

The Bethlehem Star

By Neil Steede and David Brown © 2010

The story of the Star of Bethlehem and the Three Magi who followed it has captivated Christians for millennia. Most of us have never seen an event such as this or anything remotely close to what we imagine to be the phenomena described in scriptures and legends. Ancient star charts do not record the appearance of any new stars during the period of time surrounding the birth of Christ, so what was the basis for the claim of a new star that guided wise men to Bethlehem? In our opinion the best professional study on the celestial phenomenon called the Bethlehem Star was done by David Hughes.¹ In his research Hughes not only considers all the credible theories introduced over the centuries, but he also consults all of the period historical data as well. In his conclusions he considers the

7 BC triple-conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn to be the most likely candidate for this recorded event as it seems to fit the criteria for the Bethlehem Star better than any other possibility considered. However, the limited criteria given in the Biblical record prevented Hughes from definitively stating his conclusion as fact because there were several celestial events that might have fit. We believe there is now substantial evidence to confirm Hughes position because we now have two tools that Hughes did not use when he penned his report.

The most important tool we have employed that Hughes did not consider is the Book of Mormon account of Christ's birth and the celestial event accompanying it. Remember that the event reported in the Book of Mormon took place somewhere in the Americas and it

is described as, "And it came to pass that there was no darkness in all that night, but it was as light as though it was midday. And it came to pass that the sun did rise in the morning again, according to its proper order;"² This passage provides the single most important clue in our search to find the Bethlehem Star. The second tool we employed that Hughes could not have used in the 1970's when this research took place is a celestial chart computer program. The program we used is CyberSky 4.0 and it allowed us to choose any place on earth at any time period to observe the positions of all the celestial bodies as they appear in the sky.

Taking these two tools in hand we reasoned that because the "bright night" event was recorded in the Book of Mormon, then it

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The Mayan Codex

By Terry Scott First Article of a Two-Part Series

One of the most rare and certainly intriguing relics from the Mayan culture is the type of artifact called the Mayan codex. The word "codex" refers to a single manuscript volume with the plural form known as codices. The name derives etymologically from the Latin "caudex" meaning trunk of a tree, wooden tablet, book, code of laws (Oxford English Dictionary, CD-ROM version 3.0, 2002). Codices were typically formatted as a screen-folded book painted on a paper-like material made from the bark of the fig tree. The paper was coated with a light color and then painted

with glyphs and pictures. The largest remaining codex is the Madrid Codex. It has 56 folds, is painted on both sides and measures around 22 feet long.¹ The Maya recorded nearly every aspect of life; their history, economies, religious ceremonies, wars and rulers, and used the written information in these codices to govern their daily lives.

"We can identify three main types of Maya records: *historical records* which delineate the deeds of noble persons, rulers, and states; *scientific records* which encompassed the learning of Maya scholars with regard to such diverse subjects as as-

tronomy, agronomy, military science, statesmanship, and religious ritual; and *economic records* which served to mark down routes of trade, amounts given and received in tribute, and economic policies of the state...

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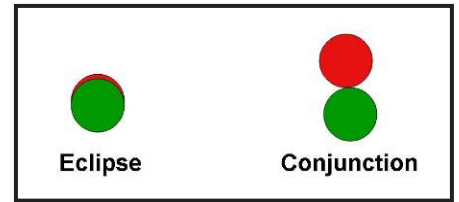
The Bethlehem Star *continued*

required us to view the night sky from a Central American position in the Western Hemisphere. We chose to view it from the perspective of Villahermosa, Mexico as it is central to the ancient Mayan culture and particularly the ancient site of Palenque. Of the several Bethlehem Star theories that Hughes explored David Brown examined each one from the Mesoamerican viewpoint using the CyberSky program. Out of the dozens of celestial phenomenon suggested and the possible thousands of nights over which the Star of Bethlehem might have occurred, there was only one night that fit the Book of Mormon description; September 8, 7 BC. The CyberSky program confirmed that the very celestial phenomenon described in the Book of Mormon included the 7 BC triple-conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn and it is the very one that Hughes had suggested as the best candidate for the star of the Magi. To the best of our knowledge Hughes did not have a clue as to the occurrence of the “bright night.” He had consulted ancient Babylonian and Chinese almanacs and all of them did note the triple conjunction of the Jupiter and Saturn, but no reference was found to a “bright night” as described in the Book of Mormon. Why?

According to what we have found in the CyberSky program the “bright night” event was caused by the alignment of the Jupiter/Saturn conjunction with an unusually bright full moon. This alignment only lasted for about ten to twelve hours and was only visible from the Western Hemisphere where the three-way alignment began as all three rose on the eastern horizon at sunset reaching their closest and

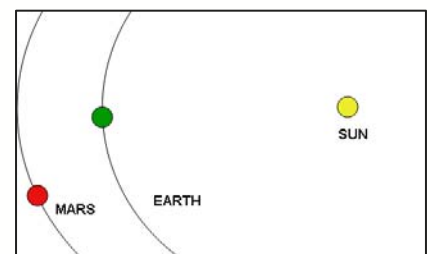
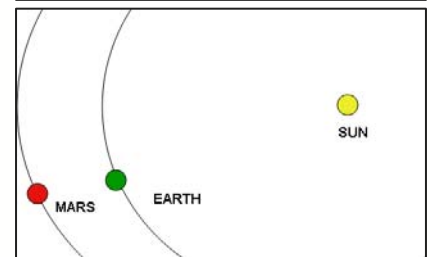
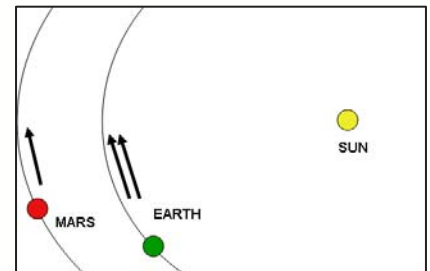
most uniform triangular position when they reached the highest point of the sky (azimuth) and then as the three lowered in the west they began to draw apart. This three-way alignment had separated by the time the Earth rotated the night sky to the Old World. This explains why only the people of the Americas observed and recorded the “bright night” event. This was not recorded by either Babylonian or Chinese Old World astronomers because they could not see it.

