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The World of the Jaredites, Part X

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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 tenth part covers Jaredite survivors, and begins to conclude the series.

Dear Professor F.

THE WORLD OF THE

BUT why all this insistence on the possible survival of a few Jaredite escapees prowling in the woods? Because it would take no great number of such renegades to perpetuate "upon the face of this north country" the ways of the Jaredite nomads and hunters. We have said that when the Asiatics hide in the mountains and the woods, their way of life becomes just like that of the Indians. Indeed Professor Grousset can think of no way of life so perfectly like that of the scattered and disorganized tribes of Asia after the destruction of the great nations than that of the North American Indians at the time of their discovery by the whites.²²² And what is more natural than that conditions in the north country, littered with bones and haunted by savage hunters, should present after the passing of the Jaredite nation just the sort of wreckage and savagery that make the Asiatic scene after the passing of empire? In time descendants of Jaredite hunters and robbers would combine with Lamanite riffraff, as their ancestors did with the Mulekites, and the old Jaredite stock would survive, like the Nephite, as a "mixture" only. (I Nephi 13:30.) But the ways of the Jaredite hunters, perfectly adapted as they were to conditions of life in this north country, would not only hold their own but also remain predominant. This complicates the picture considerably, but for that matter, the anthropologists themselves now begin to detect just such complications in their own picture, as Gladwin has shown us with much spirit and wit.²²³

We need not discuss the well-known affinities between the North Americans and the hunters of Asia—shamans, mounds, peace pipes, scalping, secret societies, and all that.²²⁴ Contacts between the natives on the Asiatic and American shores of the far North Pacific still take place, but that is strictly a local phenomenon.²²⁵ It is the really ancient Asiatic background of the Indians that interests me. In a recent study on the rise of the ancient state in Central Asia, I drew evidence equally from the American ethnologists and the Old World sources, and it all fitted neatly into a single picture. But whatever connection there might have been

between the Asiatics and the Indians—save for those maddeningly obvious ties with the Near East to which Gladwin draws attention—must have been a very early one indeed, for the Asiatic languages are among the most conservative and widespread on earth, and if the two worlds had been in contact anywhere near as recently as certain authorities believe, the Asiatic nature of the Indian languages should be instantly recognizable. To date no one has been able to recognize those languages as those of the Asiatic steppes.

Now all this is as the Book of Ether would have it. That account tells us that at the very dawn of history, many thousands of years ago, a party of nomad hunters and stock raisers from west central Asia crossed the water—very probably the North Pacific—to the New World, where they preserved the ways of their ancestors, including certain savage and degenerate practices, and carried on a free and open type of steppe warfare with true Asiatic cruelty and ferocity; it tells us that these people moved about much in the wilderness, for all they built imposing cities, and that they produced a steady trickle of "outcasts" through the centuries. A careful study of the motions of the Jaredites, Mulekites,

Nephites, and Lamanites should correct the absurd oversimplification by which the Book of Mormon as a history is always judged. It will show as plain as day that the Book of Mormon itself first suggests the Asiatic origin of some elements at least of the Indian race and culture long before the anthropologists got around to it. The scientists *no longer* hold that one migration and one route can explain everything about the Indians. The Book of Mormon *never* did propound a doctrine so naive. Though it comes to us as a digest and an abridgment, stripped and streamlined, it is still as intricate and complex a history as you can find; and in its involved and tragic pages nothing is more challenging than the sinister presence of those fierce and bloody-minded "Men out of Asia" known in their day as Jaredites.

THE BIG PICTURE

The time has come to draw a few conclusions. If you will recall, I set out to prove "that certain strange and unfamiliar things described in Ether could have taken place as described because they actually did take place—characteristically and repeatedly—in those culture areas in which, ac-

Journals of anthropology are full of such photographs of forlorn-looking Indians. They are essentially "hidlers," seeking only to escape any involvement with the outer world. The danger and exertion of life in Jaredite times drove many into the wilderness as permanent refugees. It is not impossible that their descendants have left a strain in the blood and culture of the predominantly Lamanite American Indians.



