
ETHER 8-12

Book of Mormon, Adult Institute Class, Monday, 26 April 2010

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INTRODUCTION

The second witness of the Jaredite nation continues in this lesson with some righteous people mixed in with many wicked ones. In what he considered his farewell address when he wrote it, Moroni offers marvelous doctrinal insights on faith, hope, charity, and more—especially powerful considering his personal situation and challenges.

A simple outline of the chapters in this lesson is:

Topic	Reference	1830 Reference
Akish and Secret Combinations	Ether 8	Ether 3*
Emer, Corianton, and Famine	Ether 9	Ether 4
Jaredite Kings	Ether 10	
Prophets Rejected	Ether 11	
Faith, Hope, and Charity	Ether 12	Ether 5

* Ether 6-8 today equals Ether 3 in 1830.

ETHER 8 AKISH AND SECRET COMBINATIONS

1 **he begat Omer.** The “he” refers to Shule (see 7:27), who had to endure a rebellion by his brother, Corihor, and Corihor’s sons and grandson (7:14-22). Shule defeated his enemies and reunited the kingdom, and Omer reigned after his father.

Omer begat Jared. This Jared and his daughter were the ones to bring secret combinations to the Jaredite civilization, the subject of much of this chapter and the next.

2 **he had gained the half of the kingdom.** Using flattery, Jared drew away half of his father’s kingdom, such that he was able to give battle to his father and win. Omer was placed in captivity by his son (v. 3).

4 **Esrom and Coriantumr.** These two sons of Omer were born during his captivity, which lasted half of his life. They led a counter-rebellion against their brother, Jared, a night attack (something that rarely happened in those days) which successfully defeated him and his army (v. 5). They allowed Jared to live, however, based on his pleadings and surrender (v. 6).

8 **the daughter of Jared.** We don’t know her name, but she is one of the great wicked women of the scriptures. She was “exceedingly expert” and “exceedingly fair.” She felt sorry for her father (and probably for herself, too) because of his loss of the kingdom and demeaning position (v. 9). She was

a student of the scriptures but only in a way that suited her needs. In them she had read about “secret plans” of those of old, beginning with Cain (vv. 9, 15; cf. Moses 5:25-31). From that reading, she devised a plan that would return her father and herself to power. She probably had no idea what she had unleashed. Not only did it turn back on her to destroy everyone important to her, but her suggestion to use secret combinations was what eventually caused the downfall of the entire civilization.

10 ***send for Akish***. This is the first mention of the son of Kimnor. We know little about him but it’s clear from the record that he was a man of no morals and a pure opportunist. This is exactly why Jared’s daughter wanted to bring him in on the plan and even to marry him. She knew that he could help her achieve her goals because of this and his friendship to Omer, her grandfather (v. 11). Akish wanted to marry her not only because she was “fair” but because her father, Jared, even in defeat, had a high political position which could serve Akish well (Moore 2010, 83).

13 ***swear unto me...the thing which I shall desire of you***. The language is strikingly similar but completely opposite to another account—the brother of Jared meeting the Lord face to face, where the Lord said, “Believest thou the words which I shall speak?” Both speakers referenced something they were just about to say and asked for a reaction before the listener knew what it was. In the Lord’s case, it was great blessings and covenants; in Akish’s case, it was an evil conspiracy.

19-26 These verses are Moroni’s editorial commentary on secret combinations, explaining why they are so evil and why he included them in his account.

21 ***caused the destruction of this people***. Not only were secret combinations the downfall of the Nephites, but also the Jaredites. In other words, both accounts were a witness to the destructive power of these secret doings.

23 ***that thereby ye may repent of your sins***. Moroni tells us—the latter-day Gentiles—that the reason we have this record is to call us to repentance and not to allow these secret combinations among us—or more precisely, “above” us. Leaders who use such oaths to get power and gain are those who should be most feared and quickly challenged or driven away.

25 ***the devil, who is the father of all lies***. The oaths were ancient, but they did not originate with man. In the first such recorded oath, Satan administers it to Cain (Moses 5:29). The Jaredites must have had this same account in their records, for Moroni says that it was Satan that first “caused man to commit murder,” which is the story of Cain.