To fully understand how this entire process worked it is important to first provide some definitions of astronomical terms that will be used. The terms are *conjunction*, *eclipse*, and *retrograde motion*. The terms *conjunction* and *eclipse* are similar, but the distinction between the two is a matter of position and degree. A conjunction is the close positioning of two lights (usually planets), but the nearest planet does not overlap or block the light emanating from the far planet and in fact the close proximity of the two objects often enhances the total magnitude of the two objects. By contrast, an eclipse is where one near object *blocks* the light of the far object therefore there is no increase in luminosity. In the 7 BC Jupiter/Saturn triple-conjunction Jupiter does not eclipse Saturn. There are times when Jupiter and Saturn are less than one degree apart, but Jupiter does not block the light from Saturn. The proximity of less than one degree brings these planets close enough to appear to the naked eye as if the light is emanating from a single source. In the case of this particular conjunction event the closeness of these two large planets in



concert with the maximum reflective angle of Saturn’s rings make this celestial phenomenon appear to be twice as bright as either Jupiter or Saturn alone.

The second concept that needs defining is *retrograde motion*. The outer planets of the solar system require more time to orbit the Sun than the inner planets and it is understandable that the inner planets pass the outer planets because the orbits of the inner planets are smaller. For example, Jupiter takes more than nineteen Earth years to orbit the Sun while Saturn takes more than twenty-nine Earth years to orbit the Sun. Thus, the Earth passes Jupiter nineteen times during its single solar orbit and it passes Saturn twenty-nine times in its respective solar orbit. When one inner planet “laps” another, the outer planet has the appearance of moving backwards in the sky. To illustrate this we have used the planets of Earth and Mars. From our viewpoint on Earth, Mars has the appearance of moving backward

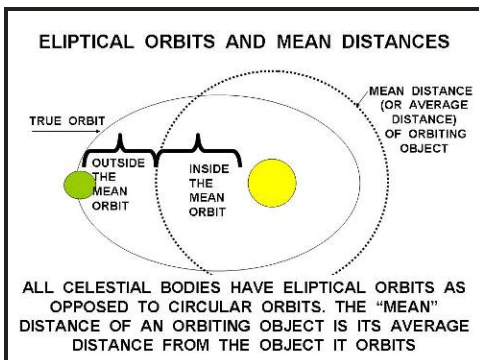


“For behold at the going down of the sun, there was no darkness; and the people began to be astonished, because there was no darkness when the night came. And there were many who had not believed the words of the prophets, fell to the earth, and became as if they were dead, for they knew that the great plan of destruction which they had laid for those who believed in the words of the prophets, had been frustrated, for the sign which had been given was already at hand; and they began to know that the Son of God must shortly appear; Yea, in fine, all the people upon the face of the whole earth, from the west to the east, both in the land north and in the land south, were so exceedingly astonished, that they fell to the earth; For they knew that the prophets had testified of these things for many years, and that the sign which had been given, was already at hand; and they began to fear because of their iniquity and their unbelief. **And it came to pass that there was no darkness in all that night, but it was as light as though it was mid-day.** And it came to pass that the sun did rise in the morning again, according to its proper order; and they knew that it was the day that the Lord should be born, because of the sign which had been given. And it had come to pass, yea, all things, every whit, according to the words of the prophets. And it came to pass also, that a new star did appear, according to the word.” Book of Mormon III Nephi 1:17-24

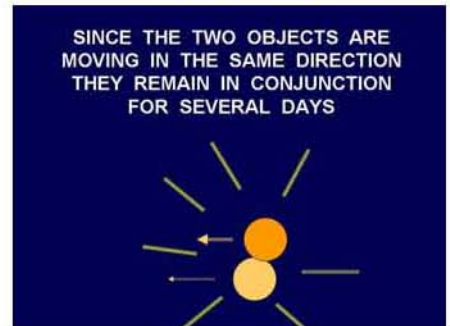
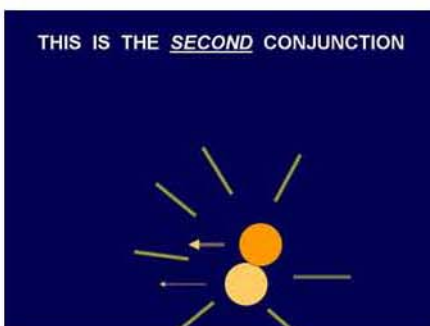
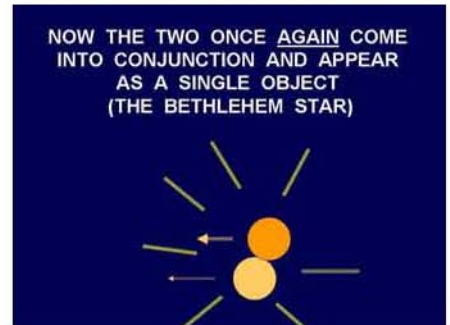
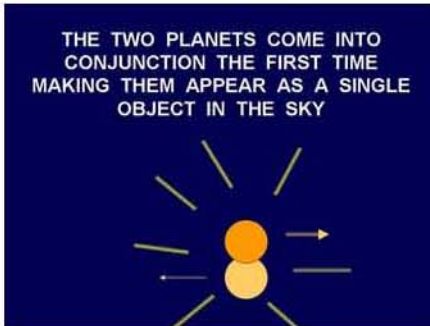
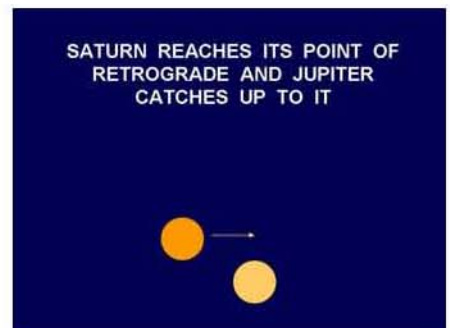
The Bethlehem Star *continued*

as we pass. This optical illusion is called *retrograde motion*. In 7 BC the Earth passed Jupiter and Saturn at the same time, and from Earth's viewpoint both of the gas giants were in conjunction. But, since Saturn's orbit is much further out than Jupiter's it began its retrograde motion before Jupiter did. This fact is what caused the triple-conjunction to occur. That sequence has been illustrated in the blue boxes to the right and on the next page.