THE IMPROVEMENT ERA

JAREDITES

by *Hugh Nibley, Ph.D.*

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, HISTORY AND RELIGION, BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

According to the Book of Mormon, the Jaredites acquired their culture and civilization." Among such strange and unfamiliar things we mentioned that valley of Nimrod, the confounding of the languages, the great wind, desert, and the flooded plains of the Old World, while in the New World our list includes such items as the great assembly of the nation, the drawing off of followers by bribes, oaths by kings in prison, fine work done in prisons, the dancing princess, strange breeds of animals, plagues of serpents, great national hunts, and special hunting preserves, the nation in arms, peculiar strategy and tactics, the formation of armies by forced recruiting, systematic terrorism, the rule of robber bands, wars of extermination regarded as personal duels between rival rulers, with the ritual survival of the king. The list of bulls'-eyes is a long one, and if it is not as long as Lehi's it is because Ether takes fewer shots (Nephi, which covers but eight years, can devote much more attention to detail) and at an, if possible, even more difficult target. His percentage of hits is no less staggering.

Individually I find the parallels between the Jaredites and the early Asiatics very impressive, but taken together their value increases as the cube of their number. In the Book of Ether they are woven into a perfect organic whole, a consistent picture of a type of society the very existence of which has come to be known only in recent years, and which is quite different from that Indian culture into which it later developed. How beautifully integrated this short history is! There is a great calamity, a confusing and confounding of peoples and tongues, a general scattering in many directions from a point somewhere to the north of Mesopotamia.²³⁴ Then a migration into unknown lands covered with swamps and lakes, the dank remnants of the last ice age, and then tremendous winds that overtake the party just as they set sail. Some years after their landing in the New World they hold a general assembly and

choose a king; his son in time rebels and inaugurates centuries of bitter warfare, ending eventually in a war of extermination with odd survivors lurking in the woods and deserts. Numbers, distances, and times all fit together perfectly, but the sort of thing that can be most fully checked and is virtually impossible to fake is, as I have often insisted, the sort of thing that was done and the way it was done. It is the big picture that is really impressive.

But our main purpose in writing these letters, if you will think back to the first one, was to refute the *Einheitstheorie* of a single beginning for the origin of the Indians, since you protested that the Book of Mormon was over-simplifying the story. I think by now it should be apparent that the Book of Mormon account is not as simple as it seems. Ether alone introduces a formidable list of possibilities, few of which have ever been seriously considered. Foremost among these is the probability, amounting almost to certainty, that numerous Jaredites survived in out-of-the-way places of the north to perpetuate a strong Asiatic element in the culture and blood of the American Indian.

To write a history of what could have happened at the very beginning of recorded history would have been as far beyond the scope of any scholar living in 1830 as the construction of an atom bomb would have been. The portrait of the first great states of antiquity is only now taking shape in our own day, and the idea of the original Asiatic nucleus of *all* civilizations was undreamed of a few years ago. Our own ideas will have to be revised continually on many points, but the main outlines of the picture are firm and clear—and it is the same picture that meets us in the Book of Ether. One of the most surprising discoveries of recent years has been the revelation that wherever the experts search, in Babylon, Thebes, Ras Shamra, Central Asia, or the Far East, we are met *at every period* of history by an almost unbelievable mix-up of physical and linguistic

types. And as the biological picture becomes more complex, the cultural one seems to become more simple, the whole civilized world at any moment of its history seeming to share in a general sort of way in a single common world civilization. This is also the picture we get in Ether, where the nations and tribes are already thoroughly "confounded" in Jared's day, while certain institutions and practices are described as being common to "the ancients" as a whole and as flourishing among all nations.

