

General Comments on Ether

Gentiles versus Israelites

The text of the book of Ether is Moroni's heavily edited and abridged version of Ether's abridged version of the history of the Jaredites. Moroni selectively glosses over large portions of Jaredite history while making lengthy parenthetical statements. This clearly indicates Moroni had a specific agenda when writing this text. Fortunately, we don't have to speculate what that agenda is as he informs us himself.

Moroni includes six major parenthesis where he stops the historical recounting and speaks directly to the reader:

Gentiles warned by example of the Jaredites (2:6-12)

Gentiles and Israel called to repentance so they may obtain sealed revelation (4:1-19)

Three witnesses and the Book of Mormon to stand as a witness against the world (5:1-6)

Gentiles warned against secret combinations (8:20-26)

Lesson on faith for Gentiles (12:6-41)

Gentiles informed this land is ultimately to be inherited by Israel through Joseph (13:1-12)

All parenthesis are aimed at primarily Gentiles and are, for the most part, warnings. Moroni's comments make it plain his intent in abridging the book of Ether is to teach non-Israelite readers a lesson from the example of the Jaredites.

The Jaredites preceded the Abrahamic covenant, so they had no promises from the Lord regarding the preservation of lineage or a promised land for their inheritance. In other words, they were just like we Gentiles are now. The result is when the Jaredites abandoned the Lord they were annihilated, and the land promised to them was given to another, the children of Lehi.

The message to current Gentile inhabitants of this land is we are in the same position as were the ancient Jaredites. We have no covenant to protect us and the land is not ours if we rebel against the Lord. Our fate will be the same if we follow in the Jaredite's footsteps. The alternative is to repent and be grafted into Israel.

Also note Moroni's selective and editorialized treatment of Ether follows immediately after two chapters (cf. Mormon 8-9) of

pointed harsh criticism of the latter-day Gentiles. His treatment of the book of Ether is a continuation of the theme of the preceding book.

Rhetorical Context of the Book of Ether

Moroni starts the book Ether with a reference to the Genesis account of the Tower of Babel (cf. 1:5, 1:33-37). Moroni includes genealogies just like Genesis does (cf. 1:6-23). He draws parallels between the brother of Jared and Moses (1:42-43, 2:4-5, 3:6-16) and Noah (1:41, 2:16-3:1). In the Genesis account, the story of the Tower of Babel (the original Great and Spacious Building) is used to set up the story of Abraham (see my comments on Genesis 11 for the contrasts between the Tower of Babel and the Abraham story). In this case, Moroni uses the story of the Tower of Babel to set of the story of the brother of Jared, so as to contrast it with the story of Abraham.

What's in a Name: Brother of Jared and Abraham

The Brother of Jared is held up as a preeminent spiritual leader who plays second to his brother, the clear political leader. He is like Moses and like Noah. His faith is so exceptional he can remove mountains (cf. 12:30). However, he doesn't have a name that is remembered and he doesn't get a new name by virtue of a covenant with the Lord. The result is there is no memory of him, no patrilineal Priesthood, or any Priesthood at all. The line that survives is Jared's line of royalty (contrary to his brother's advice, cf. 6:23), and after their grandchildren, the history turns into constant conflict, persistent captive royalty, and only sporadic prophets.

Moroni's intent is to present two figures and contrast them. The Lord's strike against the Tower of Babel creates two nations: Abraham and Jared. Abraham's posterity survives, while Jared's posterity is annihilated. Moroni presents the brother of Jared as being exceptionally spiritual with extraordinary experiences. But, his personal experiences are just that, personal. After he is dead and gone, his impact on the surviving population wears off and by the time of the great grandchildren, leading to the fist conflict (cf. 7:4).

Moroni is not disrespecting the brother of Jared, he is showing the difference between the way the Lord dealt with Abraham and the brother of Jared, and how it affected human history. Specifically, he is contrasting how the Lord has dealt with the populations with respect to this Promised Land. The promise to the Jaredites was conditional, the promise to the Lehites was unconditional in the long term. And, this is the

warning to the Gentiles who are presently upon the Promised Land. That we are in the same position as the Jaredites, and the land will be given back to the Lehites, and Israelites, when we fail to worship the Lord in righteousness. We will be wiped out and forgotten, regardless of our individual righteousness, just like the brother of Jared was, unless we unite ourselves with the Lehites and Israelites.