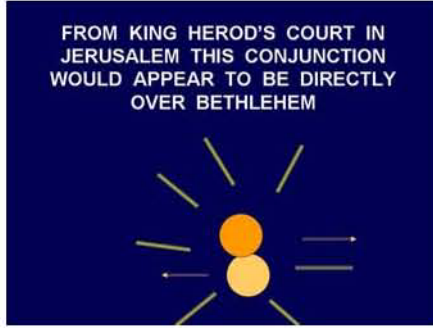
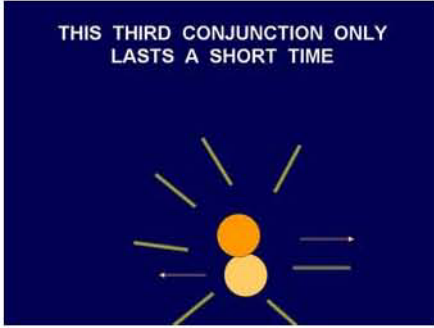
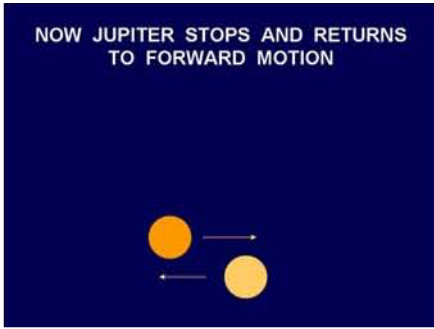
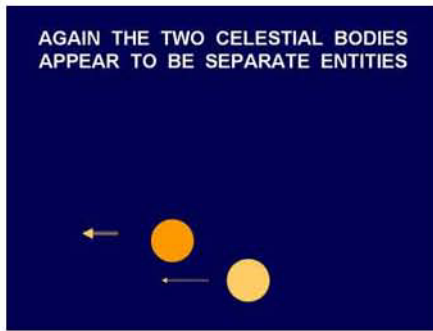
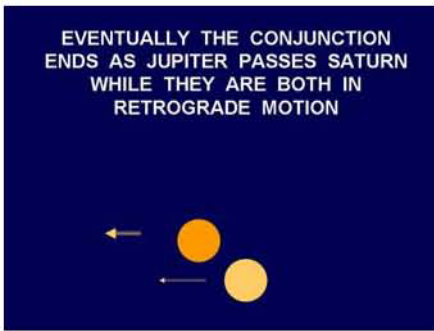
There are seven pertinent facts to consider regarding the amount of light experienced on the "bright night." These facts greatly increment the brightness of the "bright night" by almost two times the brightness of a typical full moon. A typical full moon in conjunction with Jupiter and Saturn might not be bright enough to create the "bright night" described in the Book of Mormon, but the full moon on that night was not typical. The luminosity factor for this full moon was at 99.8% which is brighter than most as nearly 100% of the moon surface that received light from the Sun was facing the Earth.



A second factor to consider is something known as *mean distance*. The night of September 8, 7 BC found the Earth inside its mean position in its distance from the Sun which also increased the lunar reflective light. The mean distance is the average distance between the two orbiting objects. All planetary orbits are elliptical causing a continual change in planetary distances both from each other and around the Sun. This aspect is important because the magnitude of light is directly related to the proximity of the source. This aspect is true for light emanating directly from its source such as the Sun or if it is reflected from the Moon. The mean distance factor was unbelievably high on September 8, 7 BC (see chart

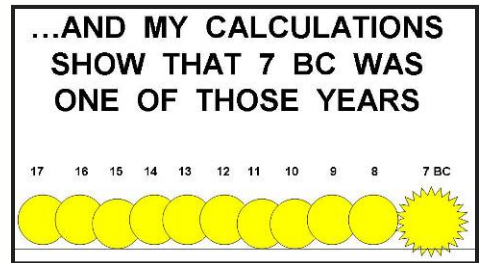
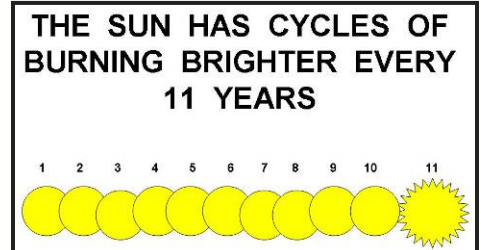


The Bethlehem Star *continued*



on bottom left of Page 4).

The third factor is the Sun's cycle of storms. About every eleven years the Sun goes through a cycle of storms and during that time the Sun burns hotter and brighter. So it follows that if the Sun was at its peak of brightness in its cycle during 7 BC, that the light cast would also be brighter.

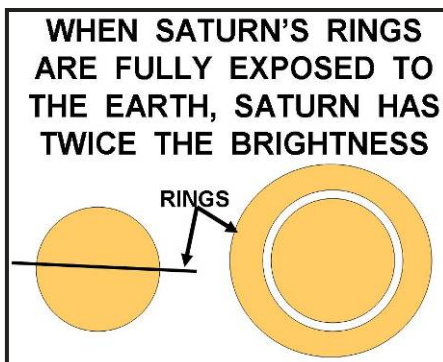
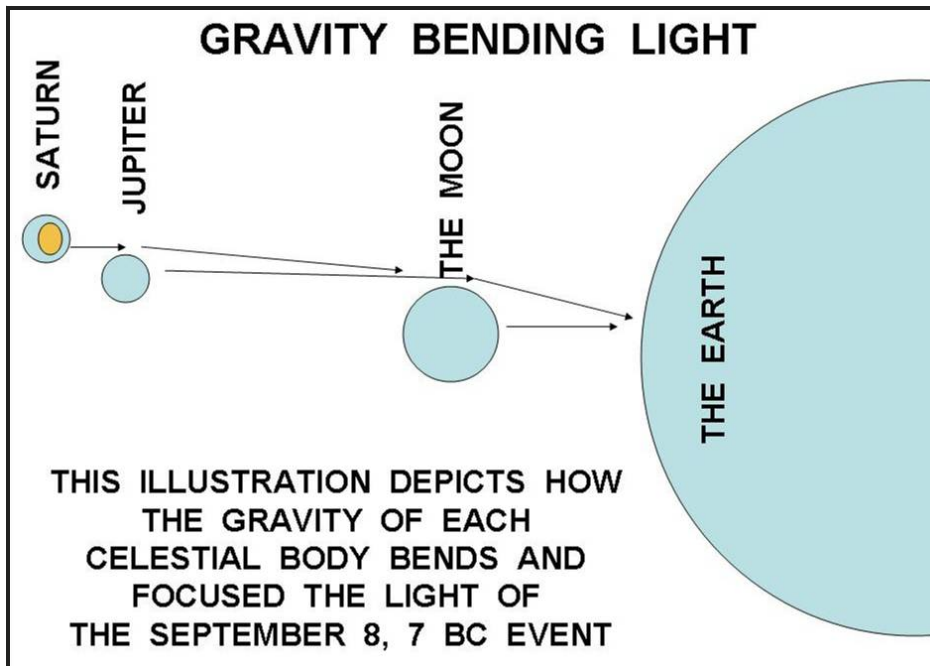


