

glyph notes

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HOPE FOR A BETTER WORLD: Jaredite/Olmec Timeline

By Lyle Smith

The Jaredites, their antiquity—perhaps beginning around 5,000 years ago—their culture, their language, their history, and their spiritual heritage have always fascinated and enticed me. Yet The Book of Mormon only gives us around 50 printed pages of Jaredite history, depending on the version you read, to cover 3,000 years of history.

I will share with you some of the points of interest and questions that caused me to be eager to learn more:

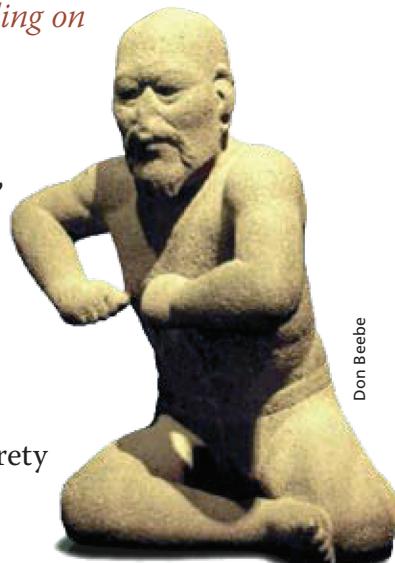
- The youngest son, rather than the customary eldest, became the next king.
- The Jaredite history, written on these 50 pages, shows us the Lord will reason with us.
- They built a great city by a narrow neck of land.
- What does it mean to be “within the vail”?
- What is the promise to our time? (Ether 1:98-101; LDS 4: 4-7)
- "Wherefore, whoso believeth in God, might with surety hope for a better world..." (Ether 5:4; LDS 12:4).

The above list is not what we are talking about today.

I do trust, however, that these points and questions will entice you to study the many glimpses of truth found in the Book of Ether and all Scripture.

In this article I am going back to an article I wrote some years ago, using it as a basis for what is presented in this issue. Now, in a time of great trial in the church we need a strong, firm testimony that our Scriptures are true. See also the article "Jaredites: Where and When, My Testimony" in *glyph notes*, July/August/September 2019.

Archaeology often uncovers major events in the cultural/linguistic/geographical history of an area and its people. By using today's proven methods correctly, archaeologists throw light on authentic cultural history of the periods in question. There are enough key points to compare with archaeological evidences to equate the Jaredites with the people known in Mesoamerica as the Olmecs and their Predecessors. Nevertheless, because the civilization existed so long ago, the archaeological record is scanty in the beginning years.



Don Beebe

One of the masterpieces of Olmec sculpture, The Wrestler, sports a mustache and beard, believed to be a privilege of political or religious leaders.

There are enough key points to compare with archaeological evidences to equate the Jaredites with the people known in Mesoamerica as the Olmecs and their predecessors.

Cont. on Page 2

Better World (*Cont. from Page 1*)

"The enormous temporal distance, three millennia, that separates us from the Olmec yields less information about this group than other, later cultures" (de Guevara 2010:25).

Working with these limitations, we will build a timeline by first looking at the history of the Jaredites as written in our primary source, *The Book of Mormon*, and compare it with major events that took place in Olmec history as found in current archaeological research.

These archaeological references come from well-known, current archaeologists. These are

not my theories or ideas. These scholars, whose observations about what archaeology reveals about the Olmec and their Predecessors, do not acknowledge that much of their archaeological insights reflect a definite correlation with the account found in Ether. They may not even realize a correlation exists. The accepted study of archaeology is based on the theory of evolution and does not include belief in God and his dealings with mankind.

When we understand the evidence, we see that "**Wherfore, whoso believeth in God might with surety hope for a better world, yea, even a place at the right hand of God...**" (Ether 5:4; LDS 12:4).

ARRIVAL IN THE PROMISED LAND

THE BOOK OF MORMON

In leaving the area of the great tower, the Jaredites essentially brought with them their civilization. In their preparation for the journey, the Lord instructed them to bring their flocks, fowls of the air, herds, beasts and animals, **seeds of the earth** of every kind, a vessel for carrying fish and a way for carrying swarms of honey bees. We know from the archaeological finds today, found in what is today Iraq, that the Jaredites were **using pottery**; so they would have brought cooking and serving vessels with them.

The route of their journey to reach the ocean, and their ocean voyage, is covered in an article "Jaredites: Where and When, My Testimony" in *glyph notes*, July/August/September 2019.

Upon arrival in the Promised Land they "went forth upon the face of the land, and began to till the earth" (Ether 3:15; LDS 6:13). Not long after their arrival, they made swords out of steel (Ether 3:45; LDS 7:9). Is there any reason to believe that they did not bring with them their cooking and serving vessels, probably mostly made from clay into pottery?

