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The World of the Jaredites, Part IV

Author(s): Hugh W. Nibley

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Abstract: This series is a detailed reconstruction of the epic milieu and ancient historical setting in the third millennium B.C. in Mesopotamia and Asia relative to details about the Jaredites: their ships, shining stones, government, wars, society, and worldview. The fourth part covers the Jaredites' journey through the wilderness.

Dear F.

So you think my account of the Big Wind is a bit farfetched. I make no claim that the tower was blown over, but only point out that the ancients had a very old, widespread, and persistent tradition that its fall was accompanied by high winds. This I correlate with the description of the winds in the Book of Ether. To show you that such a thing is possible, however, I will give you one historical parallel. Qazwini in his *Cosmography* says that the great dome of Bagdad was a sign and symbol of the power and unity of the land. Scholars have often pointed out that the Tower of Babel served as a like symbol. Qazwini further informs us that this mighty structure was destroyed by a terrible wind—at least he says it fell during a wind-storm and leaves us to draw our conclusions.^{54a}

From the plain of Sinear the Jaredites moved northward into a valley named after Nimrod, the mighty hunter, and thence “. . . into that quarter where there never had man been.” (Ether 2:5.) This would take them into the land of great broad valleys where the Tigris, Euphrates, Kura, and Araks rivers have their headwaters. The frequent occurrence of the name of Nimrod in this area, which we have already noted, may not be without genuine significance, for no phenomenon of history has been more thoroughly demonstrated than the extreme tenacity of place names. In many instances place names still in use among illiterate peasants or nomads have been proved to go back to prehistoric times.

Whether the party moved east or west from the valley of Nimrod is not a major issue, though a number of things favor an eastern course. For one thing, there is the great length of the journey: “for this many years we have been in the wilderness” (*Ibid.*, 3:3); but most revealing is the report that “the wind did never cease to blow towards the promised land, while they were upon the waters; and thus they were driven forth before the wind.” (*Ibid.*, 6:8.) Now whether the Jaredites sailed from eastern or western shores, they would necessarily have to cross the ocean between the thirtieth and sixtieth parallels north, and where

the prevailing winds are westerly right around the world. Since the cause of these winds is tied up with the revolution of the earth and the relative coolness of the polar regions, it may be assumed that the same winds prevailed in Jared's time as in ours. Of course, one cannot be too dogmatic on such a point, for weather has changed through the ages, and freak storms do occur; yet the extreme *steadiness* of the wind strongly suggests prevailing westerlies and a North Pacific crossing, since it would have meant a head wind all the way had the voyagers attempted the Atlantic. But east or west, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, “from the Gobi Desert and the border of Korea to the Lower Danube and the Car-

ing of many waters under continual direction comes as a surprise, “the sea” in question being apparently but one—though the most formidable—of many waters to be crossed. Now it is a fact that in ancient times the plains of Asia were covered with “many waters,” which have now disappeared but are recorded well down in historic times; they were of course far more abundant still in Jared's time. Even as late as Herodotus, the land of the Scythians (the region into which Jared's people first advanced) presented formidable water barriers to migration: “the face of the country may have differed considerably from what it is now. . . . The rivers were much deeper and many lakes were still left from the glacial age

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PART IV

By Hugh Nibley, Ph.D.

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, HISTORY AND RELIGION, BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

pathian Mountains,” a single way of life has prevailed since the dawn of history, conditioned by a remarkably uniform type of terrain.⁵⁵ The excavations of the Russians in recent years have confirmed the most extravagant speculations on the extent, antiquity, and uniformity of the steppe culture. The newly-discovered Kelteminarian culture, for example, would seem to bind together all the major languages of Europe and Central Asia in a single vast prehistoric continuum.^{56a} This is the classic land of wandering tribes and nations, a type of society which, as we shall see, is perfectly represented by the Jaredites. Only the Book of Ether sees the now dry and dusty landscapes under peculiar conditions: “And it came to pass that they did travel in the wilderness, and did build barges, in which they did cross many waters, being directed continually by the hand of the Lord. And the Lord would not suffer that they should stop beyond *the sea* in the wilderness, but he would that they should come forth even unto the land of promise. . . .” (*Ibid.*, 2:6-7.) The cross-