Though this cycle is neither precise nor well understood, a rough calculation by the author shows that it is very probable that during 7 BC the Sun was at the peak of its storm period. Admittedly, those calculations can only be probable with what is known at this time.

The fourth factor is the affect of gravity. One of the remarkable aspects of Einstein's Theory of Relativity is that light has enough mass to be affected by gravity. This factor is very important to the 7 BC phenomena. If a star is within one degree of the horizon of any celestial body then an observer will notice an increase in magnitude because the light from the far object is bent around the atmosphere of the closer object thereby focusing the light particles into a narrow stream and increasing the amount of observable light. This phenomenon is also true whether the light comes from a direct or indirect source. This phenomenon occurs multiple times on September 8, 7 BC creating a cascading collection of celestial lights with a remarkably focused affect.

The fifth factor to consider is the orientation of Saturn's rings. There are times when the rings of Saturn cannot be seen, and at other times Saturn's axis is turned so that the rings are very prominent. Most people do not know that Saturn is occasionally at full tilt so that all of its rings can be seen causing

CELESTIAL OBJECTS WITHIN MEAN DISTANCES ON SEPTEMBER 8, 7BC		
OBJECT(S)	INSIDE MEAN	OUTSIDE MEAN
EARTH / MOON	YES	
EARTH / SUN	YES	
JUPITER/SATURN TO SUN	YES	
JUPITER/SATURN TO EARTH	YES	
JUPITER/SATURN	YES	



Saturn to exhibit a broad fluctuation in magnitude. When this study was first performed the CyberSky program presented Saturn as a constant magnitude. We then consulted the software developers at CyberSky and found that when they entered Saturn's magnitude into the program they used Saturn's mean magnitude as a constant. In 7 BC Saturn was at its maximum reflective tilt. The reason this aspect is so important is because Saturn's magnitude not only reflected the brighter sunlight of the peak Sun cycle, but also the full reflective area of Saturn's rings are facing the Earth. When Saturn is at its rare full tilt its reflective power is doubled and becomes as bright as Jupiter. This aspect brightens the "bright night" considerably. On this extremely rare occasion Jupiter is not the brightest in the sky nor is Saturn, but their brilliant combination in conjunction with the Moon was an extremely rare occurrence.

The sixth factor is one that cannot be seen with any computer program nor be calculated with any algorithm; the halo factor. This factor is known to have happened only because it is depicted in the Mayan hieroglyphs in the Cross-Complex at Palenque. Within the hieroglyphic representation of the September 8, 7 BC event a halo is shown.

These lunar halos are caused by ice crystals in the stratosphere and many times act to focus and magnify light. Here are several photos of halos, including one that the author took on November 17, 2010 in Independence, Missouri. In that photo the clouds were thicker than the normal halo phenomena calls for, but the result was a dark blue sky.

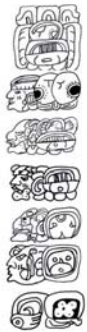
The last possible factor known as "air glow" is only a marginal possibility. This event occurs when air molecules become excited by radiation. While it is unusual for air glow to significantly affect the overall ambient light of nighttime, it could have made an impact on this brightest of all nights. All of the above will prove to be of exceptional importance to Book of Mormon believers as we now know that ancient Maya hieroglyphic inscriptions have been deciphered that refer to the above described celestial event. Of even greater importance is the fact that the storyline accompanying that description gives details concerning Book of Mormon characters that were previously unknown to the archaeological



community prior to deciphering those glyphs (see illustrations on page 6).

There are two more concepts to present here that will help the searcher comprehend the problematic sequence of events that many have taken into account when looking for the Bethlehem Star. First, in Matthew's account of the story it is implied that the star guiding the wise men to the baby king had disappeared. Therefore, the Magi went to Herod's court to ask about the child they were seeking. Herod sent them out in search of the child and told them to return when they had found the baby. Then Matthew makes a curious statement; he writes that as the Magi left Herod's court, they looked up and saw their star anew. That statement indicates that the Bethlehem Star could turn on and off in much the same manner as the Jupiter/Saturn conjunction of 7 BC. According to Hughes, the third and final conjunction occurred on December 1, 7 BC and only lasted for a short time, at the most two or three nights. Therefore, it seems very reasonable that this Jupiter/Saturn conjunction is the celestial event mentioned in the

THE MAYA HIEROGLYPHS CONCERNING THE TRIPLE CONJUNCTION



HERE THE BOOK OF MORMON STORY OF THE STAR EVENT IS WRITTEN IN STONE

THE REFERENCE MADE IS SPECIFICALLY TO THE 7 BC TRIPLE CONJUNCTION



THE GLYPHS CLEARLY SHOW THAT THE TRIPLE CONJUNCTION TO WHICH THEY REFER OCCURRED AT THE BEGINNING OF THE AGE OF PISCES



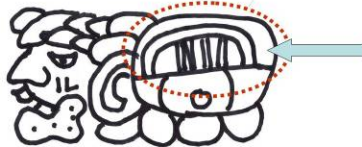
THAT CONJUNCTION HAD TO BE THE TRIPLE CONJUNCTION BETWEEN JUPITER AND SATURN

THE INITIAL GLYPH SHOWS DOUBLE BANDS THREE TIMES WITHIN THE "SKY EVENT" GLYPH

THE BANDS ARE DOUBLED TO REPRESENT THAT THERE ARE TWO OBJECTS CROSSING THE SKY THREE TIMES



ON THIS GLYPH ONE CAN SEE THE TRIPLE BAND CROSSING THE "SKY EVENT" GLYPH



ON THIS SAME GLYPH THE FULL MOON IS SHOWN TO HAVE A LARGE "HALO"



Maya inscriptions. Those inscriptions will be translated in future articles.

