

Ether 7–15: Fall of the Jaredites

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Quotes

- Life is like a garden. I can focus on weeds or flowers.
- There is no conspiracy theory in the Book of Mormon—it is a conspiracy fact. (Ezra T. Benson, *Ensign*, July 1972, 60–61)
- If you want to walk on water, you have to get out of the boat.
- When faced by a Goliath-sized problem, do you say: “He’s too big to hit!” or, like David, “He’s too big to miss!”?

1. Secret Combinations (8:9, 15–16, 18)

⁹ They by their *secret plans* did obtain kingdoms and great glory. ... ¹⁵ Akish did administer unto them the oaths which were given ... ¹⁶ to help such as sought power to gain power, .. murder, ... plunder, ... lie, and to commit ... wickedness and whoredoms....
¹⁸ They formed a *secret combination*

Objectives (Adapted from Hugh Nibley, *Since Cumorah*, 370–2)

- “Power and gain”: power wins gain and gain wins power.
- Control or overthrow of government ‘to rule and do according to their wills, that they might get gain and glory’ (Hel. 7:5).

Methods

- Secret agreements between individuals and groups.
- Assassination. Imprisoned or killed possible threats to power.
- “Payola”: ‘Akish did offer them money’ (9:11); ‘letting the guilty ... go unpunished because of their money’ (Hel. 7:5).
- Skillful propaganda and public relations: ‘flattering words.’
- Hate campaign: a steady output of charges, accusations, and rumors: Accuse--always accuse.
- Intimidation: ‘breathing out many threatenings,’ operating ‘by the hand of secrecy,’ wearing fearsome disguises (3 Ne. 4:7).
- Showmanship: uniforms and flattery attract young (3 Ne. 1:29)
- Control of members: death penalty for betrayal (8:14; Hel. 1:11)
- Heavy taxes for buildings and prisons (labor camps). (10:5–6)

Attitude.

- Partisan: Their laws and interests take priority over all others.
- Ambitious: labor for power and gain.
- Combinations were highly competitive, feuding fiercely.
- Project a noble image: Talk of rights and wrongs, high courage and upright character (3 Ne. 3).
- Profess piety and religion: swear oaths ‘by the God of heaven’ (8:14), ‘by their everlasting Maker’ (Hel. 1:11).
- Paranoid: Attribute troubles to wickedness of others; never the aggressors, they are constantly seeking to avenge their wrongs.

Ecology

- They flourish in affluent society, wither in times of poverty.
- They crystallize around ambitious individuals.
- They readily unite with king-men, great families, ambitious local officials, and Lamanite kings (all opposed to Nephites).
- They have destroyed every civilization in which they thrived.
- As parasites, they must have a complacent society to host and support them. Such a society accepts the goals of power/gain.
- They can be dormant until circumstances are favorable.

2. Warning to Gentiles in latter days (8:20–26)

²⁰ Their oaths ... are had among all people. ... ²¹ And they have caused the destruction of [the Jaredites and the Nephites]. ²² And whatsoever nation shall uphold such *secret combinations*, to get power and gain, until they shall spread over the nation, ... they shall be destroyed. ... ²³ Wherefore, O ye Gentiles, ... these things [are] shown unto you, that thereby ye may repent of your sins, and suffer not that these murderous *combinations* shall get above you. ... ²⁴ Wherefore, the Lord commandeth you, when ye shall see

these things come among you that ye shall awake to a sense of your awful situation, because of this secret combination which shall be among you. ... ²⁵ For ... whoso buildeth it up seeketh to overthrow the freedom of all lands, nations, and countries; and it bringeth to pass the destruction of all people, for it is built up by the devil, who is the father of all lies. ... ²⁶ Wherefore, I, Moroni, am commanded to write these things that evil may be done away, and that the time may come that Satan may have no power upon the hearts of the children of men, but that they may be persuaded to do good continually. (8:20–26)