Before, when writing to you about the Jaredites, I have always referenced the Olmec **and** their Predecessors. According to archaeology today, the Olmec culture in Mesoamerica began about 2000 B.C. The people prior to the Olmec in Mesoamerica, beginning around 3000 B.C., are called the Olmec Predecessors

The Predecessors and the Olmec are both Jaredites. The Predecessors equate with the Jaredites before the great drought. The term Olmec refers to the Jaredites after the drought. This drought almost decimated the Jaredites. Following the great drought, the Olmec (Jaredites) began to build the great city by the narrow neck of land.

ARCHAEOLOGY

"After 3000 B.C., it is clear that lowland societies began to acquire **domesticated plants....**" In addition, "some of the earliest, if not the earliest, **pottery** in Mesoamerica" has been found to date to 2400 B.C. (Adams 2005:42, emphasis added).

Although what is classified as the "Olmec Heartland" is on the Gulf Coast, some archaeologists believe the earliest evidence for the Olmecs is found on the west or Pacific side. See Coe and Koontz's discussion of this in *Mexico* pages 89 through 91.

"Indubitably in Guerrero there was a marked Olmec influence, to the point that Covarrubias thought that the style had been born there, before its efflorescence in Veracruz-Tabasco" (Bernal 1969:142).

Summary: The Jaredites from the Old World knew about domesticated crops and how to make pottery. That both domestication of plants and evidence of pottery occur about the same time as the arrival of the Jaredites provides a strong witness for correlating the two groups.



Lyle Smith

Dennis and Shirley Heater, travelling with a PSI tour to Mexico, flank one of the many large stone heads discovered in the Olmec heartland.

DROUGHT

THE BOOK OF MORMON

According to The Book of Mormon, at the time of King Heth, prophets came into the land crying repentance; and that there would be a great famine in the land if the people did not repent.

Glenn Scott, in his book *Voices from the Dust*, has an excellent timeline of the Jaredite kings and events. He places King Heth at 2165 B.C. (Scott 2002:43).

"There began to be a great dearth upon the land, and the inhabitants began to be destroyed exceeding fast, because of the dearth, for there was no rain upon the face of the earth..." (Ether 4:35; LDS 9:30). Even King Heth and his household perished.

Handout photograph released by Mexico's National Institute of Anthropology (INAH)



While mammoth and other extinct types of animals have been discovered throughout North America, recently (November 2019 and early this year) a large number of mammoth bones have been discovered in several different areas around Mexico City.

ARCHAEOLOGY

"The higher temperatures of this period were accompanied by decreased rainfall. Authorities on ancient climate do not agree on the precise beginning and ending dates of this warm, dry spell, which is known as the Altithermal or Hypsithermal.... Higher than modern temperatures prevailed until sometime between 3000 and 1500 B.C." (Fiedel 1987:119-120).

"Vast areas of the New World were transformed into desert wastes" and many animals disappeared like the "mastodon, mammoth, horse . . . camel, giant bison, ground sloth, and dire wolf" (Coe and Koontz 2008:26).

Summary: The drought recorded in The Book of Mormon may have lasted a few years, yet this tiny blip, sometime in the period 3000 to 1500 B.C. of the Hypsithermal, may have caused the disappearance of the various animals. While animals and humans can live with higher temperatures, no plant, animal, or human can survive without moisture.

HORSES

THE BOOK OF MORMON

"And they also had horses, and asses, and there were elephants, and cureloms, and cumoms..." (Ether 4:21; LDS 9:30).

"And they had taken their horses, and their chariots, and their cattle, and all their flocks, and their herds, and their grain, and all their substance..." (3 Nephi 2: 30; LDS 3:22).

ARCHAEOLOGY

"Among the animals that disappeared at this time [Hypsithermal period mentioned above] were the mastodon, mammoth, horse . . . camel, giant bison, ground sloth, and dire wolf" (Coe and Koontz 2008:26).

Summary: For 190 years The Book of Mormon has been criticized for claiming the existence of horses in the Promised Land, which from all evidence is Mesoamerica. But now, Coe and Koontz firmly put horses and other large animals in Jaredite times. Evidently *not all* horses were destroyed in the drought for some remained in the land in Nephite times. Given time, archaeology may also discover the remains of horses closer to the destruction at the time of Christ's appearing in the Land of Promise.



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A GREAT NATION

THE BOOK OF MORMON

After the great drought, the Jaredites/Olmec were again establishing a great civilization with mighty cities within a few centuries. It is after this period of excessively high temperatures

that archaeologists begin to identify the people in the area of Veracruz on the Gulf Coast as the Olmec.