which later turned into swamps.”^{56b} Indeed, Pumpelly's theory of the development of civilization from oasis cultures rests on the existence of vast inland seas, now vanished, in central Asia. He notes that the Chinese annals speak of “expansive bodies of water of which Lobnor and other shrunken lakes and brackish tarns are the withered survivals.”⁵⁷ The steady and continual drying-up of the Asiatic “heartland” since the end of the last ice age is one of the basic facts of history and is even looked upon by some experts as the mainspring of world history. But it is a relatively recent discovery. Whoever wrote the Book of Ether showed remarkable foresight in mentioning waters rather than deserts along the migrants' way, for most of the deserts are of very recent origin, while nearly all the ancient waters have completely vanished.

Ether's account of “crossing the plains” is an Asiatic idyll. Nothing essential is missing. First of all the steppe is darkened by “flocks, both male and female, of every kind,” and if we look more closely fowl,



—Photograph by Bartlett

An open-air market place in the Near East where travelers to and from desert places carry on their barter.

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fish, even bees, and "seed of the earth of every kind" are not wanting. Moreover the brother of Jared was instructed to admit to his company anyone whom he felt like taking: ". . . also Jared thy brother and his family; and also thy friends and their families, and the friends of Jared and their families." (*Ibid.*, 1:41.) All these families with their herds and their baggage moved through the valleys and out over the plains with the intent and expectation of becoming "a great nation" and finding a promised land; in all of which they are typical Asiatic nomads of the old school, as a few examples will make clear.

Ammianus describes the Alans on the march as resembling "a moving city." All the people of Asia migrate in the same way, he explains, driving vast herds before them as they go, mounted on the backs of beasts, with their families and household effects following along on great ox-drawn wagons. In spite of their wealth of cattle, says Ammianus, the people hunt and plunder as they go.⁵⁸ The Huns, who defeated and supplanted the Alans, kept the same customs, as did their successors,⁵⁹ until in the thirteenth century William of Rubruck, traveling as a spy and observer for Louis IX of France, uses almost the very words of Am-

mianus: "On the next day we met with the carts of Scacatai laden with houses, and I thought that a mighty city came to meet me. I wondered also at the huge droves of oxen, and horses, and at the flocks of sheep."⁶⁰ In the present century Pumpelly describes how "a thousand Kirghiz families descended from the passes roundabout, with their long camel trains caparisoned and rich-laden with nomadic wealth, and each caravan with its flocks of sheep and goats, herds of camels and cattle and horses. . . ."⁶¹ Characteristic of all these people is that their herds consist of every type of animal—to us an almost inconceivable mix-up: "flocks of every kind," says Ether, who seems to know what he is talking about. If you want to move backward in the time scale, you will find at an age far more remote from Ammianus than our own, the annals of Assyrian kings swarming with the same huge herds of cattle, sheep, horses, camels, and human beings all mixed up together and moving across the plains either as prisoners of mighty conquerors or seeking escape in the search for a promised land.⁶² Nearly all the wandering tribes of which we have descriptions were, in fact, seeking for new homelands—promised lands where they might settle and become "mighty nations." Moreover, these

people almost without exception, however terrible they may appear to us, were actually refugees who had been driven from their native farms and pastures by the pressure of still other tribes who in the end are all driven by a common necessity which the weather imposes from time to time on the users of marginal and sub-marginal lands.⁶³

If the Jaredites mixed their cattle, they also seem to have mixed their professions, and you might well ask, what were they, hunters, herdsmen, or farmers? You might ask the same of any normal Asiatic society and get the same answer: They were all three! McGovern repeatedly points out that the tribes of the steppes have at all times been hunters, herdsmen, and farmers all at once.⁶⁴ All the tribes we have just mentioned were expert hunters, though none lacked animals in plenty. Typical is the case of the Manchu-Solons who when murrain destroyed the herds of their people took to farming, yet "plough no more than hunger compels them, and in years when game is plentiful, they do not plough at all,"⁶⁵ that is, they are hunters, cattlemen, or cultivators as conditions require or permit. On top of this they seem to have been the original city-builders, as I have attempted to point out in some of my studies on the state.