26 ***I, Moroni, and commanded to write these things***. Moroni is clear that he is not writing of his volition, but because God has commanded him to do so. His purpose is to defeat Satan and persuade men “to do good continually” and come unto Christ.

ETHER 9 EMER, CORIANTON, AND FAMINE

3 ***the Lord warned Omer in a dream***. Omer must have been a righteous man because the Lord was merciful to him and his faithful family (all but Jared) and warned them to leave before Akish and Jared could carry out their plot. They traveled a long time and ended up near the “hill of Shim” where Moroni says the Nephites were destroyed. Omer continued to Ablom near the seashore, “and there pitched his tent.”

4 **he gave unto Akish his daughter.** Even though Akish had not fulfilled his oath (to bring the head of Omer, 8:12), Jared achieved his ultimate goal of becoming king, so he gave his daughter to Akish.

5 **Akish sought the life of his father-in-law.** The tables quickly turned on Jared. Akish showed that his ultimate goal was the same as that of Jared—to rule as king. Now that he was armed with secret combinations, he determined to use those to achieve his goal, which included the need to kill Jared. They did this and Akish was king (v. 6).

7 **Akish began to be jealous of his son.** Power and control were more important to Akish than anything. Seeing his son as a threat to his position, he locked him up and starved him to death. How did Jared's daughter, Akish' wife, feel now? They had tried to kill her grandfather, then she watched as her evil husband killed her father and her own son.

8 **Nimrah.** Another son, Nimrah “was angry with his father” and took a group to join his great-grandfather, Omer, in the eastern lands (v. 9).

11 **sons of Akish did offer them money.** Akish and his sons remained in power because they offered the people money. Where did they get the money? It had to be from the people. In other words, they taxed them, took what they wanted, and gave the rest back in the form of bribes. It might be easy to make the comparison to the current political situation where the government is increasing taxes in order to give money away to the people in order to maintain its popularity and thus its power. But I will forbear.

12 **a war between the sons of Akish and Akish.** Following their father's lead, Akish's sons rebelled against him. However, the split in the kingdom and the war was so long that it nearly annihilated the Jaredite people entirely, leaving only “thirty souls” plus those who had gone east with Omer. The result was that Omer was able to retake his position, but to a much reduced kingdom (v. 13).

14 **he begat Emer.** In his old age, Omer had another son named Emer, who became the next king. Emer is one of the great kings of the Jaredites. Rebuilding the kingdom after the terrible civil wars caused by Akish and his sons, Emer led in righteousness and helped his people return to prosperity. He apparently reigned for 62 years (v. 16) and the people enjoyed an abundance of food, clothing, precious metals, and animals.

18-19 Twelve animals are identified by name in the Book of Mormon, ten of them in these verses. John Sorenson has done the most work on the lists of animals and has proposed that many of the names in the Book of Mormon might match animals that we today don't call by the same name, such as the tapir or mastodon (Sorenson 1985, 292-299). Elephants and horses were two mentioned that were initially the source of ridicule, but now evidence shows that mastodons were in Mesoamerica until about 2500 B.C. (Jaredite times) and that horses existed in pre-Columbian times (Largey 2003, 61-62). Two animals named in these verses have names that were transliterated and not translated: cureloms and cumoms. We do not know what these animals were, but the text says they were not for food but were “useful unto man.” Sorenson suggests they might be the sloth, bison, tapir, mastodon, or mammoth (Sorenson 1985, 299).

20 **possess it unto the Lord, or they should be destroyed.** The contrast between Jared and Akish and Omer and Emer is the illustration of this principle. The wicked were destroyed off the face of the land while the righteous were preserved and prospered.

22 **he even saw the Son of Righteousness.** Emer was a good king and a righteous man. He chose Coriantum, his son, to succeed him and made a smooth transition four years before his death. Sometime during his lifetime, he even saw a vision of the life of Jesus Christ.

24 **an hundred and forty and two years old.** Even by their ages, the Book of Mormon testifies that the righteous prosper and the wicked are destroyed. Coriantum's wife lived to be 102, and he lived to the age of 142. Moreover, Coriantum had his only children after he was 100 years old!