The Lord promised the Brother of Jared and his people that they would become a great nation. "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" (Ether 1:19; LDS 1:43).

"Coriantum . . . did build many mighty cities..." (Ether 4:25; LDS 9:23). "And they built a great city by the narrow neck of land, by the place where the sea divides the land" (Ether 4:68).

"And the whole face of the land northward was covered with inhabitants; and they were exceeding industrious . . . and never could be a people more blessed than were they, and more prospered by the hand of the Lord..." (Ether 4:70, 78; LDS 10:22, 28).



Sherrie Kline Smith

More than 900 axes in three different offerings were found at La Merced, not far from San Lorenzo. Many are made of jade in various colors; some in white. The Olmec highly prized jade and created many figures and other items of jade, requiring a great deal of skill. Jade is one of the hardest stones and not easily worked.

ARCHAEOLOGY

"Because of their early achievements in art, politics, religion, and economics, the Olmec stand for many as a kind of 'mother culture' to all the civilizations that came after, including the Maya and the Aztec" (Stuart 1993:92).

"Olmecs were the first Native Americans to erect large architectural complexes, live in nucleated towns and cities, and develop a sophisticated art style executed in stone and other imperishable media..." (Diehl 2004:12).

In San Lorenzo, "between 1800 and 1400 BC, they moved 2.2 million tons (2 million metric tons) of earth as part of the initial step in their plan to erect the first capital of the Olmec world..." (Cyphers 2010:37).

"The total quantity of the treasures uncovered in Complex A [at La Venta], only a portion of which are described here, brings to mind the royal treasures of

European monarchs or pharaonic tombs" (Diehl 2004:74, emphasis added).

Summary: The Lord promised the Jaredites that they would be greatly prospered. The treasures found in Olmec cities such as San Lorenzo and La Venta support this. Such wealth does not come when people are only subsistence farmers. The accumulation of wealth is made possible by business, government, trade, i.e. advanced, well organized, and prosperous civilizations.

NORTHWARD VERSUS SOUTHWARD

THE BOOK OF MORMON

"And they did preserve the land southward for a wilderness to get game" (Ether 4:68; LDS 10:21). In other words, the Jaredites as a nation remained north of the narrow neck dividing the **land southward** from the **land northward**, although archaeological evidence indicates some farming and small settlements and trading posts south of the Isthmus or narrow neck of land.

ARCHAEOLOGY

"One of ancient Mesoamerica's great mysteries is the absence of significant human populations in Yucatan, Belize, and the Peten of Guatemala before 800 BC. Earlier remains have been identified at various places in the northern Peten and Belize, but the entire area was very lightly settled until 600/500 BC." (Diehl 2004:150).

"Slow, uneven population growth occurred from

ARCHAEOLOGY cont.

1000 to 500 B.C. (Middle Formative), resulting in the proliferation of small farming communities throughout the peninsula. There are indications that **this erratic population growth became an explosion after 550 B.C.** The reasons for the apparent jump in numbers are obscure" (Adams 2005:132, emphasis added).

Summary: The Jaredites did not formally include the territory south of the narrow neck as a part of their empire, but it does not mean that trading posts and even small groups did not move into the area, especially along the Pacific coast of Mexico and Guatemala. The answer to the explosion of population after 550 B.C. was the arrival of the Nephites and Mulekites not long after 600 B.C.

**WRITING****THE BOOK OF MORMON**

The Brother of Jared could write (Ether 1:87-89, 92; LDS 3:22-24, 27); they had brought written records with them (Ether 3:80); and Ether wrote on plates of gold a condensed history, found some years later by the people of Limhi (Ether 1:2; 5:16; 6:108-109; Mosiah 12:16; LDS 3:22-24, 27). Ether most probably had written records to use in compiling their history of more than 2800 years.



Discovered north of the La Venta Pyramid, this extraordinary offering is unlike any found in any other region of pre-Hispanic Mexico. According to archaeologists, it represents a ceremonial scene. With the 16 figures are 5 small celts made from serpentine with engraved signs.

Don Beebe

ARCHAEOLOGY

"Mesoamerica was the **only** area of the New World that developed indigenous writing systems" (Pool 2007:290, emphasis added; see also pages 255-258).

"Prior to 2002, it was generally agreed that *pars pro toto* 'pseudo-writing,' in which specific elements stand for a large invisible item—for example, the 'paw-wing' as shorthand for the deity called the Olmec Dragon—was the closest the Olmecs came to true writing.... Then in December 2002 a fortuitous discovery established the existence of Olmec writing and calendrics by at least 650 BC" (Diehl 2004:96).

