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John L. Sorenson

The Years of the Jaredites

Summary:

John Sorenson proposes a plausible chronology for the Jaredites based on what is known of ancient American cultures through archaeology.

Preliminary Report
Book of Mormon, Chronology
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This FARMS preliminary report reflects substantial research but is not ready for final publication. It is made available to be critiqued and improved and to stimulate further research.
The Book of Mormon has been in print for 140 years. In that time, no one has written a chronology of Jaredite history using the dates and calendar familiar to modern readers. As a result, Jaredite history floats in readers' minds in a chronological limbo.

This lack led to no serious problem as long as there was nothing in secular history with which to compare the civilization described in Ether. Today, however, ancient American cultures known through archaeology and assignable to the period of Jaredite existence are coming to sufficient attention that systematic comparison ought not to be put off longer. To make sound comparisons will require that the events of Jaredite history be dated firmly enough to allow their being lined up with the archaeological record.

This article proposes a plausible chronology for the Jaredites. In the nature of their record as we have it, it is impossible to pin down precisely just when they lived, but inferences can at least be made which have considerable value. That is what is done here—to show when events recorded in the Book of Ether might well have taken place, even if no one can be precise about the details.
There are at least three ways in which such dates can be useful. They give a greater sense of reality to the record, especially by allowing it to be tied to other, more familiar, sequences, such as biblical events. Dates also allow comparison between specific historical events or patterns referred to in Ether and from archaeology. Finally, developing a chronology stimulates inquiry into the meaning and internal consistency of the scriptural record as history, possibly provoking in the process new and broader interpretations and appreciations in our minds of what the book has to say to us.

The method followed here has been quite simple. First it was necessary to settle upon beginning and ending dates for the Jaredite civilization in terms of chronological frameworks outside the Book of Mormon. Next an attempt was made to distribute the events in the Book of Ether over the whole time period marked out in a way which did no violence to the facts in the book.

The beginning date for the Jaredites depends upon historical data from the Old World. Unfortunately, even that information is not firmly established, so a certain amount of reasoning must be employed. Ether begins by talking of a "great tower" which is the same as the "tower" referred to in Genesis 11. Can the events surround the construction of that tower be dated? Fundamentalist Christians and some Latter-day Saints have accepted a date of around 2200 B.C. for the tower event. Actually there is no adequate basis in the Bible for such a date. In fact there are strong arguments against it on the basis of the
Bible alone, but that source proves insufficient to settle the matter, for the early chronology of the Old Testament is not precise enough and even appears to be conflicting at a number of points. (Note that in questioning the dating, I do not question that actual events in fact occurred which are more or less correctly described in the brief language of Genesis 11. That language is not, however, clear enough to allow anyone to make a single clear interpretation as to precisely what happened—let alone when it took place.)

The secular history of ancient Mesopotamia, which included what Genesis refers to as the "land of Shinar" where the tower was constructed, refers to a "flood" just as does the Bible. The description is strikingly similar in some features to the account in Genesis, and all serious scholars consider the two accounts to be closely related. In addition there are some evidences from archaeology of several floods in Mesopotamia, one of which could have been the one referred to in the traditions. The annals of rule, or king lists, of the Sumerians who dominated the lower Mesopotamian plain in earliest historical times trace back rulership to a time just following this flood. (Compare Genesis 10:8-10, on Nimrod.)

In the history and archaeology of the land-between-the-rivers, the nature of the "tower" of the Bible and the Book of Mormon becomes clear. It is the ziggurat or temple-tower whose remains still dot the plain of southern Iraq. This architectural form first appears in the concluding centuries of the fourth millennium B.C.
The flood/tower combination of Genesis is undoubtedly derived from the same source as the flood/tower of secular Mesopotamian history. The latter is most comfortably dated in the second half of the fourth millennium B.C. On this basis a date for the beginning of the Jaredite story can be estimated. About 3100 B.C. is acceptable. Possibly it could be a little later.