Composition of the text

Moroni's organization of the text emphasizes the first prophet and the last prophet:

Ch. 1-6 Brother of Jared, Jaredite genesis

Ch. 7-11 27 generations of war, secret combinations and prophets preaching destruction

Ch. 12-15 Ether, Coriantumr, Jaredite annihilation

The middle of the book is a rapid accounting of how awful the Jaredites generally were, with only brief interruptions for righteous kings who support prophets. Amid the rapid historical accounting, Moroni includes a lengthy detailed recounting in chapter 8 about the origin of secret combinations among the Jaredites.

Plate History

The history of Ether's plates among the Nephites is they are found by the people of Limhi (cf. Mosiah 21:27) and delivered to the Nephites at Zarahemla (cf. Mosiah 22:14). King Mosiah subsequently translates and publishes them among the Nephites (cf. Mosiah 28:11-19).

Comments on Ether 1

1 AND now I, Moroni, proceed to give an account of those ancient inhabitants who were destroyed by the hand of the Lord upon the face of this north country. 2 And I take mine account from the twenty and four plates which were found by the people of Limhi, which is called the Book of Ether.

3 And as I suppose that the first part of this record, which speaks concerning the creation of the world, and also of Adam, and an account from that time even to the great tower, and whatsoever things transpired among the children of men until that time, is had among the Jews-- 4 Therefore I do not write

those things which transpired from the days of Adam until that time; but they are had upon the plates; and whoso findeth them, the same will have power that he may get the full account. 5 But behold, I give not the full account, but a part of the account I give, from the tower down until they were destroyed.

v1-5 Moroni informs us he is now going to abridge the record of the Jaredites, who were annihilated from off the face of this land (v. 1). He takes his record from the plates of Ether, which were delivered to Nephites (cf. Mosiah 22:14) by the splinter group of Limhi (v. 2, cp. Mosiah 21:27).

The first part of Ether's record covers the Creation and Fall just as the Jewish record of Genesis does (v. 3) so Moroni doesn't bother transcribing it as the account is available elsewhere (v. 4). Moroni will start abridging the history from the tower of Babel onward (v. 5).

v1 "destroyed by the hand of the Lord", from the historical point of view given by Moroni, it looks like internal conflict led to the destruction of the Jaredites. However, from Moroni's point of view, he sees the Lord as an engineer of humanity, and His unwillingness to intervene to save them as His choice to destroy them, because of their failure to respect and worship Him. The Lord occasionally tried to chasten them (cf. 9:30-34), but ultimately just lets them wipe each other out.

v3 "And as I suppose that the first part of this record...is had among the Jews", Moroni omits the Creation account from Ether's record. It is too bad he did as it would have been interesting to compare and contrast the Jaredite version with the Semitic one. One would assume that since Moroni omitted it there weren't major differences. But, even the complete lack of difference between the accounts would have been interesting as it is generally assumed the Genesis Creation account is heavily influenced by Semitic culture and is reactionary to Canaanite creation stories. If the Jaredite and Semitic versions were very similar this would question that general assumption.

v4 "but they are had upon the plates", it is unclear whether Moroni is referring to the Brass Plates or Ether's 24 gold plates. It is safe to assume he is referring to the latter as he never explicitly refers to the Brass Plates, only the record of the Jews in v. 3. If this is the case, then Ether's 24 gold plates is probably part of the sealed portion of the plates.

However, in 4:4-6 Moroni says he has written the entire account of the brother of Jared's vision and sealed them up. So, Ether's original plates may not be part of the sealed

portion of the plates, he may have just transcribed and/or translated the content, either in part or in total, of Ether's plates onto a set of plates that fit in with the rest of the record.

It seems unlikely that Moroni would bother transcribing the content of the vision as well as include the original 24 plates of Ether as that would be redundant. It is also unlikely the plates of Ether would be the same or similar size as the plates of the Nephite record, fitting neatly into the bound set.