Coe and Koontz, though, report in their sixth edition of *Mexico* (2008), that, "More conclusive evidence that the Olmecs had a script appeared in 1999 at a place called El Cascajal, not far north of San Lorenzo . . . local villagers had recovered a serpentine block, one face of which was incised with hieroglyphs..." (76). They date this writing to 1000-900 B.C.

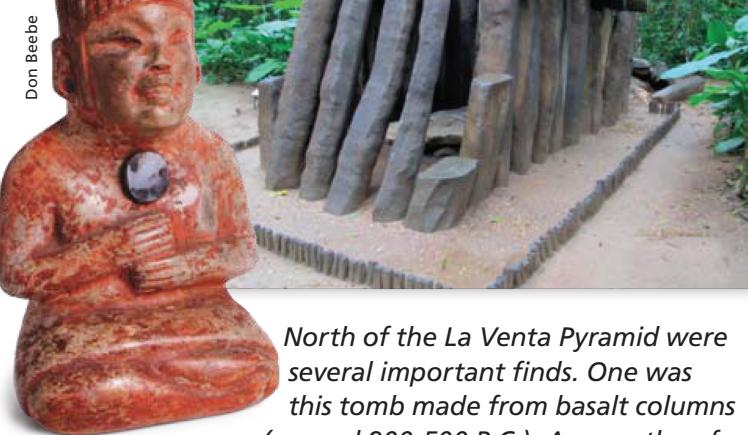
METALS

THE BOOK OF MORMON

Shortly after the Jaredites arrived in the Promised Land, they were using metals. “Wherefore he came to the hill Ephraim, and he did molten out of the hill, and made swords out of steel...” (Ether 3:46; LDS 7:9).

“And they did work in all manner of ore, and they did make gold, and silver, and iron, and brass, and all manner of metals; and they did dig it out of the earth; wherefore they did cast up mighty heaps of earth to get ore, of gold, and of silver, and of iron, and of copper” (Ether 4:71; LDS 10:23, about 1500 B.C.).

“And they did make all manner of tools to till the earth, both to plow and to sow, to reap and to hoe, and also to thrash. And they did make all manner of tools with which they did work their beasts. And they did make all manner of weapons of war” (Ether 4:74-76; LDS 10:25-27).



North of the La Venta Pyramid were several important finds. One was this tomb made from basalt columns (around 900-500 B.C.). Among the offerings found in the burial was a small figurine, covered in cinnabar and wearing a hematite mirror.

ARCHAEOLOGY

“Pierre Agrinier found native iron ore deposits, a workshop littered with thousands of broken and partially worked ilmenite and magnetite blocks, chert drills and other tools, and even a fragment from an iron ore mirror...” (Diehl 2004:133).

“Ilmenite may have been quarried somewhere near San Lorenzo, where Ann Cyphers and her colleagues uncovered two workshops containing tons of small rectangular [iron] ‘beads’ perforated with conical holes.... The sheer quantity of objects turned up by Cyphers suggests they must have had some other use as well” (Diehl 2004:93).

“Ilmenite and magnetite were used to make mirrors in Oaxaca about 1475 B.C.” (Flannery and Schoenwetter 1970:149).

“Small iron-ore mirrors, reached a height of popularity...” around 1450-1400 B.C. (Pool 2007:190).

“The most spectacular Olmec iron ore creations are large, beautifully polished, parabolic concave ‘mirrors’ made from magnetite and ilmenite.... The concavity on the front is as carefully ground as many modern optical lenses, and the optical qualities of some allow them to be used to ignite fires and project ‘camera lucida’ images on flat surfaces” (Diehl 2004:93-94).

“Although the Olmecs had a Stone Age technology, they did work the iron ores magnetite, hematite, and ilmenite into beads, mirrors, and at least one marvelous little human figurine...” (Diehl 2004:93)

Summary: While archaeologists say the Olmecs had a stone-age technology, they admit considerable evidence of metallurgy. Why should we not assume that they could also make metal tools to “till the earth” and “all manner of weapons of war”?

END OF A CIVILIZATION

THE BOOK OF MORMON

The prophet Ether prophesied unto Coriantumr that unless he and all his household would repent, “they should be destroyed...” (Ether 6:21-22; LDS 13:21-21).

“Yea, there had been slain two millions of mighty men, and also their wives and their children...” (Ether 6:73; LDS 15:2).

Yes, it was “human actions and responses” that destroyed the people. The Book of Mormon describes this history (Ether 6:24-109; LDS 13:22-15:34).