The end of the Jaredite account cannot be dated without question either. Ether 11:20-21 implies that the later immigrant peoples (of Zarahemla and of Lehi) had not yet reached the promised land in America at a time just before Ether, the last Jaredite prophet, was born. On the other hand Coriantumr, the final Jaredite king, "was discovered by the people of Zarahemla; and he dwelt with them for the space of nine moons." (Omni 20-21) We know that the arrival of the people of Zarahemla was some time after 586 B.C., the date of the fall of Jerusalem from which that group of people fled. The encounter with Coriantumr could have taken place at any time in the first decades, or somewhat later, of the Mulekites' inhabiting the new land. (However, if Ether 11:20-21 indeed precedes the arrival of the Israelite group, Coriantumr could not have lived as late as, say, 400 B.C.) That it was early in their history may be inferred from the fact that more extensive mention of contacts would have been likely had the people of Zarahemla and the Jaredites lived in adjacent lands for any length of time. Also the fact that the Mulek group "discovered" Coriantumr, rather than the reverse, and that he died after only nine lunar months with them, suggests that the fallen king had been incapacitated by his wounds (see Ether 15:32) and so did not live long after the final Jaredite battle.
A reasonable conclusion is that the most likely date for the end of the Jaredite people falls not earlier, and not much later, than 580 B.C. (Of course the "end of the Jaredite people" by no means indicates that all Jaredites were wiped out. That would be far-fetched. There is solid evidence in the Book of Mormon itself, and certainly more from archaeology, indicating that remnants of the old population survived in various spots after the final organized battle. The scripture only talks, after all, of the destruction of the Jaredite people as a social entity, not the extinction of the entire population. Why the later Nephite account does not take more account of the Jaredite remnants could be treated at some length, but not here.)

How confident can we be about the beginning and ending dates decided upon here? They could be off by as much as several centuries on the early end. The possibilities range from perhaps 3250 to 2800 B.C. On the other hand the final date seems to be on firmer ground, but conceivably it could be stretched as late as 400 B.C. In any case the overall duration of about 2500 years has considerable likelihood of being about right—to within a century or so.

The next task is to distribute between 3100 and 580 B.C. the history of the Jaredites as reflected in statements in the Book of Ether. This involves judgment, for on many points the book is cryptic or silent. For example, Ether 10:8-9 tells of the overthrow of a ruler named Riplakish, followed by the statement "And it came to pass after the space of many years, Morianton, (he being a descendant of Riplakish)" gained control. In other
cases terms are used such as "old age," "many days" or "exceeding old age." Durations in years are sometimes added which act to an extent as controls on the language, but not always. An attempt has been made here to be consistent in interpreting the chronological terms, yet admittedly other readers could come to somewhat different conclusions. No one answer can be considered correct. Instead emphasis must be placed on plausibility and reasonableness in the light of the whole.

Once a reasonable distribution of the events through time had been reached, memory-aiding period markers were sought. Significant shifts in Jaredite history seem to be implied at the division points chosen. The period names are hopefully descriptive of the major directions in that history; someone else's labels might be better yet.

Since the dates are approximate at best, minor adjustments were made in order to make the main periods come out in convenient segments. The duration of these periods should be easier for readers to remember because they are in round numbers, which also emphasizes their tentativeness.

