

“It Came to Pass”

Occurrences in the Book of Mormon

	Instances of “it came to pass” in the 1830 edition	Percentage of total “it came to pass” phrases	Average rate of occurrence (instances/words)
1 Nephi	208	14.1	108.9
2 Nephi	52	3.5	525.4
Jacob	48	3.3	174.7
Enos	6	0.4	164.8
Jarom	4	0.3	164.8
Omni	13	0.9	97.8
Words of Mormon	6	0.4	137.3
Mosiah	168	11.4	170.3
Alma	433	29.3	178.6
Helaman	135	9.2	138.2
3 Nephi	154	10.4	173.4
4 Nephi	20	1.4	89.5
Mormon	63	4.3	137.6
Ether	166	11.3	89.4
Moroni	0	0	0

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Key Scripture 1 Nephi 1:4

Explanation This chart compares the frequency of the phrase “it came to pass” and its closely related formulations in books of the Book of Mormon. The number of times the phrase is used (expressed as a total and as a percentage) and the rate of occurrence (expressed as one occurrence every so many words) are listed for each individual book, varying considerably. Some readers wonder why these words occur so often in the Book of Mormon compared with the Bible. Actually, the Hebrew word *wayehi* is translated in the King James Version of the Bible as “it came to pass,” but it is also translated as “it happened, came, had come, became, arose, was, now,” and so forth. Therefore, what was an extremely common phrase in the Bible appears to be less so because it was translated into various phrases instead of a single one. Apparently, Joseph Smith was quite consistent in translating it with the phrase “it came to pass” every time. Incidentally, in much the same way, some books in the Bible have a high frequency of “it came to pass,” while others do not.

Source Robert F. Smith, “‘It Came to Pass’ in the Bible and the Book of Mormon” (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1984).