



FOUNDATION FOR RESEARCH ON ANCIENT AMERICA

THELONA D. STEVENS, CHAIRMAN / 202 SOUTH PENDLETON AVE. / INDEPENDENCE, MO. 64080

NEWSLETTER No. 17

February 1, 1974

Dear Members and Friends:

The annual meeting of the Foundation of Research on Ancient America will be held at 3:00 p.m. Sunday, February 10, in the Lower Auditorium of the Stone Church. The speaker will be Charles R. Hield, Chairman of the Society for Archaeological Research, whose subject will be "Jesus Christ, Specialist." Do come and hear him. Election of officers will be a feature of the short business session.

During the coming World Conference the Foundation will hold a meeting, following the business session Thursday, April 11, in the South Conference Room (formerly called the Music Room). The speaker will be Dana Simmons, son of Wayne and Verneil Simmons. Do plan now to keep time open for attendance at this meeting.

A gentle reminder: Your Foundation membership expired December 31, 1973. We shall be happy to accept payment of dues now, either renewal of initial enrollment. You may subscribe to regular membership (\$2.00), family membership (\$10.00), or sustaining membership (\$50.00). Please remember that the Foundation is now incorporated under the laws of the State of Missouri, and contributions to our organization are tax exempt.

Another reminder is that we are having to drop names, unwillingly, from our mailing list because of those who change their address without notifying us. We appreciate the interest shown by those who have sent us their new addresses. If you are interested in continuing to receive the newsletters, please notify us promptly of any change of address. Once more we offer the newsletters free to members and friends who are desirous of receiving them. Please be sure the zip code is included when sending names and addresses. Thank you.

--T.D.S.

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The following researched material has been submitted by Dana Simmons, of Brownsville, Texas. We have long felt that much research of the Eastern Hemisphere should be done in relation to the Book of Mormon. Hence, we are happy to have this material on the beginnings of the Jaredites.

The first group to leave the Old World for the New (as told in the Book of Mormon) is named after its leader, Jared. The twice condensed account of this group is found in the book written by Ether, the last historian of the Jaredites, separated from Jared by perhaps more than 1,500 years. This book tells of Jared and his group being present at

the great tower, at the time the Lord confounded the language of the people, and swear in his wrath that they should be scattered upon all the face of the earth . . . (B. of M., p. 715).

This would appear to refer to the same event as that recorded in the Bible in Genesis, as follows:

4. And they said, Go, let us build a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.
6. And the Lord said, Behold, the people is one, And they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do.
7. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.
8. So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of the earth: and they left off to build the city (Bible, Gen., chap. 11).

The location of this tower is upon a plain in the land of Shinar (Gen. 11:1), which theologians have traditionally placed in southern Mesopotamia, known to modern archaeologists as Sumer.

If Sumer is the origin place of Jared and his group, it is also the seat of early Biblical civilization, being the site of the first city and "tower" mentioned after Noah in the Bible. Babel, Erech, Accad and Calneh were all of the land of Shinar (Sumer), and Nimrod was the first ruler over the land (Gen. 10). This was the seat of the earliest true civilization in the Old World, indeed, the world over (Kramer, 1959, pp. xvii-xx). There are at least two clues in the Bible which help identify Babel of Shinar with Sumer. The first is the mention of the tower, and its purpose as quoted above of reaching into heaven, to God himself, as it were. Sumer built some of the earliest true cities in the world, and throughout the kingdom were various towers known as Ziggurats. These towers represented God on earth, as God's abode was in the shrine at the top of the edifice, and the name of this tower was the Hill of Heaven (Ziggurat) (Woolley, 1963, p. 119). Thus, Sumer possessed towers which certainly aspired of reaching to heaven, and these are the earliest such buildings known in the world. Egypt's pyramids are somewhat later, and moreover, are all constructed of stone. Sumer's towers were of fired brick (Woolley, 1963, p. 240), exactly as the Bible describes the buildings of Shinar in the 11th chapter of Genesis:

2. ...they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there.
3. And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar (Bible).