Now that a chronological framework is established, comparisons of Jaredite events and tendencies internally can be made, as well as pointing out how that picture relates to what is revealed by archaeology.
A Logic for Jaredite Chronology

I. Pioneering Phase (3100-2920 B.C.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Departure from the &quot;great tower&quot; to arrive at land</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjustment to choosing a king</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orihah's rule (&quot;exceeding many days,&quot; 31 children)</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total duration of phase</strong></td>
<td><strong>180</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

II. Formation Phase (2920-2320 B.C.)

A. Early Formation

Kib begets Corihor after he becomes king, then reigns 32 years until Corihor's flight | 34    |
Corihor prepares to rebel, fathers children who help                        | 32    |
Corihor rules, with father captive, until latter is very old                 | 25    |
Kib, the father, begets Shule, who grows to manhood before seizing the throne| 25    |
Shule has children, including Noah who rebels and reigns over half the kingdom| 33    |
Cohor, Noah's son, succeeds him, ruling half the land                       | 15    |
Nimrod, another son of Cohor, succeeds, then gives up the half kingdom to Shule, reuniting the nation | 10    |
Thereafter Shule begets children in his old age                             | 25    |
Omer, Shule's son, begets Jared, then the latter has children               | 30    |
Jared plots, Omer flees, Jared rules one year                               | 1     |
Akish kills Jared. Akish's one son is imprisoned; he then has others        | 35    |
Akish wars with his sons for many years                                    | 35    |
(Sub-phase total)                                                          | (300) |

B. Late Formation

Omer regains the throne. While old, begets Emer, who
comes to reign 20
Emer's "house" reigns 62 years 62
Coriantum follows and rules until 142 years of age 142
Com reigns 49 years until Heth is born; Heth grows up then kills his father 30
Heth rules until the drouth becomes unbearable 24
(Sub-phase total) (300)
Total duration of phase 600

III. Disruption Phase (2320-1720 B.C.)

A. Early Disruption
Interval 30
Shez picks up the pieces after drouth, and lives long 88
Interval 100
Riplakish, a descendent of Shez, gains power, then reigns 42 years, until killed in a rebellion 42
Interval 100
(Sub-phase total) (360)

B. Late Disruption
Morianton, a descendent of Riplakish, prepares, fights for years to gain control power 40
He lives to "an exceeding great age" 60
His son Kim succeeds him, reigning 8 years while his father still lives 8
Kim's brother later overthrows him; Kim goes into captivity 15
Kim begets Levi in his old age 65
Levi lives in captivity 42 years after father's death 42
Then Levi fights and gains the throne 10
(Sub-phase total) (240)
Total duration of phase 600
IV. Elaboration Phase (1720-1120 B.C.)

A. Early Elaboration

Levi rules to "a good old age" 60
Corom replaces Levi and "saw many days" 66
Kish then reigns and passes away 60
Lib next reigns, living many years 60
Hearthom rules for 24 years before being overthrown 24
(Sub-phase total) 270

B. Late Elaboration

He then lives in captivity many years 60
Heth lives in captivity all his days 60
Interval 30
Aaron (a "descendent") lives in captivity 60
Ammigaddah also lives in captivity 60
Corianton also was in captivity all his days 60
(Sub-phase total) 330
Total duration of phase 600

V. Decline Phase (1120-570 B.C.)

A. Early Decline

Com matures, prepares, and gains control of half of the kingdom 30
He then rules for 42 years (10:32) 42
After that he wars "for many years" with Amgid 30
After Amgid's demise, Com rules to the accession of his son Shiblom 18
Shiblom rules through much trouble, then is slain 35
Seth (apparently the successor) is in captivity all his days 60
His son Ahah retakes the kingdom; "few were his days" 25
Interval 30
(Sub-phase total) (270)

B. Late Decline

Ethem (a "descendent") obtains the kingdom, reigns 50
Moron, his son reigns (10), loses half the kingdom (35),
fights but loses all (5), then is a captive (20) 70
Coriantor is in captivity all his days 60
Interval 40
Ether (a "descendent") sees the end of the nation 60
(Sub-phase total) (280)