Consistent with this picture is the fact that a number of Jaredite names are also Bible names. You asked in your last letter how that can be if the Jaredite language was the lost Adamic tongue? In the first place, let us make it clear that the language of Jared was not the Adamic language at all: Jared asked that his language be not confounded, so that his people might continue to understand each other, not because it was a unique or perfect language or the sacred language of Adam, a thing which would certainly have been mentioned if it were so. Indeed, after the Jaredites had made their getaway and their language was safe, the Lord told the brother of Jared: "the language which ye shall write I have confounded." (Ether 3:24.) When Moroni tells of the remarkable power of the writings of the brother of Jared, he attributes the mighty words not to the genius of the language but to a special gift from God to the writer. (*Ibid.*, 12:24.) As to the antiquity of writing, incidentally, we have not discussed the matter because it is still, so to speak, completely up in the air. At Uruk, where "the parent forms" of writing first appear, they do not do so by any gradual process of evolution, but "suddenly and without warning there appear fifteen hundred signs and pictographs scratched on clay. They seem to have been written and used without any signs of hesitancy,²³⁵ showing that writing was already well-established somewhere in the world, and that somewhere was the region to the north of Mesopotamia.²³⁶ The emergence of writing in Egypt is just as sudden and surprising.²³⁷

As to Jaredite names in the *Bible*, the general confusion of tongues would not only allow it but also require it, for, remember, that the vast majority of people who spoke Jared's

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The World of the Jaredites

(Continued from page 399)

language originally were confounded and that language contaminated, so that while the words remained, their meanings did not. (*Ibid.*, 1:34.) We would expect, then, to find Jaredite words scattered here and there all over the Old World. The only way we can trace such words, of course, is in proper names. Few people in our society know what their names mean, though both family names and given names almost all once had meanings because our names are almost without exception survivals from long-dead languages, having very involved and picturesque histories. Such has always been the case with proper names. It is not surprising that three of the oldest cities in the world, one of them traditionally described as the first city in the world after the flood, all bear the good Jaredite name of Kish, though these cities are widely separated. It is not surprising that the first king of Israel should also be named Kish. It is not surprising that a city rivaling Kish in age and importance in Mesopotamia should be named Lagash, while one of the oldest cities in Palestine was Lakish, both recalling the Jaredite Rip-lakish, which could mean in Babylonian "Lord of Lakish." A more remarkable coincidence is that the Jaredite king, Aha, was the son of Seth (*Ibid.*, 1:10, 11:10), since Menes, the fabled founder of the First Egyptian Dynasty, bore the name of Aha (meaning warrior), and was supposed to have succeeded Seth as the ruler of the land. A good idea of how mixed up things are may be gained from considering the name of Corihor. We noted above that the name of the high priest who in 1085 B.C. usurped the throne of Thebes (incidentally, the oldest city in Egypt and the oldest city in Europe both bear the name of Thebes—how come?) seemed to be identical with that of the Nephite upstart Korihor. But we have just seen that Korihor is just as obviously identical with the Jaredite Corihor. What is the tie-up? Not in Egypt, surprisingly enough, for Hur-hor, Heriher, or whatever it was, does not seem to have been an Egyptian name at all, but is possibly a late adoption from the Hurrian, through Canaanite or Amorite; that is, it comes from the original stamping

THE IMPROVEMENT ERA

grounds of the Jaredites.²⁸⁷ The Nephites can thus have got it either from the Jaredites through Mulek or have imported it directly from their corner of the Egyptian Empire, where its Egyptian form was illustrious among the followers of Ammon.

There is not a name or an event in Jaredite history that does not call for long and serious study. They merit such study because they are names and events of authentic *type*. As with the Lehi story, if this is fiction, it is fiction by one thoroughly familiar with a field of history that nobody in the world knew anything about in 1830. No one is going to produce a skilful forgery of Roman history, for example, unless he actually knows a good deal of genuine Roman history. So if Ether is a forgery, where did its author get the solid knowledge necessary to do a job that could stand up to five minutes of investigation? I have merely skimmed the surface in these hasty letters, but if my skates are clumsy, the ice is never thin. Every page is loaded with matter for serious discussion—discussion that would fizzle out promptly in the face of any palpable absurdity.