One final observation to note is the length of time of the Jupiter/Saturn triple-conjunction. Matthew does not say exactly how long the celestial event lasts, but the Maya inscriptions do. The ancient inscriptions state that the "star event" lasts for about eight to nine months. Interestingly that is a correct description of the conjunction event being considered for the Star of Bethlehem.

This latest development in the continuing effort to find factual support for the Bethlehem Star and the Three Magi is both exciting and very promising. Many additional facets will need to be researched and considered; old material revisited and searches for new material in the Mesoamerican archives will undoubtedly work to either validate or disprove this latest theory, but it helps us draw closer to the truth and provides opportunity to continue to serve through bringing this truth forth from the earth.

Endnotes:

1. Hughes, David; [The Bethlehem Star](#).
2. 1908 Book of Mormon III Nephi 1:17-24.
3. If the reader should doubt this then look at a lit 100 watt bulb at 10 feet away and 10 inches away.
4. Wikipedia
5. Ibid.
6. Wikipedia
7. Ibid.
8. CyberSky
9. Wikipedia
10. Inspired Version Matthew 3:1-7
11. Inspired Version Matthew 3:8-12
12. The inscription alluded to is found at Palenque.

The best translations can be found in: Steede, Neil; [Book of Mormon Archaeology: Artifact by Artifact](#), 2008, ESRS, Independence, MO 64056.

Professional references include:

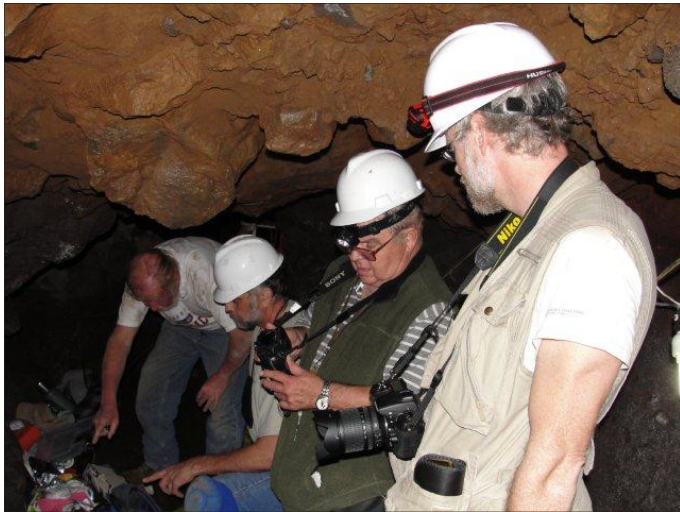
- Stuart, David; [The Temple XIX Inscriptions](#).
Schele, Linda; [A Forest of Kings](#).

"Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, Saying, Where is the child that is born, the Messiah of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and have come to worship him. When Herod the king had heard of the child, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests, and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them, saying, Where is the place that is written of by the prophets, in which Christ should be born? For he greatly feared, yet he believed not the prophets. And they said unto him, It is written by the prophets, that he should be born in Bethlehem of Judea, for thus have they said, The word of the Lord came unto us, saying, And thou Bethlehem, which lieth in the land of Judea, in thee shall be born a prince, which art not the least among the princes of Judea; for out of thee shall come the Messiah, who shall save my people Israel. Then Herod, when he had called the wise men privily, inquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found the child, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also. When they had heard the king, they departed; and lo, the star which they saw in the east, went before them, until it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child, with Mary his mother, and fell down and worshiped him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh. And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way."

Inspired Version Matthew 3:1-12

“CSI” Investigations at Teotihuacán By David B. Brown

The hit TV series called CSI has intrigued our imagination with so many incredible investigative methods that we often fail to realize that much of it is based in reality. While there are many nuances of the science that get stretched for the sake of increasing the drama, still the basic concepts of retrieving DNA, blood splatter illumination, metal residue illumination and so on, is a valid aspect of modern scientific investigation for any situation that requires evidentiary retrieval. Such is the case with the latest adventure at Teotihuacan.



The team works inside the tunnel to determine a method of attack for gathering film evidence in both still photography and video media.



Neil measures an ancient drain tile found in the tunnel

In early 2010 Neil Steede submitted a proposal to the INAH Director at Teotihuacán to conduct this type of an investigation of the tunnel beneath the Pyramid of the Sun. This tunnel was first discovered in the early 1970s and has never been investigated in this regard. Neil felt that it would be a great benefit to add this

study to the opus of studies collected on this tunnel over the years.

It was about mid-2010 when Neil received word that his proposal had been accepted and that they were being given a time slot in early December when they would have a week of access to the tunnel to conduct the studies. Once Neil received the approval he immediately began assembling a team. Don Beebe was selected for his still photography expertise, Gary Woods for his electronic wizardry, Sean Adair for his videography and ability to develop a virtual tour of the

tunnel, and last minute was Mike Brown as a second Spanish speaker who could assist with logistics.

Don, Gary and Neil began researching the possibilities of methodology for collecting samples from the tunnel for scientific reporting and in the process they were absolutely amazed at the amount of sophistication they were able to obtain with state-of-the-art sample collection devices. Using filter illumination for element, compound and

bodily fluid illumination it allowed the group to determine the best possible areas for sample collection in this 300 foot long tunnel thereby making the most of the sample collection items they had purchased.

When the time arrived for them to make the journey to Teotihuacán and eventually into the tunnel, they were prepared with an array of filter, camera recording medias, and sample collection props that would make any professional police crime lab the talk of the industry. The filming was a success with hours of video taken for the development of the virtual tour, and hundreds of samples were collected to send to laboratories for testing of such items as blood types determining animal or human and DNA if there is anything substantial to be found.

The archaeologists at Teotihuacán were very impressed with the preparation and level of sophistication of the tests to be

run, and they were very pleasant and accommodating to the group.