Total duration of phase 550

Total duration of Jaredite tradition 2530
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>PHASE</th>
<th>SUB-PHA.</th>
<th>PERSONS</th>
<th>EVENTS, CHARACTERISTICS</th>
<th>MESOAMERICAN ARCHAEOLOGY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-600 BC</td>
<td>550</td>
<td>Ebb Phase</td>
<td>Late (270)</td>
<td>Ether</td>
<td>Great final war</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>500</td>
<td>Ahah</td>
<td>Ethem</td>
<td></td>
<td>War and disruption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>400</td>
<td>Early (270)</td>
<td>Com</td>
<td></td>
<td>War, famine, destruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>300</td>
<td>Late (330)</td>
<td>Corianton</td>
<td></td>
<td>Years of war</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>200</td>
<td>Developed Phase (600)</td>
<td>Heth</td>
<td></td>
<td>Secret groups reappear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1500 BC</td>
<td>Early (270)</td>
<td>Lib</td>
<td></td>
<td>Extensive trade, metalwork &quot;City&quot; built at narrow neck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Levi</td>
<td></td>
<td>(General political stability throughout Phase D)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Late (240)</td>
<td>Morianton</td>
<td>Riches, many &quot;cities&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2000 BC</td>
<td>Conflict Phase (600)</td>
<td>Early (360)</td>
<td>Riplakish</td>
<td>Political disruption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Shez</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Late (300)</td>
<td>Emer</td>
<td>Severe drought</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2500 BC</td>
<td>Building Phase (600)</td>
<td>Early (300)</td>
<td>Omer</td>
<td>Secret groups again</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Shule</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Kib</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3000 BC</td>
<td>Advance Phase (180)</td>
<td>Early (300)</td>
<td>Jared</td>
<td>First king chosen</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

John L. Sorenson, April 1970
An Alternative

**JAREDITE DEVELOPMENT & CHRONOLOGY**

Compiled by Robert F. Smith

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>JSD</th>
<th>Lineage</th>
<th>Events, Notes, and References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Jared I</td>
<td>*Brother of Jared (Mahouni Moriancumer) ca. 3139 B.C.; migration from &quot;great tower&quot; (Heb. migdal Gn 11:4); Mt Zerin (Ltn 12:30); GMT 3114 B.C. for start of Hayan Long Count, and arrival in New World; choosing of king; fowl, fish, &amp; bees (2:2-3).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Jacom</td>
<td>Mahah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gilgah</td>
<td>Pagag</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Mahah</td>
<td>brothers of Pagag</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>*Orihah</td>
<td>ca. 2920 B.C.; Early Formative; reign of 32 years plus (from begetting Corihor until Corihor's flight, 7:4); in land of Moron; in land of Nehor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>*Kib</td>
<td>ca. 2800 B.C.; period of coregency (7:13); hill Ephraim &amp; city Nehor (7:9). ca. 2770 B.C.; rules over &quot;land of their first inheritance&quot; (7:16).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Corihor</td>
<td>ca. 2755 B.C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Shule</td>
<td>ca. 2745 B.C.; Late Formative at end of Omer's reign?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Noah</td>
<td>Cohor I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Cohor II</td>
<td>ca. 2720 B.C.; Jared rebelled and dwelt in land of Heth (8:2).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>*Omer</td>
<td>Kimmor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Nimrod</td>
<td>ca. 2630 B.C.; reigns 62 years (9:16), with 2-year coregency (9:15); Late Formative: fruit, grain, silk, linen, gold, silver (9:17); cattle, oxen, cows, sheep, swine, goats, etc. (9:18); horses, asses, elephants, cureloms, cumoans (9:19).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Jared II</td>
<td>ca. 2568 B.C.; 4-year coregency (9:22); lived 142 years (9:24); &quot;did build many mighty cities&quot; (9:23).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>dau. of Jared</td>
<td>ca. 2453 B.C.; son of old age (?); ruled 49 years (9:25) in the stead of his father, and then begat Heth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Esrom</td>
<td>Nimrah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coriantumr I</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>*Eomer</td>
<td>ca. 2380 B.C.; rules until &quot;great famine&quot; and drought (9:28,30), and flocks mi_rate before serpents into the land southward-- Zarakahula to the later Nephites (9:31).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>*Coriantum I</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>*Com I</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>*Heth I</td>
<td>(drought)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ca. 2250 B.C.; Disruption—Shez a "descendant" of Heth (10:1).