25 **Com...reigned forty and nine years.** Ether doesn't give ages or reign lengths very often. This one is important because Com's wicked son, Heth, slew his father to get the throne (v. 27). It shows that Com was on his way to a long and righteous life but it was cut short by secret combinations and his son's wickedness.

28 **there came prophets.** At least in Jaredite civilization, prophets are only mentioned when they come with a message of 'repent or die.' In this case, the warning related to a "great famine" that would soon overtake the land. But led by the wicked usurper and murderer, Heth, the people rejected the prophets, cast them out or threw them in pits (v. 29).

30 **a great dearth.** Meaning a shortage of something, often related to famine.

31 **poisonous serpents.** John Tvedtnes recounted a time in Israel when there was a drought (though man-induced by war) so the rodents eating the crops fled, which meant that the snakes eating the rodents also fled. Those living in the destination of the rodents and snakes remarked that they had never seen anything like it (Tvedtnes 1997). Everything goes with the food. So it seems here. When the rain stopped and the crops failed, the snakes appeared.

the land southward...Zarahemla. This is the first mention of this land in Moroni's Jaredite record. Moroni knew this was also the land of Zarahemla, where his father had spent a portion of his life.

35 **when they had humbled themselves.** After nearly starving, the people finally repented and were humble enough that the Lord brought them rain again.

ETHER 10 JAREDITE KINGS

1 **Shez.** Everyone in the royal family died in the famine except Shez, who was a "descendent" (perhaps meaning not a son) of Heth. Shez attempted to rebuild the shattered kingdom and "did walk in the ways of the Lord" (v. 2).

3 **Shez.** Shez had a son also named Shez. The son rebelled against the father and brought him much grief. But one day the son was overpowered by robbers and killed "because of his exceeding riches."

4 **Riplakish.** Inheriting his father's throne, Riplakish took "many wives and concubines," taxed the people heavily, and build large buildings (v. 5). He built a huge throne for him to sit on and prisons for those who didn't pay his taxes (v. 6). After 42 years, he was killed and his family driven out of the land (v. 8).

9 **Morianton.** A descendent of Riplakish, Morianton raised an army and fought a war to regain the throne. It lasted many years and he was finally victorious. Magnanimously, he didn't place the same

burdens on the people as did his predecessor, and thus gained some favor (v. 10), but not with the Lord (v. 11). He did lead the people back to prosperity (v. 12).

10 **Kim**. The son of Morianton was co-regent with his father for 8 years, and was equally unrighteous. His unnamed brother rebelled and put him into captivity (v. 14).

15 **Levi**. Born and raised in captivity for 42 years, Levi finally defeated the man who put his father into captivity. He “did that which was right in the sight of the Lord.”

16 **Corom**. Levi’s son, Corom, was the next king. Like his father, he “was good.”

17 **Kish**. His son, Kish, also reigned, though we know nothing but his name.

18 **Lib**. Kish’s son next was king. In his days, the poisonous serpents finally were destroyed (though it doesn’t say how) and people began to hunt the game in the land southward (v. 19). It was a prosperous time (v. 22-27), and the land was full of people (v. 21).

28 **never could be a people more blessed**. Moroni sounds almost like he is sighing as he writes this: ‘Ah, to live in the days of Lib...’

29 **Hearthom**. Lib’s son was the next king. He reigned for 24 years but then was put into captivity by an unnamed aggressor (v. 30), showing how this was clearly the record of Jared’s descendents, not just the Jaredite people as a whole. This overthrow resulted in the next four generations (Heth, Aaron, Amnigaddah, and Coriantum) all being born and raised in captivity (v. 31).

32 **Com**. Gaining popularity, Com managed to re-establish his family’s position, but only over half the kingdom at first. Finally, after 42 years (third time that number is mentioned in this chapter!), he overthrew the king, Amgid, who was probably a successor of the king who first put his ancestor Hearthom into captivity.

33 **robbers in the land**. The robbers with their secret oaths returned again. Com fought them but wasn’t entirely successful (v. 34).