While the filming and sample collection were a success there is still a lot yet to complete on the testing and reporting of the results. Early Sites Research Society along with Pre-Columbian Studies Institute assisted in supporting the funding for the illumination filters, lights, testing devices and collection supplies. The Hill Cumorah Expedition Team contracted with Sean Adair to fund the videography and development of the virtual tour of the tunnel, documenting the collection process and the environment where each sample was taken. Several individuals assisted in small, but important ways such as Tim Brown's development of a single tape measure to run the length of the tunnel so the team could obtain an accurate measurement. This truly was a team effort.



The team gathers for breakfast and a discussion of the prospects of what they have collected.

Now comes the part of affording the testing of the items, and the further development of the virtual tour. If you would like to assist in any way, please feel free to contact David Brown at davidbrown@hillcumorahexpeditionteam.com. Your desire to assist or to financially support will be greatly appreciated. The Hill Cumorah Expedition Team, Inc is a 501(C)(3) corporation which makes your contributions tax-deductable. Now that the samples are collected and the good first impression is made with the officials at the site, it is more important than ever to continue to uphold the high level of production and reporting so that we can continue to be in the midst of some of the most important developments that are still yet to be found at Teotihuacán. Your financial support can help us maintain that high level of professionalism and success.

The Maya Codex *Continued*

the Maya named nearly everything and structured their rituals, their agriculture, and their warfare around their calendar...the Maya believed that to name a thing was to have power over it; likewise, the ability to keep records that encompassed learning beyond the span of one lifetime allowed the Maya to profit from their past."²

The Mayan leaders set aside special people to keep the record of the society written upon these codices. Their Mayan titles *ah ts'ib* and *ah woh*, meant scribes and painters. Painting or drawing was an important talent for a scribe to possess and when these raw abilities were discovered in young people they were selected by the priests to become scribes. Their preparations required them to learn the language and culture in great detail. They eventually specialized in a specific area such as history, astronomy, medicine, and so on.

"Their intense apprenticeships lasted several years. Scribes belonged to a class above the local people because of their great knowledge. Then, depending on their field of study, each was destined to reside in some of the centers that dealt with their specialty, for example in matters that were religious, economic or civic: temples, tribunals, palaces, markets or houses of tributes were used.

From that moment, the scribe would have to be completely devoted to his activities. Anonymously, they toiled to make the codices in their specialized fields, and the product of each person would become a part of the collective patrimony."³

Thus, the occupation of scribe, or *ah ts'ib* (sometimes *tz'ib*) which literally means "he of the writing," was very important to the Maya culture. Evidence of their work is found in the glyphs and pictographs carved in Mayan architecture, painted on Mayan codices, and glazed on Mayan pottery.²

In the language of the Maya, sounds are formed by combining a consonant with one of the five vowels; a, e, i, o, or u. If a Maya scribe (*tz'ib* in Maya) wanted to describe the act of "writing" he could select from several different signs to convey the sounds. The combination *tz'i* + *b'i* to make "he who writes" would be done as illustrated in the example here.⁴

The hieroglyphic texts recorded in the codices are written in the script used throughout the lowland Maya area from

the 2nd century A.D. to the 15th century. This area was occupied by Yucatec and Ch'olan-speaking populations at the time of Spanish contact in the early 16th century.¹

"Given the rarity and importance of these books, rumors of finding new ones often develop interest. Archaeological excavations of Maya sites have turned up a number of rectangular lumps of plaster and paint flakes, most commonly in elite tombs. These lumps are the remains of codices where all the organic material has rotted away. A few of the more coherent of these lumps have been preserved, with the slim hope that some technique to be developed by future generations of archaeologists may be able to recover some information from these remains of ancient pages. The oldest Maya codices known have been found by archaeologists as mortuary offerings with burials in excavations in Uuxactun, Guaytán in San Agustín Acasaguastlán, and Nebaj in Quiché, Guatemala, at Altun Ha in Belize and at Copán in Honduras. The six examples of Maya books discovered in excavations date to the Early Classic[100- 600 CE] (Uuxactún and Altun Ha), Late Classic[600-900 CE] (Nebaj, Copán), and Early Post-classic[900-1519 CE] (Guaytán) periods and, unfortunately, all have been changed by the pressure and humidity during their many years in the ground, eliminating the organic backing and reducing all into unopenable masses or collections of very small flakes and bits of the original lime sizing and multicolor painting. The result being, unfortunately, more old books which will probably never be read."⁵

There were many such books in existence at the time of the Spanish conquest of Yucatán in the 16th century, but they were destroyed in bulk by the Conquistadors and priests soon after. In particular, all those in Yucatán were ordered destroyed by Bishop Diego de Landa in July of 1562. Such codices were primarily written records of Maya civilization, together with the many inscriptions on stone monuments and stelae which survive to the pre-

sent day. However, their range of subject matter in all likelihood embraced more topics than those recorded in stone and buildings, and was more like what we find on painted ceramics (the so-called 'ceramic codex'). With their destruction, the opportunity for insight into some key



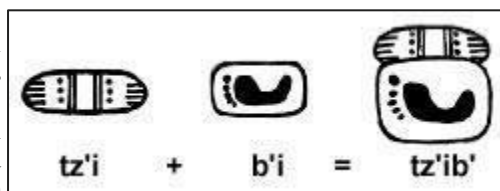
Figure 1 Bishop Diego de Landa destroying the codices

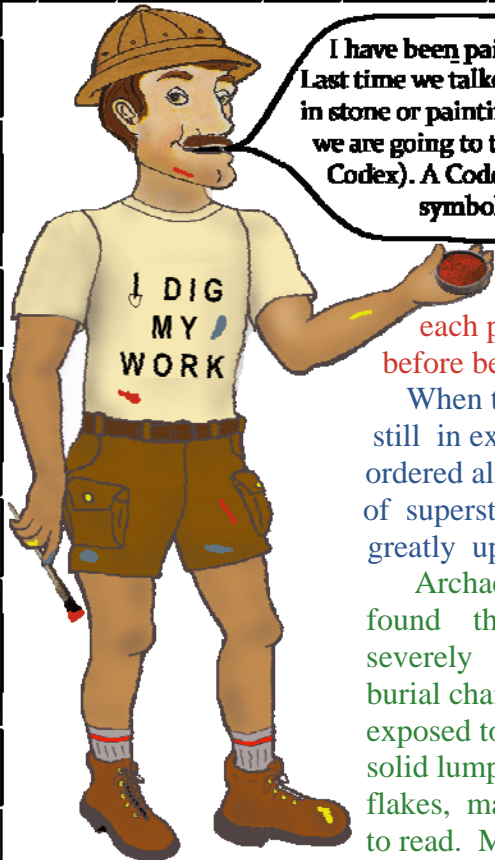
areas of Mayan life has been greatly diminished.⁶