6 And on this wise do I give the account. He that wrote this record was Ether, and he was a descendant of Coriantor. 7 Coriantor was the son of Moron. 8 And Moron was the son of Ethem. 9 And Ethem was the son of Ahah. 10 And Ahah was the son of Seth. 11 And Seth was the son of Shiblōn. 12 And Shiblōn was the son of Com. 13 And Com was the son of Coriantum. 14 And Coriantum was the son of Amnigaddah. 15 And Amnigaddah was the son of Aaron. 16 And Aaron was a descendant of Heth, who was the son of Hearthom. 17 And Hearthom was the son of Lib. 18 And Lib was the son of Kish. 19 And Kish was the son of Corom. 20 And Corom was the son of Levi. 21 And Levi was the son of Kim. 22 And Kim was the son of Morianton. 23 And Morianton was a descendant of Riplakish. 24 And Riplakish was the son of Shez. 25 And Shez was the son of Heth. 26 And Heth was the son of Com. 27 And Com was the son of Coriantum. 28 And Coriantum was the son of Emer. 29 And Emer was the son of Omer. 30 And Omer was the son of Shule. 31 And Shule was the son of Kib. 32 And Kib was the son of Orihah, who was the son of Jared;

v6-32 Moroni indicates the original author of the record was Ether (v. 6) , who can trace his genealogy back to the original Jared (v. 7-31).

The genealogy given goes from the most recent to the most ancient, and then the story Moroni subsequently gives goes from the most ancient to the most recent. The genealogy therefore sets up the history as it unwinds through the rest of the text of the book of Ether.

Another thing to note is the genealogy is that of the kings of the Jaredites, and not simply a father-son relationship. All names given are the kings and heirs to the kingdom. In the case of the two most recent names, Coriantor and Ether, they were heirs to the kingdom but not actually sitting rulers. The ruling line is as follows:

Ether	11:23
Coriantor	11:18
Moron	11:14
Ethem	11:11
Ahah	11:10

Seth	11:9
Shiblon	11:4
Com	10:32
Coriantum	10:31
Amnigaddah	10:31
Aaron	10:31
Heth	10:31
Hearthom	10:30
Lib	10:18
Kish	10:17
Corom	10:16
Levi	10:15
Kim	10:13
Morianton	10:9
Riplakish	10:4
Shez	10:1
Heth	9:27
Com	9:25
Coriantum	9:22
Emer	9:14
Omer	8:1
Shule	7:10
Kib	7:3
Orihah	6:27
Jared	6:24

Thus, while Ether was a leading prophet of the time, he was also the heir apparent.

This might explain some of Coriantumr's cynicism and hostility towards Ether as he would have been seen as one of, if not the only, heir to the throne he was occupying and fighting for. Ultimately, when Ether's predictions are all fulfilled Coriantumr tries to repent (cf. 15:1-6), but by then it is too late. This suggests Coriantumr was not entirely beyond repentance himself and perhaps Ether's being the heir apparent could have fueled his cynicism enough to make him deaf to his preaching.

33 which Jared came forth with his brother and their families, with some others and their families, from the great tower, at the time the Lord confounded the language of the people, and swore in his wrath that they should be scattered upon all the face of the earth; and according to the word of the Lord the people were scattered. 34 And the brother of Jared being a large and mighty man, and a man highly favored of the Lord, Jared, his brother, said unto him: Cry unto the Lord, that he will not confound us that we may not understand our words. 35 And it came to pass that the brother of Jared did cry unto the Lord, and the

Lord had compassion upon Jared; therefore he did not confound the language of Jared; and Jared and his brother were not confounded. 36 Then Jared said unto his brother: Cry again unto the Lord, and it may be that he will turn away his anger from them who are our friends, that he confound not their language. 37 And it came to pass that the brother of Jared did cry unto the Lord, and the Lord had compassion upon their friends and their families also, that they were not confounded.