ca. 2150 B.C.; reigns 42 years (10:8); begotten (10:4); polygynist (10:5); Interregnum follows his death in a rebellion (10:8); builder.

ca. 1950 B.C.; "descendant" (10:9); Late Disruption phase—fights for years (10:9).

ca. 1870 B.C.; 8-year coregency (10:13); captivity all his days (10:14), while his brother ruled (10:14).

ca. 1800 B.C.; lived in captivity 42 years after father's death (10:15), but then reigned over the kingdom.

ca. 1740 B.C.; "saw many days" (10:17).

ca. 1680 B.C.; reigns and passes away (10:17-18).

ca. 1620 B.C.; great city built by narrow neck—Desolation (10:20); hunting in land southward (10:19), but land northward heavily populated (10:21) and prosperous (10:22-28).

ca. 1560 B.C.; reigned 24 years plus (10:30), then lived in captivity.

ca. 1500 B.C.; lives in captivity all his days (10:31).

ca. 1410 B.C.; lives in captivity all his days (10:31); "descendant" (1:16), or son (10:31), or both!

ca. 1350 B.C.; lives in captivity all his days (10:31).
ca. 1290 B.C.; dwelt in captivity all his days (10:31).

Decline Phase
ca. 1230 B.C.; won half of kingdom and ruled 42 years (10:32), then warring against Amgid, the king, and obtaining all the kingdom; criminal cliques then began to destroy the kingdom, despite Com's efforts (10:33); lived to a good old age (11:4).

pro-criminal (11:5).
ca. 1170 B.C.; wars, contentions, famines, and pestilences—a great destruction, such an one as never had been known (11:6-7); Shiblon was slain (11:9); "Shiblon" (1:11-12).

c. 1110 B.C.; dwelt in captivity all his days (11:9); apparently a descendant of Shiblon (?); or "son" (1:11).

c. 1050 B.C.; ruled over the kingdom, but "few were his days" (11:10).

c. 950 B.C.; "descendant" (11:11), or "son" (1:9)? a wicked king.

c. 890 B.C.; wicked king (11:14); lost half his kingdom temporarily, to a wicked and mighty man (11:15); then a "descendant" of the Brother of Jared arose to oppose him (11:17), and overthrew him—holding him in captivity the remainder of his days (11:18).

c. 830 B.C.; dwelt in captivity all his days (11:19).

Interregnum?
ca. 650 B.C.; a prophet (12:2); a "descendant" (1:6), or son (11:23); came forth in the days of Coriantumr (12:2), ca. 600 B.C.; the successive rebel chiefs who fought Coriantumr were: Shared (13:23 – 14:3); Brother of Shared (14:3-8); Lib (14:10-17); Brother of Lib (14:17 – 15:31).

ca. 551 B.C.; final destruction of Jaredite nation at Ramah (Cumorah).

On remnants of Jaredites, see Omni 22, Mosiah 8:12, and Eth 14:21-22.

ca. 550 B.C.; Coriantumr found by people of Zarahemla/Mulek (Omni 21; cf. HC IV:537).

c. 200 B.C.; interpreted by Mosiah I: a stone engraved with account of the finding of Coriantumr II by people of Zarahemla/Mulek (Omni 20-21).

ca. 124 B.C.; records of Ether found by people of Limhi, king of land and city of Lehi-Nephi, and a son of Noah, son of Zeniff—who came south from the land of Zarahemla ca. 193 B.C. (Eth 1:1-2, Morm 6:6, Mosiah 8:7-13).

* rulers
JSB — relative Jaredite Sequence Dating
for context, see Book of Mormon Chronology: I