³⁷ The Lamanites did hunt the ... robbers of Gadianton; and they did preach the word of God among ... them, insomuch that this band of robbers was utterly destroyed from among the Lamanites. (Hel 6:37)

³⁸ The Nephites did ... support them ... until they had overspread all the land ..., and had seduced the more part of the righteous until they had come down to believe in their works and partake of their spoils, and to join with them in their secret murders and combinations. (Hel 6:38)

¹¹ The people of Akish were desirous for gain, even as Akish was desirous for power; wherefore, the sons of Akish did offer them money, by which means they drew away the more part of the people after them. (Eth 9:11)

Ezra Taft Benson: There is no conspiracy theory in the Book of Mormon—it is a conspiracy fact. (*Ensign*, July 1972, 60–61)

3. Faith and Repentance (12:3–6)

³ By faith all things are fulfilled— ⁴ Wherefore, whoso believeth in God might with surety hope for a better world, yea, even a place at the right hand of God, which hope cometh of faith, maketh an anchor to the souls of men, which would make them sure and steadfast, always abounding in good works, being led to glorify God. ...

⁵ Ether did prophesy great and marvelous things unto the people, which they did not believe, because they saw them not. ⁶ And now, I, Moroni, ... [say] that faith is things which are hoped for and not seen; wherefore, dispute not because ye see not, for ye receive no witness until after the trial of your faith. (12:3–6)

| | Opposite of FAITH IN CHRIST | REPENT |
|--------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Mind | Doubt, unbelief | Change thinking |
| Heart | Fear | Change of desires |
| Body | Disobedience | Change actions (forsake) |
| Might | Not sacrifice | Build up Zion |

After Christ and his apostles died, Greek philosophy was mingled with scriptures. The meanings of words were often changed, not the words themselves. God became a spirit without a body or emotions. Faith and repentance became “mind” words instead of “doing” words (e.g., hear and obey promptings [1 Ne 3:7]). The goal was to seek truth, not wisdom and righteousness. Leaders excommunicated people for disagreeing with them, not for sinning.

4. “I give unto men weakness” (12:27)

²⁷ If men come unto me I will show unto them their weakness. I give unto men weakness that they may be humble; and my grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them.

How is this verse commonly applied to us?

5. Moroni's Weakness (12:23–28)

²³ I said ...: Lord, the Gentiles will mock at these things, because of our weakness in writing; for ... thou hast not made us mighty in writing; for thou hast made all this people that they could speak much, because of the Holy Ghost...; ²⁴ And thou hast made us that we could write but little, because of the awkwardness of our hands. Behold, thou hast not made us mighty in writing like unto the brother of Jared, for ... the things which he wrote were mighty... unto the overpowering of man to read them. ²⁵ Thou hast also made our words powerful and great, even that we cannot write them; wherefore, when we write we behold our weakness, and stumble because of the placing of our words; and I fear lest the Gentiles shall mock at our words. ²⁶ And ... the Lord spake ... saying: Fools mock, but they shall mourn; and my grace is sufficient for the meek, that they shall take no advantage of your weakness; ... ²⁷ I give unto men weakness that they may be humble; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them. ... ²⁸ I will show unto the Gentiles their weakness, and ... that faith, hope and charity bringeth unto me.

How did the Lord show Moroni his weakness?

How did the Lord “make weak things become strong”?

6. Meaning of “weakness” as contained in scriptures

OED *weakness* 1. The quality or condition of being weak ...; deficiency of strength, power, or force. 2. ... b. An infirmity of character, a failing. ¹⁶⁴⁶⁺ ... 3. An unreasonable or self-indulgent liking or inclination *for* (a person or thing). ¹⁷¹²

Which definition is implied in Joseph's comment below?