Later in life Bishop Diego de Landa (1524-1579) said, "We found a large number of books in these characters and, as they contained nothing in which were not to be seen as superstition and lies of the devil, we burned them all, which they (the Maya) regretted to an amazing degree, and which caused them much affliction."³

"To have only a meager four codices to work with seems very sad indeed, and sad it is. But it is also lucky that these four were able to escape the ravages of the damp climate of much of Central America, the 16th century purposeful European destruction of the so-called "works of the Devil", the later European neglect, and the further damages during WWII. The codices that ended up in Europe seem to have arrived there as part of the "Royal Fifth" to Spain, and/or as souvenirs. Since the Spanish royal family had ties throughout Europe, especially with Austria, it is not surprising that the Dresden Codex, for instance, spent some time in Vienna. What with various sales, etc., three of the Maya Codices have ended up in Madrid, Dresden, and Paris. The tale of the Grolier Codex is quite different, having been "discovered" in 1965, in México."⁷

The Dresden Codex - Johann Christian Götze, Director of the Royal Library at Dresden, obtained the Dresden codex from a private owner in Vienna in 1739. In 1744, Götze gave it to the Royal Library (Sächsische Landesbibliothek)





I have been painting in a Mayan Codex. Last time we talked about the Mayans carving in stone or painting on walls and pottery. Today we are going to talk about Codices (plural for Codex). A Codex is a picture book of glyph symbols and pictures.

A Codex is made by using long thin strips of bark fiber.¹ The fiber is washed, pounded together, smoothed and dried. It is then folded into pages (see figure 2) and each page is coated on both sides with a plaster like white coating before being painted (see figure 3).

When the Spanish conquered the Mayans there were many codices still in existence. In 1562, a Catholic Bishop named, Diego de Landa ordered all codices to be destroyed. He declared these books to be full of superstitions and lies. The destruction of these sacred records, greatly upset the Mayan people.

Archaeological have since found the remains of many severely damaged codices in burial chambers. They have been exposed to moisture and become solid lumps or turned into piles of flakes, making them impossible to read. Museums have only four

surviving codices. These are called the Dresden codex, the Madrid codex, the Paris codex and the Grolier codex. A fifth codex, the Prague codex is currently being retested for authenticity. (see figure 1)

¹The Dresden codex is over 8 inches high and 11.74 feet long when unfolded and the Madrid codex is over 9 inches high by 22 feet long when unfolded.



Dresden Codex



Grolier Codex



Madrid Codex



Prague Codex
(Authenticity being tested)



Paris Codex

Figure 1

Pottery figure of Mayan scribe holding a folded Codex. (Jaina Island, Campeche) Now in National Anthropology Museum

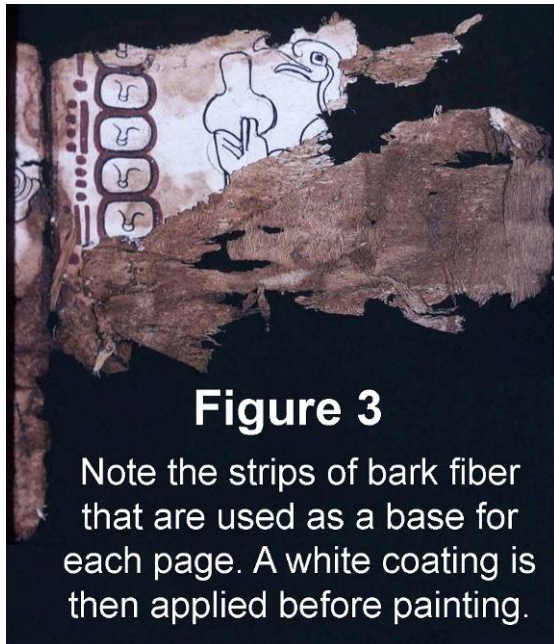


Figure 3

Note the strips of bark fiber that are used as a base for each page. A white coating is then applied before painting.

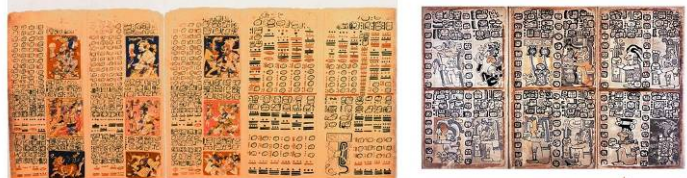


Figure 2

A Codex was folded up when not being read.

The top two pictures were taken from the Dresden Codex.

The bottom two pictures have been changed slightly.

Find twelve (12) differences between the top two pictures and the bottom two pictures.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____
11. _____
12. _____



I U L W N M D Z N D S W M M X
 L K Z Y A R E J W E E C F X E
 N K S D M E S S C F D H K B D
 D F R K X I T P T O C S S E O
 F I B E R L R O A A A M E A C
 D O E F K O O W E R O T D R W
 Q J I G F R Y C Y O I J E X D
 Q Q Q J O G E X T K Z S S D Z
 A V E O L D D H S E C I D O C
 M B V V D I E X M D O E D H Y
 Q O G O E D O L E E T X R I V
 P O U N D E D I A N G V B R M
 E U G A R P R M I N W L A R Q
 K D W F L D Z A R F D M R V J
 M Q U X E Z P Q U M N A K Y N

Find the hidden words in the Word Search Puzzle to the left.