But nothing could be more unfair than to treat the Book of Ether simply as a history. After our long preoccupation with the sordid and secular side of Jaredite history, it is high time to remind ourselves that this text, from which we have been arbitrarily selecting for comment only those verses which might have been found in any ancient chronicle, is one of the greatest treasures that ever came to a generation of men. The sad story of the Jaredites is but a framework for the inspired commentary of Moroni, a mighty tract for our times but more than that for the times ahead.

(To be concluded)

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²⁸¹Above, note 226.

²⁸²Gladwin, *Men Out of Asia*.

²⁸³M. A. Czaplicka, *Aboriginal Siberia* (Oxford, 1914), pp. 114-6.

²⁸⁴If the reader will examine the culture map of Asia published in *Life* magazine for December 31, 1951, pp. 8-9, he will notice that the editors have placed the "beginning of civilization" in the mountains to the north and east of Mesopotamia, with the main focal point in the great valleys

(Continued on following page)

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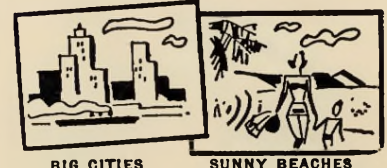
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AT YOUR GROCERS

The World of the Jaredites

(Continued from preceding page)

immediately north of the Plain of Sinear. This is in strict accordance with our own conclusions based on the Book of Ether.

²³⁶W. Andrae, "The Story of Uruk," *Antiquity* X (1936), 141-2. On the equally sudden emergence of Egyptian writing, S. Schott, *Mythe und Mythenbildung in Alten Aegypten* (Leipzig: Hinrich, 1945), pp. 2ff.

²³⁷I have treated this theme in *Wstin. Pol. Quart. II* (1949).

²³⁷P. K. Hitti, *History of Syria* (N.Y.: Macmillan, 1951), p. 149; for the archaic Hur-, Hor- element in Egyptian names, Schott, *op. cit.*

Colleen Hutchins—Miss America

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son Square Garden. Barbara was a "sweetheart" at Utah State Agricultural College, and brother Dale was named most preferred man at the same school. Ruth was stake Gold and Green Ball queen. Bob was judged outstanding actor in a stake play. But their most important trophy according to the family (if one of the smallest) is one by Father Hutchins for his performance on his motorcycle.

Prescriptions...for Our Friends

RICHARD L. EVANS

IT SEEMS that there are many important principles on which most of us can agree. And there are many standards of conduct that most of us feel others should observe. But the point where we often part company is the point of deciding when and to whom the principles should apply. Of course it is true that there are some wholly unprincipled people who don't even give lip service to a high code of conduct. But most of the people whom most of us are likely to meet are people who at least pay lip service to high principles—people who concede, for example, that the Golden Rule is a desirable code of conduct, that the Ten Commandments are not purely of the past but still apply to people in the present; that honesty, morality, fair dealing, clean living, and considering others as we should consider ourselves are all indispensable principles that should apply to all persons. Such things most of us agree to in the abstract, but we are sometimes disposed to think more of their application to others and to make liberal allowances for ourselves. And when we hear some sound advice, when we hear a sensible sermon, or when we hear a recipe or a precept for improving people, we frequently think of others who we wish had heard it. We think how fine it would be for our friends. Almost every day we hear or read of remarkable means and methods that tell how to improve talents, how to make better use of time, how to live within income, how to avoid marital misunderstandings, how to get along with neighbors, how to teach children. We rarely hear or read of such suggestions without thinking how fine they would be for our friends. And if there is a community cause or project for which we are called to assume some responsibility, we are frequently full of suggestions as to others who should be interested in it and who should take time to do it (excepting ourselves). So long as we are interested primarily in improving other people, our own approach to improvement will be much more slow than if we should begin with ourselves, and see first what the recommended remedy would do for us, and second, how fine it would be for our friends.

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