ARCHAEOLOGY

“Olmec culture collapsed with the fall of La Venta, around 400 B.C.” (Pool 2007:243).

“Whatever environmental changes occurred, the demise of Olmec culture was ultimately a cultural process that reflected human actions and responses.... But what happened to the people?” (Diehl 2004:82).

COMPARATIVE TIMELINE

The Book of Mormon Jaredites	Dates	Mesoamerican Archaeology Olmec and Predecessors
Jaredites arrive	Circa 3100 B.C.	Olmec Predecessors
Till the earth (seeds for domesticated crops) knowledge of ceramics	3100 B.C. 2400 B.C. or earlier	Domestication of crops pottery appears
Wickedness of people causes a great dearth (a tiny blip in the hypsithermal); almost all of the Jaredites destroyed	Circa 2200 B.C.	Hypsithermal ends; deserts form
Jaredites had large animals; no further mention of elephants, cureloms, and cumons	Circa 2200 B.C.	Elephants and other large animals disappear
Become a great nation; build many mighty cities; are exceeding industrious and prospered by the Lord	2000-1200 B.C.	Olmec recognized; "mother culture;" large Olmec cities like San Lorenzo begin; they amass pharaonic-like treasures
Preserve land southward as a wilderness	Circa 1500 B.C.	Yucatan, Belize, and the Peten of Guatemala very lightly settled until 600/500 B.C.
Always had knowledge of metals	*1475 B.C.	Current earliest evidence for Olmec metallurgy
Always had knowledge of writing	*1000 B.C.	Current earliest evidence for Olmec writing
Jaredite civilization ends	Circa 300 B.C.	Olmec civilization ends

**Lack of evidence of metals or writing in earlier times does not mean that such knowledge did not exist.
Deterioration of metals and writing is far more rapid than other substances such as pottery
making it more difficult or impossible to find examples of these in earlier times.*

REVIEW

The nine major parallels between the Jaredite and the Predecessors/Olmec civilizations (shown above) illustrate how The Book of Mormon as compared to archaeology findings provide a solid witness that the Olmecs and their Predecessors were the same people as the Jaredites. Up until a few years ago, archaeological evidence did not align with Jaredite history. Only in the last few decades have archaeological findings converged with The Book of Mormon history so that Jaredite and Olmec histories now have parallel timelines.

The Book of Mormon has not changed. When we understand the evidence, we see that "... whoso believeth in God might with surety hope for a better world, yea, even a place at the right hand of God ..." (Ether 5:4; LDS 12:4).

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2020 Vision

By Patricia J Beebe

When I think of 2020, vision automatically comes to mind. The normal visual clarity and sharpness for an individual is 20/20—if you have 20/20 vision, you can see clearly at 20 feet what should normally be seen at that distance. If you have 20/100 vision, it means that you must be as close as 20 feet to see what a person with normal vision can see at 100 feet. Having 20/20 vision does not mean you have perfect vision; other important skills enter in such as focus and peripheral acuity.

As I review the year 2020, I wonder what my visual clarity and sharpness measurement is in relation to others. The year has definitely been troublesome. Filled with such descriptors as quarantine, isolation, distance, and masks, I view the first half of the year as cold emotionally. Joy, hope, security, and peace is quickly drained from an individual's coping capacity when enduring day in and day out these stressors. Because of technology and social media, the world is brought closer for everyone to view and process.

In a year filled with so much turmoil, I find it necessary to rely on my focus and peripheral vision to help maintain balance in my life. As a person of faith, I choose to focus on the positives rather than

the negatives around me. But, be assured, I see the negatives; and they have impact on my life as much as I allow them to do so. Faith coupled with hope has power to dispel fear—fear which drives man to ignore past lessons, to experience anxiety and alarm for the present, and to be helpless in cultivating expectation and anticipation for the future. People of faith have concern for others and desire to uplift their fellowman by sharing hope to endure the now (2020) in which we find ourselves.

There are many ways that we can restore hope, peace and security for ourselves and for others in 2020. PSI has chosen to share the good news of the Gospel as it is reflected in The Book of Mormon narrative through its newsletter *glyph notes*. Hope, conscientious and unceasing through prayer, enlarges our vision as it correlates to the past, the now, and the future. With your help, we can share the hope expressed by Moroni in the closing pages of The Book of Mormon with those who lack hope; and encourage those with hope to continue to share with others. In isolation, we can still experience joy and happiness by banding together for a good cause. Won't you join with PSI to help strengthen each other's vision of the world in which we live. A self-addressed envelope is enclosed in this issue for your convenience. Any amount is welcomed and greatly appreciated. 