Sumer used brick instead of stone because of an almost complete lack of stone in that portion of Mesopotamia (Woolley, 1963, p. 251). Egypt's great "towers" (the pyramids) are of stone, rendering Egypt an unlikely candidate for the Great Tower, especially as Egypt is called by name in Genesis when referred to.

If Sumer can be accepted as the location of the tower "where the tongues were confounded," Jared and his following most probably lived in the First Dynasty of Sumer, that period wherein Sumer arose from a "protoliterate" level to one of high civilization, displaying a command of written language, calendrical systems, animal husbandry, large ceremonial centers, and all the material and non-material culture traits which accompany the pre-industrial society (Groenewegen-Frankfort and Ashmole, 1967, pp. 73-82; Sjoberg, 1960). The First Dynasty lasted from 2800 to 2350 B.C., according to Groenewegen-Frankfort and Ashmole (1967, p. 76) and Cottrell (1957, p. 234).

It would have been during this time that the Jaredites left Babel on their long journey, probably at a time when Sumerians were traveling to many areas of the Old World, colonizing and introducing their own culture traits into other culture areas (i.e., the Nile, Indus and Yellow River Valley areas). The date 2500 B.C. seems to fit well into this arrangement of the evidence, and will be used as a tentative date for the departure of the Jaredites from the Tower.

They were a large group, in relative terms, consisting of twenty-four household heads and perhaps married children, and probably servants (B. of M., p. 728). They were instructed to carry with them their flocks of domestic animals, seeds of every kind, and "deseret," or honey bee, in swarms (B. of M., p. 716).

The group left Babel and went north into the Valley of Nimrod (B. of M., p. 716), and from there they went into the wilderness, "into that quarter where there never had man been" (B. of M., p. 716). Thus, they apparently were not on a trade route or trail of common use, and they traveled for a long time. Finally the Jaredites arrived at "that great sea which divideth the lands" (B. of M., p. 718). There they stayed, in tents, for four years, and they called the place Moriancumer (B. of M., p. 718).

The route from the Valley of Nimrod to the "great sea" is not very clear in the Book of Mormon account. Still, it would seem that the Jaredites journeyed east from the Valley of Nimrod, since they entered into an area unknown to them and relatively devoid of inhabitants. If they had gone west they would have arrived at the Mediterranean, and would certainly have been in contact with people, as that area was heavily populated, relatively speaking (Woolley, 1963). They could not have gone north and still leave the coast on a reasonable route to the Americas. They had just come from the south, and would hardly return in that direction, and it certainly was not "wilderness" back at Babel. The eastern area, however, was not the seat of any civilization, and was not well traversed, until the Yellow River Valley center arose about 2500 B.C. with the Yang-shao phase (Hawkes, 1963, p. 347), and established contact with its Western predecessors. Even then this Chinese seat of culture did not encourage great interchange and trade. The amount of influence of Sumer and succeeding Mesopotamian dynasties in the Huang Ho Valley is unclear, but what there was seems to have occurred by minimal diffusion through accidental contacts, rather than through trade and constant communication. Thus, the area was relatively isolated and unknown.

The peoples located around the somewhat later Shang culture of the Huang Ho were still quite primitive and uncivilized, according to the Shang writers themselves; and modern archaeologists agree, placing even the neighboring Chou (who later overthrew the Shang dynasty, without lowering its quality much at all) at a Neolithic stage of culture at 1400 B.C. (Woolley, 1963, p. 164).

The Jaredites camped by the ocean for four years in the vicinity of a mountain which they named Shelem (B. of M., p. 720), because of its exceeding height, which could be another clue to which coast they left from. The Mediterranean coast is surprisingly lacking in mountainous areas, as is nearly all of Europe's coast, whereas the Chinese coastline has several regions which might accommodate Mount Shelem.