- | | |
|-----------|--------------|
| Bark | Coated |
| Codex | Codices |
| Destroyed | DiegoDeLanda |
| Dresden | Dried |
| Fiber | Folded |
| Grolier | Madrid |
| Painted | Paris |
| Pounded | Prague |
| Smoothed | Washed |

(all words used in story)

http://www.teach-nology.com/teachers/lesson_plans/science/archaeology/

http://research.history.org/Archaeological_Research/KidsPage.cfm

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<http://www.precolumbianweapons.com/>

For questions e-mail me at tscott75@sbcglobal.net

The Mayan Codex *Continued*



Figure 2 the Dresden Codex



Figure 5 the Grolier Codex

where it still resides.⁷

It gathered dust until it was rediscovered in the late 19th Century by the library archivist, Ernst Forstemann. It is the most elaborate of the codices and displays a high artistic quality. Many sections are ritualistic and include so-called 'almanacs' while others are of astrological in nature and list eclipses, the Venus cycles, and so on. The codex is written on a long sheet of 'fan-folded' paper to make a book of 39 leaves, written on both sides.⁶

Because it sustained heavy water damage during the Dresden Fire Storms of WWII, it was falling apart when rediscovered. The pages were assigned page numbers, but the order the sections were incorrect. For reference, they have been left that way but the correct order was probably 1-24, 46-74, and 25-45.⁷

The Madrid Codex - Although crafted of inferior workmanship in comparison to the Dresden Codex, the Madrid Codex is even more varied subject matter and is the product of eight different scribes. It currently resides in the Museo de América in Madrid, Spain.

The Madrid Codex became separated into two parts after reaching Europe and was not reunited until 1880. A Frenchman by the name of Léon de Rosny discovered that the two parts were a single codex. One part is named after Don Juan Tro y Ortolano who was a professor of Spanish paleography and the

first owner; this part is called the "Troano." The remaining portion is known as the "Cortesianus." The Troano portion of the Madrid Codex comprises pages 22-56, 78-112 and the Cortesianus included pages 1-21, 57-77. For some unknown reasons pages 77 and 78 were upside-down within the codex, so page 78 should really be page 77 and vice versa. The reunited parts are now commonly called the "Madrid", or "Tro-Cortesianus" codex.⁶

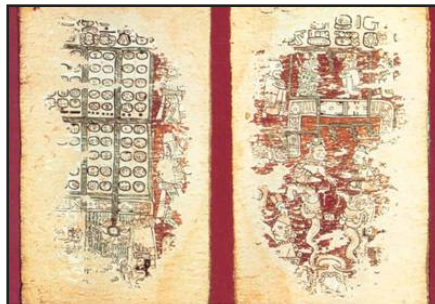


Figure 4 the Paris Codex

The Paris Codex - Though the codex has sometimes been referred to as the "Pérez Codex" and the "Maya-Tzental Codex", the preferred names are the "Paris Codex" or "Codex Peresianus."

The Paris Codex was acquired by the Bibliothèque Impériale (now called the Bibliothèque Nationale) of Paris in 1832. Its first replication was for Lord Kingsborough in 1835. This first copy is now lost, but a copy of it with some

Rosny is said to have "discovered" it.⁷

The Paris Codex contains prophecies for Mayan Calendar tuns and katuns and in this respect is akin to the Books of Chilán Balam books written from memory by a Mayan after all the codices were destroyed. The codex was said to have been found in a trashcan in a Paris library. As a result, it is in very poor condition.⁶

The Grolier Codex - While the other three codices were known to scholars since the 19th century the Grolier Codex only surfaced in the 1970s. This fourth Maya codex is claimed to have been found in a cave, but the question of its authenticity has still not been resolved to everyone's satisfaction. The codex is a fragment of 11 pages. It is currently in a museum in Mexico, but is not on display to the public. Scanned photos of it are available on the web. The pages are much less detailed than any of the other codices. Each page shows a hero or god, facing to the left. At the top of each page is a number. Down the left of each page is what appears to be a list of dates.⁶

The Prague Codex - The Prague Codex falls into the category of many pseudo-authentic artifacts. It appears that an authentic but worn and faded codex was painted over to make it appear more valuable, not realizing that any authentic codex, no matter its condition, is more valuable than a fraud.

The Prague Codex is made of plant

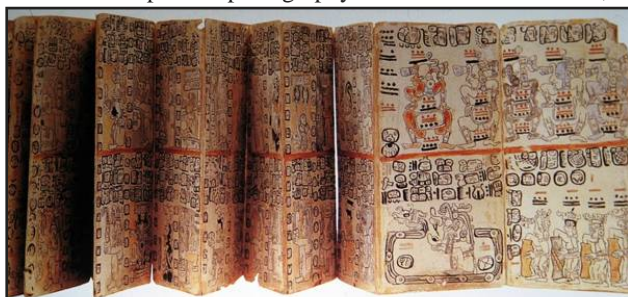


Figure 3 the Madrid Codex

pages colored is preserved on the proof sheets of Kingsborough's never-published Volume X of his "Antiquities of México," currently in the Newberry Library of Chicago. Though the Paris codex was mentioned occasionally during the next 24 years, it didn't really reach prominence until 1859 when Léon de



Figure 6 the Prague Codex

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The Mayan Codex *Continued*

fibers covered by white stucco. It is about 11 feet (2834 mm) long and it is folded into 18 pages. The page size is about 6 x 10 inches (155 x 265 mm). The appearance and condition are similar to the other codices.

Results from ultraviolet tests show it to be an original Mayan manuscript covered over by fake drawings from the late 1800s. Much of the original drawings were removed and replaced by fabricated illustrations and glyphs. By scanning the codex in the spectrum of invisible radiation, it is hoped to reveal much of the original content. This method has been used successfully in revealing original art under forged paintings.

“After processing all preserved original Mayan data and making the content of the original pages visible within the framework of the possibilities of the present-day technical equipment, the Prague Codex will be published completely and made accessible for the widest public.”⁸

The Mayans used their codices as

reference libraries for religion, economics, science, agriculture and significant historical events. Unlike a carved wall or statue, the codex was portable. There are murals, carved or painted on walls, stelae (statues) and pottery to read and learn from, but the multi-page detailed information seen in the few remaining codices, provides a hint of the vast knowledge that was destroyed when whole libraries were burned by the Spanish.

Mosiah 1:5 *“For it were not possible that our father Lehi could have remembered all these things, to have taught them to his children, except it were for the help of these plates:*

6 that thereby they could teach them to their children, and so fulfilling the commandments of God, even down to this present time.”

Omni 1:12 *“And after this manner we keep the records, for it is according to the commandments of our fathers.”*

The authors of the Book of Mormon saw the need for accurate and thorough

record keeping. “The ability to keep records that encompassed learning beyond the span of one lifetime allowed the Maya to profit from their past.”²

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