ETHER 11 PROPHETS REJECTED

1 **many prophets**. Once again, the prophets came to warn the people of destruction if they did not repent. The people rejected them (v. 2) so they fled to Com, the king, for safety and prophesied to him (v. 3).

4 **Shiblom reigned in his stead**. Com’s son, Shiblom, followed his father but was challenged by his brother, causing a great war. Shiblom’s brother killed the prophets who had taught his father. Some people repented (v. 8) and Shiblom was killed (v. 9). His son, Seth, was kept in captivity his whole life.

10 **Ahah**. This man retook the kingdom but was a very wicked man, and did not live long.

11 **Ethem**. Also wicked, this descendent of Ahah saw even more prophets come into the land warning of the pending destruction (v. 12). The prophets were ignored, so the prophets withdrew (v. 13).

14 **Moron**. Another in the line of wicked Jaredite kings. Moron lost half his kingdom to a man working with secret combinations (v. 15). Moron eventually defeated him (16).

17a **descendant of the brother of Jared**. This is the first time Mahonri's line was mentioned. This became the line of the ruling kings for a time.

18 **Coriantor**. Moron's son was born in captivity and lived his whole life in that state.

20 **there also came many prophets**. Not only did the Lord send more prophets to warn the people, but this time it appears to be a new message: not only would they be destroyed, but they would be replaced by "another people to possess the land" (v. 21). The prophets' words again were unheeded.

23 **Ether**. Ether is from the line of Jared, who now in this generation are very wicked, though he personally somehow found the Lord and was an amazingly righteous prophet. His father, Coriantor, died in captivity.

ETHER 12 FAITH, HOPE, AND CHARITY

1 **Coriantumr**. One of the three main characters in the end of the Jaredite civilization with Ether and Shiz, Coriantumr's tale is a sad story of greed and selfishness that impacted literally millions of others. He was evidently a descendent of Mahonri Moriancumer because that family's line had taken over the kingship about three generations previously (11:17).

2 **Ether was a prophet of the Lord**. Though "prophets" are mentioned several times in the book, Ether has the distinction of being the only Jaredite prophet mentioned by name. The only other one called out individually is the brother of Jared, but of course, the record doesn't give his name directly, and only partially through a geographical reference (2:13).

3 **by faith all things are fulfilled**. Ether's message started at the beginning, because that's where his people were. They needed to build faith in God which would lead them to repentance. But Moroni is introducing Ether's message here because this is going to be the theme of this entire chapter.

4 **hope for a better world**. Ether also taught that belief in God gives us hope that the trials of this life will be rewarded with something more resplendent later. This hope, growing out of our faith, "maketh an anchor to the souls of men." Anchors are only mentioned twice in the Book of Mormon, here at in Mormon 5:18. There Mormon comments that his people had no anchor, and Ether implies that his people did not either. President Gordon B. Hinckley taught that the anchor is Christ, "certain and sure as the anchor of our immortal lives" (*Student Manual*, 376).

5 **they did not believe, because they saw them not**. Ether's words fell on deaf Jaredite ears because they would not exercise faith in something they could not see.

6 **I, Moroni, would speak somewhat**. Moroni injects himself into the story and writes one of the great chapters of scripture, building on the doctrinal foundation he has described in Ether's teachings. His comments extend to the end of chapter 12.

no witness until after the trial of your faith. Sometimes we consider this phrase to mean that we must suffer some kind of difficulty or challenge for our faith to grow. While it is true that such things can extend our faith, Elder Richard G. Scott also taught that the “trial” can be thought of as just ‘trying’ faith: “Thus, every time you *try your faith*—that is, act in worthiness on an impression—you will receive the confirming evidence of the Spirit. Those feelings will fortify your faith” (*Student Manual*, 376).

7 by faith that Christ showed himself unto our fathers. We might wonder why it took almost a year for Jesus to appear to the Nephites after his resurrection, but Moroni gives the reason—the appearance had to wait until they had sufficient faith!

9 ye may also have hope. Hope in the blessings of God, current and future, come from a proper exercise of faith.

10 by faith...called after the holy order of God. Priesthood authority and power comes from the exercise of faith in God and that power. Without faith, the priesthood is of no value to a man because he cannot truly serve anyone else.