It is a remarkable thing that mention of flocks of *any* kind is conspicuously absent from the story of Lehi, though that story is told in considerable detail. What an astonishing contrast! The one group hastening away from Jerusalem in secrecy to live a life of hunting and hiding in the desert and almost dying of starvation, and the other accepting volunteers, as it were, from all sides, moving out in a sort of massive front, driving innumerable beasts before them and carrying everything from libraries to hives of bees and tanks of fish! It would be hard to conceive of two more diametrically different types of migration, yet each fits perfectly with the customs and usages recorded throughout history for the part of the world to which the Book of Mormon assigns it.

But how could the Jaredites carry all that stuff with them? The same way other Asiatics have always done—in wagons. And such wag-

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ons! "Measuring once the breadth between the wheel ruts of one of their carts," William of Rubruck reports, "I found it to be twenty feet over. . . . I counted twenty-two oxen in one team, drawing a house upon a cart . . . the axletree of the cart was of huge size, like the mast of a ship."⁶⁸ Marco Polo saw the houses of the Tartars mounted "upon a sort of cart with four wheels."⁶⁷ Seventeen hundred years before Marco Polo, Xenophon beheld enormous wagons on the plains of Asia, drawn by eight yokes of oxen,⁶⁸ and yet a thousand years earlier we have reports of how the Philistines rolled into Palestine with their families and their possessions loaded on huge solid-wheeled affairs drawn by four oxen.⁶⁹ To this day the archaic type of wagon has survived in the immense ceremonial wagons in which such tribes as the Buriats carry their gods across the plains.⁷⁰ But can we say the wagon is possibly as old as the Jaredites?

In all probability it is. We now have a few sample wagons of such high antiquity as to come within hailing distance of the flood itself, and these vehicles have already acquired the form and perfection which they are to keep without major change for thousands of years to come. The teams and wagons from the royal tombs at Ur, the el-Agar chariot model, found in 1937, the Khafaje car that dates back to the fourth millennium, B.C., all point to the great antiquity and central Asiatic origin of the wagon.⁷¹ The last named was horse-drawn and justifies Gertrud Hermes in her conclusion that the horse was not only known "but actually used, at least in some places, as a draught animal with war chariots" at a surprisingly early date.⁷²