Joseph: “I was left to all kinds of temptations; and, mingling with all kinds of society, I frequently fell into many foolish errors, and displayed the weakness of youth, and the foibles of human nature; which, ... led me into divers temptations, offensive in the sight of God. ... I was guilty of levity, and sometimes associated with jovial company, etc., not consistent with that character which ought to be maintained by one who was called of God. ... In consequence of these things, I often felt condemned for my weakness and imperfections.” I prayed and Moroni appeared. (JS–H 1:28)

Which definition is used elsewhere in the scriptures?

Jacob: We keep the law of Moses ... we search the prophets, and we have many revelations and the spirit of prophecy; and having all these witnesses we obtain a hope, and our faith becometh unshaken, insomuch that we truly can command in the name of Jesus and the very trees obey us, or the mountains. ... Nevertheless, the Lord God showeth us our weakness that we may know that it is by his grace, and his great condescensions ... that we have power to do these things. (Jac 4:5–7)

Ammon: I know that I am nothing; as to my strength I am weak; therefore I will not boast of myself, but I will boast of my God, for in his strength I can do all things; yea, behold, many mighty miracles we have wrought in this land. (Al 26:12)

As human beings, we are not all-knowing, all-powerful, or immortal. Adversity, problems, and sickness are some of the ways that God shows us our weakness or lack of these things so that we might be humble and realize our dependence on him. In this sense, we do not need to pray for forgiveness of these mortal limitations. Instead, we seek and appreciate his tender mercies instead of feeling proud.

7. Ether's prophecies concerning this land (13:2–12)

² [This land] became a choice land above all other lands ... wherefore the Lord would have that all men should serve him who dwell upon the face thereof; ³ And that it was the place of the New Jerusalem, which should come down out of heaven, and the holy sanctuary of the Lord. ... ⁵ After [Jerusalem] should be destroyed it should be built up again, a holy city unto the Lord ... ⁶ A New Jerusalem should be built up upon this land. ... ⁸ [And] the remnant of ... Joseph ... shall build up a holy city unto the Lord, like unto the Jerusalem of old. ... ¹⁰ And then cometh the New Jerusalem; and blessed are they who dwell therein, for it is they whose garments are white through the blood of the Lamb. (13:2–12)

³⁷ If they have not charity it mattereth not unto thee [Moroni], thou hast been faithful; wherefore, thy garments shall be made clean. And because thou hast seen thy weakness thou shalt be made strong, even unto the sitting down in the place which I have prepared in the mansions of my Father. (12:37)

² In my Father's house are many mansions. (Jn 14:2)

The word *mansions* in verse 2 is a Latinism for the Greek original *μοναί* (*monai*), which means “stopping places” or “resting stations,” thus giving the impression of a long journey rather than a large estate. The word in the last part of the verse not only means “place” but can also refer to an “opportunity” or “occasion,” without specifying a particular site. Whether we wish to think of a permanent place or a more general heavenly journey, the emphasis Jesus gave was that the disciples would be with Him and with God. (Griggs)

SOED *mansion* 2. A place of abode. ... 2b. A separate dwelling place or apartment in a large house or enclosure. (Jn 14:2; Obs.)

8. Pride Cycle: Wickedness ↔ Righteousness

²³ There came prophets ... prophesying that the wickedness and idolatry of the people was bringing a curse upon the land, and they should be destroyed if they did not repent. ... ²⁴ The people did revile against the prophets, and did mock them. ... King Shule did execute judgment against [them]. ²⁵ And he did execute a law ... [allowing] the prophets [to] go whithersoever they would; and by this cause the people were brought unto repentance. (7:23–25)

³ The Lord warned [king] Omer in a dream that he should depart out of the land; wherefore Omer departed... with his family (9:3)

²⁰ The Lord did pour out his blessings upon this land. ... ²¹ Emer did execute judgment in righteousness all his days, and ... ²² he saw peace in the land; yea, and he even saw the Son of Righteousness, and did rejoice and glory in his day. (9:20–22)