The group left the coast in boats of their own construction ". . . the bottom thereof was tight like unto a dish, and the sides thereof were tight like unto a dish, and the ends thereof were peaked . . ." (B. of M., p. 718). There are boats known from the early Egyptian and Mesopotamian dynasties which are similar, with markedly peaked ends (Montet, 1964, p. 43). The Jaredites then left the shore in their eight boats, driven by great winds and strong ocean currents (B. of M., p. 727), for the 344 days, during which time the wind never ceased (Ibid.).

Apparently they had to depend entirely upon the ocean current, as they had no sails. Such a current exists, which has floated flotsam and the like from China and Japan across the Pacific to the west coast of the Americas, usually averaging about a year. This is the Japan Current, whose warm waters give America's northwest coast balmy winters, and is a climate factor from Canada to the state of Oaxaca in Mexico. A ship drifting on such a current, with some means of navigation, could land anywhere it chose along this immense expanse of coastline. Thus the Jaredites, after their years of travel and preparation since leaving the Great Tower, came to the Americas.

Within the Book of Mormon account the landing site of the Jaredites is said to be near the "narrow neck of land." The earliest culture found in Mesoamerica, which can be called civilization, as distinguished from the folk culture of the Ocos and other Neolithic-type people present all over the Americas at 2500 B.C. (Spinden Hypothesis) is that of the "Olmecs" (Coe, 1968, p. 23; Sanders and Price, 1968, p. 15). This culture is perhaps the most surprising and the most enigmatic of the Mesoamerican cultures (Covarrubias, 1957, p. 78). It is certainly one of the oldest, and one of the greatest, for, although termed Pre-Classic due to its great antiquity, it may have reached as great heights of civilization as the Classic cultures of this area, and is considered by some the "Mother culture" to all Mesoamericas. It would be logical to connect the arrival of a large group of settlers from the Old World in Mesoamerica, sometime after 2500 B.C., with the "Olmec" culture which arose shortly thereafter and which has shown no beginning phase in the material excavated to date, as if it were introduced from some other locale in an already advanced state.

In chapter three of Ether (B. of M., p. 728) we are told that the Jaredites immediately began to till the earth upon landing in their "Promised Land." "They multiplied and became strong," and several years after their landing, when Jared was elderly, and knew he must die shortly, the group chose one of his sons to be king over them, despite warnings that this would lead into captivity (B. of M., p. 728).

It is possible that one of the divisions of the early Jaredite kingdom resulted in the founding of the two earliest seats of high culture known in Mesoamerica: the first in the "Olmec" area in Veracruz and Tabasco, and the second in the central Mexican plateau. These two areas show very similar basic culture traits which tie the two together, indicating a common origin, yet are different enough to suggest local development of art styles, customs, etc., which would support the separation-of-the-kingdom theory. This would be the first clear traces of the Jaredites unearthed in Mesoamerica, and should be dated at about 1500 to 1300 B.C. (Sanders and Price, 1968, p. 15; Coe, 1968, p. 23; Covarrubias, 1957, p. 14). What happened between the date of their landing about 2500 B.C., and 1500 B.C., can not be shown by the archaeological evidence known at this time. It is probable that the Jaredites, despite political divisions, village centers, and warfare, were not yet sufficiently advanced to leave permanent artifacts indicative of their culture (other than those artifacts which were common to the Spinden culture present all through Mexico at 2500 B.C.--projectile points, bone implements, worked stone, grinding stones, etc., all of which the Jaredites probably adopted as they needed). Such artifacts would hardly serve to distinguish them from any other group at that time, and what experimentation they did indulge in, which might be revealing in terms of their advanced background, wasn't likely to be found due to the smallness of the group during the earliest period of their history.

It must be remembered that Guerrero, their probable landing site, is one of the least explored archaeological areas of Mexico, which would help explain the absence of signs of the Jaredites before 1500 B.C. Recent research at Marqués, Guerrero, seems to have turned up the oldest pottery yet seen in Mexico. Its discoverer is calling it "pox pottery" because of its poor finish which leaves it with a pitted and pocked surface. This pottery may be a supporting factor in the choice of Guerrero as the likely landing site of the Jaredites.

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