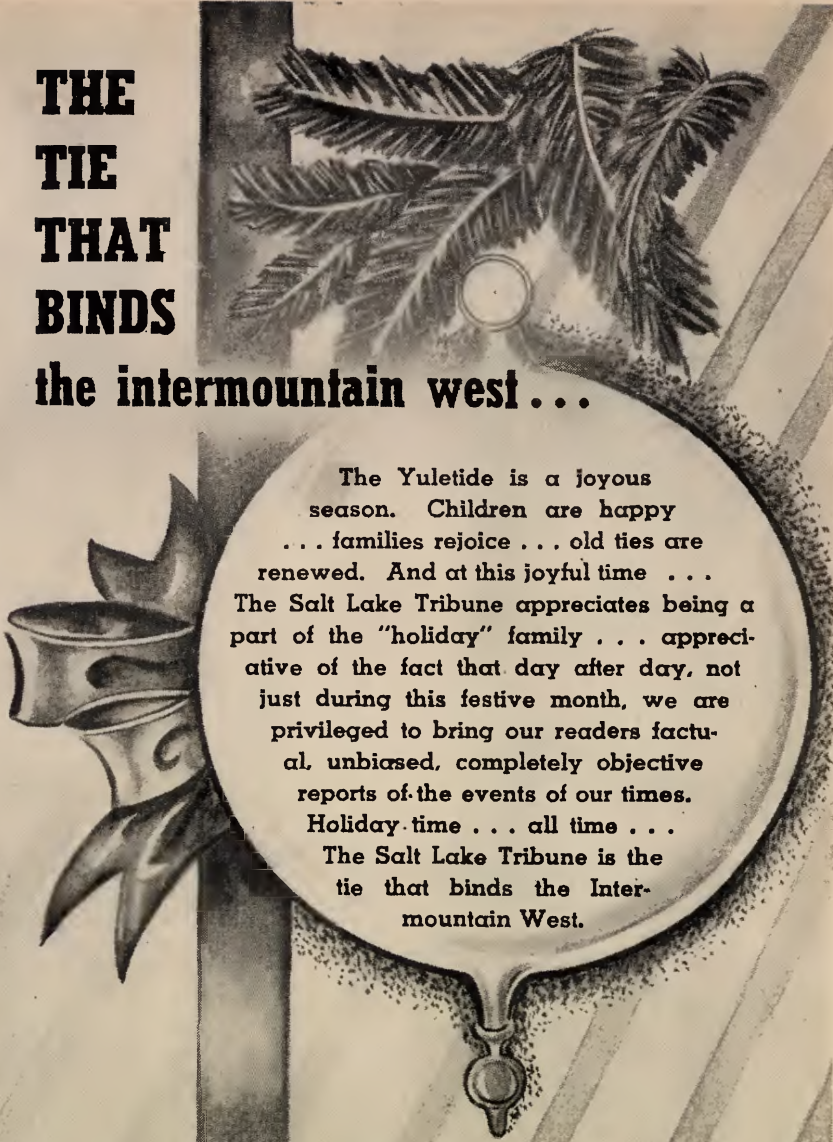
Incidentally, the whole history of the domestication of animals runs counter to the evolutionist formula. H. G. Wells once wrote a vivid description of how a primitive man swinging from a branch once landed plunk on the back of a grazing horse that happened to walk under his tree. Such an event, he believes, would account most logically for the discovery of the art of riding and the domestication of the horse. Perhaps it would, but that isn't the

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way it happened according to the present-day consensus, which is that "driving everywhere preceded riding."⁷⁸ Nay, McGovern tells how at a relatively recent date "the Scythians and Sarmatians hit upon the brilliant and original notion of mounting the animal they had

long been accustomed to drive."⁷⁹ It is generally agreed that cattle were used for driving long before the horse, and that would put the use of cattle-drawn vehicles in a very early age indeed. Though it would have been possible for the Jaredites to go afoot, as the Mongols themselves did as late as the

*"Evils Have Their Life
 and Limits..."*

RICHARD L. EVANS

THERE is an almost limitless list of things to worry about—a list that may somehow seem to have grown longer lately. Our problems sometimes seem to have multiplied, and also our perplexities. But perhaps people were always worried. If they weren't worried about the world they were worried about themselves, their families, their business affairs, their health and future happiness. And yet despite all the causes of continuing worry, there are always some who seem to meet the realities of the present and to face the uncertainties of the future with calm composure. There are always some who seem to have learned, as Montaigne once wrote, that "Evils have their life and limits." There is no known way of ridding ourselves of some reverses and of some uncertainties. But there is less or little room for fear, for unhappiness and hopelessness in the life of a man who has faith—faith in the fact that ultimately in the Lord's own time and place and purpose there will come an inevitable understanding and justice and comfort and compensation—faith in the fact that we are children of an Eternal Father who is as earnestly anxious for us to weather our way through the experiences of this world even as we ourselves are anxious for our own children. We may rest content that there is plan and purpose in our present period here, and we must meet all conditions that we inevitably encounter to the best of our ability. And whatever we have cause to complain of, we are not here to succumb but to conquer—to conquer ourselves and the problems that present themselves. We are not here to be at ease but to be earnestly engaged in a good cause. We are not here to by-pass problems but to be about the business of learning to live life. There will always be things we don't know, that we don't understand; there will always be conditions that could cause concern. But we can rest assured that if we live life as well as we reasonably can under all conditions, and if we seize and accept truth wherever it is, the answers we so much seek we shall surely find, and the peace we so much pursue will surely sometime come.