11 by faith was the law of Moses given. Sometimes we think the opposite, that the law of Moses was given because of a *lack* of faith, based on D&C 84:23-26. But here Moroni teaches that even after the people rejected the higher law, it still required faith for the Lord to mercifully give them the law that directed Israel’s path for the next several hundred years.

a more excellent way. This phrase is also found in 1 Corinthians 12:31, but the concept is quite different. There Paul is introducing the idea of charity. Here Moroni is referring to “the gift of [God’s] Son” as the more excellent way, as compared to the law of Moses. That Jesus is often called “The Way” is appropriate and refers to his role in not only fulfilling that law but in bringing us back to God.

13-18 Using examples from his father’s record, Moroni illustrated how faith comes before the miracle: Alma and Amulek; Nephi and Lehi; Ammon and his brethren; the three Nephite disciples.

20 one of these was the brother of Jared. Making the point that faith made it so God could not withhold himself from some of the ancient prophets, Moroni recalls to our minds the example at the beginning of this record of the brother of Jared seeing the finger and then the full presence of the Lord.

22 my fathers have obtained the promise that these things should come. “These things” refers to the plates. Several Nephite prophets exercised sufficient faith to know that their record would endure to the last days and come to the Gentiles. Moroni knows that is his only audience.

23 our weakness in writing. We see the Book of Mormon as a powerful piece of writing, but Moroni struggled with the difficulty of writing it. He declares that they were far more powerful in speaking “because of the awkwardness of our hands” (v. 24). By contrast, he says that God enabled the brother of Jared to write things that were “mighty even as thou art, unto the overpowering of man to read them” (v. 24).

26 Fools mock, but they shall mourn. To comfort Moroni, the Lord assures him that only those who are foolish will mock his work, but even they will one day regret it.

27 ***I will show unto them their weakness.*** In that context—Moroni being concerned about the weakness of their writing—the Lord teaches this important verse, which is sometime interpreted that God gives man weaknesses. But notice that “weakness” is singular. Our “weakness” is shown to us by God that we may be humble. It is our human nature, our tendency to sin, that God shows to us, that drives us to humility and repentance, and that through our faith can become a great strength.

29 ***having heard these words, [I] was comforted.*** Knowing that faith, hope, and charity could overcome the weaknesses of the flesh gave Moroni comfort as he worked through his own concerns and weakness.

30 ***the brother of Jared said unto the mountain Zerin, Remove.*** This account is not in Moroni’s abridgement but was obviously in the longer record that he had.

32 ***a more excellent hope.*** The greater hope is not just to have a better future, but to inherit a house in heaven, to dwell with God in his mansions, and thus to inherit all that the Father has.

34 ***this love which thou hast had for the children of men is charity.*** Later, Moroni will declare that “charity is the pure love of Christ” (Moroni 7:47). This is the same message. The love that Jesus showed as he laid down his life for us (v. 33) is the definition of charity.

36 ***give unto the Gentiles grace.*** Ever mindful of his audience and responsibility, Moroni prayed for us, that we might have the grace of God sufficient to produce true charity in us.

37 ***thou hast been faithful.*** However, the Lord instructed Moroni not to worry about us, but assured him that he had lived up to his covenants and that his “garments shall be made clean.” Because Moroni had seen his own weakness—his complete inability to save himself—he had exercised faith, hope, and charity, and would be “made strong,” meaning he would have his eternal inheritance in the presence of God.

38 ***I, Moroni, bid farewell.*** We might say, ‘Farewell? You still have several chapters left to write.’ But Moroni seems to have thought he was very near the end of his task, and certainly saw Ether 12 as his concluding remarks of personal exhortation to the Gentiles.

39 ***I have seen Jesus.*** Not only had his ancestors seen him, but Moroni had personally seen Jesus and experienced the Second Comforter, as expressed in v. 37.

41 ***seek this Jesus.*** Moroni’s plea is for us to seek Jesus, to discover him for ourselves, to have the experience that he had enjoyed, that we might have the grace of God in our lives and the Holy Ghost abiding with us forever.

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