced great wars, a good degree of civilization, and great skill in fortification. And articles dug from old mounds in and near those fortified places, clearly evince that their authors possessed no small degree of refinement in the knowledge of the mechanic arts.

These partially civilized people became extinct. What account can be given of this, but that the savages extirpated them, after long and dismal wars! And nothing appears more probable than that they were the better part of the Israelites who came to this continent, who for a long time retained their knowledge of the mechanic and civil arts; while the greater part of their brethren became savage and wild.—No other hypothesis occurs to mind, which appears by any means so probable."

"These ancient works continued all the way down the Ohio river to the Mississippi, where they increased and were far more magnificent. They abound at the junctions of rivers, in most eligible positions, and in most fertile lands. The number of tumuli on that river exceeds three thousand; "the smallest not less than twenty feet in height, and one hundred in diameter at the base. The largest are of huge magnitude. The informer in the Archaeology says; "I have been sometimes induced to think that at the period when these were constructed, there was a population as numerous as that which once animated the borders of the Nile or of the Euphrates, or of Mexico. Brackenridge calculates that there were 5000 cities at once full of people. I am perfectly satisfied that cities similar to those of ancient Mexico, of several hundred thousand souls, (says the writer) have existed in this country. Nearly opposite **St. Louis** there are traces of two such cities in the distance of five miles. One of the mounds is eight hundred yards in circumference at the base, (about fifty rods in diameter) the exact size of the pyramid of Asychis; and one hundred feet in height." (See Archaeologia Americana, page 189.)

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Conclusion: At this point, it would be tempting to say that we have to take all of this on faith. Does God work through faith, when that would keep us bound to any made-up religion, faithfully following its rules? As they say in Islam: "Faith is trusting Allah even when you don't understand His plan." Or in Hinduism, "without faith we cannot attain Krishna." *If* God/higher powers do exist, perhaps there are reasons besides faith that we don't know more about them, or an afterlife (ex: that we have to take this life seriously, or that they are beyond our ability to comprehend). Faith is believing without evidence. The thing is, we do have plenty of evidence, which shows us that we have been misled.

Does God send us here and damn us if we don't believe a man who makes up names like Onandagus, when he lived by Onandaga County? A man who claims that the word for angel in God's pure language is Awmen-Angls-men?

Does God send us here and then damn us when we can't justify polygamy, or the genocide in the Bible (involving grown men slaughtering little children in mass)? Can we follow an organization with integrity when it justifies such things?

Perhaps we can find reasons to be glad. We have been given plenty of evidence that *if* God exists, he is not a God of genocide or polygamy. People aren't damned for picking the wrong religion, especially when the Holy Ghost/our feelings are so unreliable (pp. 11-16 of the Mormon Challenge). There won't be billions of souls suffering in Outer Darkness for eternity (a third of the hosts of heaven), with those in the Celestial Kingdom living in bliss in spite of that fact. God's plan doesn't send billions of people here to experience romantic love and then deprive them of that forever, for not being valiant. Families won't be divided forever (as will be the case with most families, according to Mormonism).

Some religions believe – and many of those with near death experiences indicate – that we will be with our loved ones after death, eventually (maybe only after additional growth). The experience of existence and learning continues, maybe in this world, maybe in another, maybe in some spiritual plane. While there are many such "near-death" accounts out there, one must be cautious in taking someone at their word, especially if they are making money by publishing their story in a book. If it turns out that our existence does end with death, at least we won't be around to be upset over it. At least billions of souls won't be in agony forever.

Perhaps we can have faith that if a god does exist, it's not a god of genocide, but rather a god of empathy and rationality.