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sixth century B.C., it would not have been possible for them in such circumstances to have carried bird cages, beehives, and tanks of fish with them. There is not the slightest objection to their using wagons, especially since they had no shortage of beasts to pull them.

(To be continued)

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⁵⁴⁸ . . . this dome was the symbol ('alam) of Bagdad, and the crown of the country, and the principal achievement of the sons of Abbas." (cf. Gen. 11:4.) The passage is in E. Harder, *Arabic Chrestomathy* (Heidelberg, 1911), p. 166.

⁵⁵The quotation from L. Marin's foreword to G. N. Roerich, *Trails to Inmost Asia*, p. 9.

⁵⁵⁸V. Altman, "Ancient Khorezmian Civilization in the Light of the Latest Archaeological Discoveries," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 67 (1947), pp. 82f.

⁵⁶Geo. Vernadsky, *Ancient Russia* (New Haven, Yale Univ., 1943), p. 6, cf. p. 19.

⁵⁷R. Pumpelly, *Excavations in Chinese Turkestan* (Washington, 1906), II, 286, cf. I 66, 70-75.

⁵⁸Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res. Gest.* XIII, ii.

⁵⁹See the vivid description in Priscus, *De legationibus Romanorum ad gentes in Migne, Patrol. Graec.* Vol. 113, cols. 705-9, written in 433 A.D.

⁶⁰William of Rubruck, in M. Komroff (Ed.), *Contemporaries of Marco Polo*, p. 76 (Ch. xii).

⁶¹Pumpelly, *op. cit.* II, 260.

⁶²D. D. Luckenbill, *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia* (Univ. of Chicago Press, 1926), I.

⁶³The sense of being lost and on the search for a promised land or an ancestral home has always dominated among the nomads of Asia, as is finely illustrated in a recent study of the Kirghiz, S. Lipkin, *Manas Vgelikodushnyi* (Sovietski Pisatyl, 1947).

⁶⁴McGovern, *Early Empires*, etc., pp. 44, 73ff. Cf. Pumpelly, *op. cit.* I, 39, 41, 43, 67-69.

⁶⁵H. Haslund, *Men and Gods in Mongolia*, p. 264.

⁶⁶*Op. cit.* Ch. ii (p. 59).

⁶⁷Marco Polo, *Travels* I, xlvi.

⁶⁸Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* VI, i, 52. Cf. *id.* 29, where he describes huge wooden tower-wagons used in war.

⁶⁹For sources, Moret, *Histoire de l'Orient* II, 584, n. 150.

⁷⁰M. A. Czaplicka, *Aboriginal Siberia* (Oxford, 1914), Pl. 16.

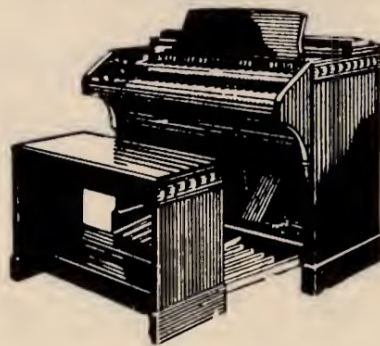
⁷¹Xenophon, *Cyrop.* VI, i, 27, notes that "in ancient times Medes, Syrians, Arabs, and all the inhabitants of Asia used to make use of those wagons which today survive only among the Cyrenaeans."

⁷²Gertrud Hermes, in *Anthropos* XXXI, 365-394, Cf. XXXII, 105-127. For the El-Agar chariot, discovered after Hermes' authoritative study appeared, see *Illust. London News*, Dec. 6, 1937.

⁷³McGovern, *op. cit.*, pp. 47; B. Meissner, *Babyl. u. Assyr.* I, 93.

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