38 And it came to pass that Jared spake again unto his brother, saying: Go and inquire of the Lord whether he will drive us out of the land, and if he will drive us out of the land, cry unto him whither we shall go. And who knoweth but the Lord will carry us forth into a land which is choice above all the earth? And if it so be, let us be faithful unto the Lord, that we may receive it for our inheritance. 39 And it came to pass that the brother of Jared did cry unto the Lord according to that which had been spoken by the mouth of Jared. 40 And it came to pass that the Lord did hear the brother of Jared, and had compassion upon him, and said unto him: 41 Go to and gather together thy flocks, both male and female, of every kind; and also of the seed of the earth of every kind; and thy families; and also Jared thy brother and his family; and also thy friends and their families, and the friends of Jared and their families. 42 And when thou hast done this thou shalt go at the head of them down into the valley which is northward. And there will I meet thee, and I will go before thee into a land which is choice above all the lands of the earth. 43 And there will I bless thee and thy seed, and raise up unto me of thy seed, and of the seed of thy brother, and they who shall go with thee, a great nation. And there shall be none greater than the nation which I will raise up unto me of thy seed, upon all the face of the earth. And thus I will do unto thee because this long time ye have cried unto me.

v33-43 Here, Jared prompts his brother to obtain two blessings from the Lord. First, that their family and friends not be scattered as were others at that time (v. 33-37) and second that they might obtain a land for their inheritance (v. 38-43).

These blessings are similar to those promised later to Abraham, namely that of family and land (cf. Gen. 12:1-3). The pivotal difference is the promises made to Abraham span generations as the Lord promises to preserve Abraham's children and restore them to their land. Unfortunately for the Jaredites, their promises are completely contingent upon their individual righteousness (cf. v. 38, 43).

v33-37 After tracing Ether's genealogy (v. 6-32), Moroni explains its relevance by informing us Jared and his family and friends were part of the scattering that took place at the tower of Babel (v. 33). However, Jared's brother is a godly man, so Jared has him appeal to the Lord that their family and friends

might not be confounded as well (v. 34, 36). Jared's brother does so and the Lord has mercy on him and grants that both his family (v. 35) and friends be spared the confusion and scattering (v. 37).

v34 "the brother of Jared", Ether might have failed to include the brother of Jared's name because he was in Jared's line and not the brother's line. However, when we review the text and pay attention to the interplay between Jared and his brother it is Jared calling the shots. Even though his brother is described as "a large and mighty man, and...highly favored of the Lord", it is always Jared telling his brother what to do and him doing it (cf. v. 34, v. 36, v. 38). Jared even overrides his brother's counsel (cf. 6:22-25). Even though they had no kings at that point, Jared was clearly the political-physical leader of the people even though his brother was the spiritual leader. It is safe to assume the brother of Jared goes unnamed out of deference to Jared's leadership role.

The name of the brother of Jared was apparently revealed to Smith. According to Elder George Reynolds:

While residing in Kirtland Elder Reynolds Cahoon had a son born to him. One day when President Joseph Smith was passing his door he called the Prophet in and asked him to bless and name the baby. Joseph did so and gave the boy the name of Mahonri Moriancumer. When he had finished the blessing he laid the child on the bed, and turning to Elder Cahoon he said, the name I have given your son is the name of the brother of Jared; the Lord has just shown [or revealed] it to me. Elder William F. Cahoon, who was standing near, heard the Prophet make this statement to his father; and this was the first time the name of the brother of Jared was known in the Church in this dispensation. ("Jaredites," Juvenile Instructor 27:282.)

The place-name "Moriancumer" appears in 2:13 and has since been assumed to be named after the brother of Jared per the ancient tradition alluded to in 2:1, with the valley being called after Nimrod, and explicitly identified in Alma 8:7, also cp. 2 Ne. 5:8.

v38-43 After obtaining the blessing from the Lord that their family and friends would not be scattered (v. 33-37), Jared follows up by having his brother ask the Lord if he will drive them out of Babylon, and if they are faithful, perhaps take them someplace better so they can obtain land for their inheritance

(v. 38). The brother does as Jared requests (v. 39) and the Lord has mercy on him (v. 39). The Lord tells Jared's brother to gather family, friends and herds (v. 41) and to travel into the wilderness where the Lord will meet and guide them to prime land (v. 40). In this prime land the Lord will bless and prosper these people so they will become a great nation, and He does this because of the brother's considerable faith and lengthy petitions (v. 43).

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