¹⁰ [Morianton] did ease the burden of the people. ... ¹¹ And he did do justice unto the people, but not unto himself because of his many whoredoms; wherefore he was cut off from the presence of the Lord. ¹² And ... the people became exceedingly rich. (10:10–12)

¹ Many prophets ... prophesied of the destruction of that great people except they should repent ... and forsake their murders and wickedness. ² ... The prophets were rejected by the people, and they fled unto Com for protection, for the people sought to destroy them. ³ And they prophesied unto Com many things; and he was blessed in all the remainder of his days. (11:1–3)

9. Destruction [Covenant Curse]

⁷ [The people] hearkened not unto the voice of the Lord, because of their wicked combinations; wherefore, there began to be wars and contentions in all the land, and also many famines and pestilences, insomuch that there was a great destruction. (11:7)

² Every man did cleave unto that which was his own, with his hands, and would not borrow neither would he lend; and every man kept the hilt of his sword in his right hand, in the defence of his property and his own life and of his wives and children. (14:2)

10. Shiz vs Coriantumr [final destruction] (Eth 14 and 15)

¹⁷ Shiz pursued after Coriantumr, and he did overthrow many cities, and he did slay both women and children, and he did burn the cities. ¹⁸ And there went a fear of Shiz throughout all the land; yea, a cry went forth throughout the land—Who can stand before the army of Shiz? Behold, he sweepeth the earth before him! ...

¹⁹ The people began to flock together in armies, throughout all ... the land. ²⁰ And they were divided; and a part of them fled to the army of Shiz, and a part ... fled to the army of Coriantumr. ²¹ And so great and lasting had been the war, and so long had been the scene of bloodshed and carnage, that the whole ... land was covered with the bodies of the dead. ²² And so swift and speedy was the war that there was none left to bury the dead. (14:17–22)

⁶ The people repented not of their iniquity; and the people of Coriantumr were stirred up to anger against the people of Shiz; and the people of Shiz were stirred up to anger against the people of Coriantumr; wherefore, the people of Shiz did give battle unto the people of Coriantumr. ... ²² And when the night came they were drunken with anger, even as a man who is drunken with wine; and they slept again upon their swords. (15:6, 22)

11. How do these chapters apply to us?

Questions

1. Could a 23 year old young man have written this book?
2. How do these things apply to me now in my circumstances?
3. As I read these chapters, how do I feel?
4. Do they invite and entice me to love God, and do good?
5. As I read, do I “remember how merciful the Lord hath been, and ponder it in [my] heart” and ask God if it is true?

Quotes

J. Reuben Clark (1940): We are not given the step-by-step backsliding of this Jaredite civilization till it reached the social and governmental chaos the record sets out, but those steps seem wholly clear from the results. Put into modern terms, we can understand them. First there was a forsaking of the righteous life, and the working of wickedness; then must have come the extortion and oppression of the poor by the rich; then retaliation and reprisal by the poor against the rich; then would come a cry to share the wealth which should belong to all; then the easy belief that society owed every man a living whether he worked or not; then the keeping of a great body of idlers; then when community revenues failed to do this, as they always have failed and always will fail, a self-helping by one to the goods of his neighbor; and finally when the neighbor resisted, as resist he must, or starve with his family, then death to the neighbor and all that belonged to him. This was the decreed ‘fulness of iniquity’ (Ether 2:10). (*Stand Fast By Our Constitution*, 177–179)

Neal A. Maxwell: There for us to ponder also is a clear case in which personal pride and rage kept two principals from acting for the welfare of their people. Shiz insisted on ‘getting his man,’ even if it meant the destruction of his own people; and Coriantumr offered his kingdom *but not his life* for his people. Each said, in effect, that the ultimate object of his selfishness was nonnegotiable! Neither was willing to play the role of the intervenor and say of the circumstances, ‘This has gone too far—enough is enough.’ How often on a lesser scale in human affairs

do tinier tragedies occur for want of this selfless intervention? How often do we withhold the one thing that is needed to make a difference? (*Ensign*, Aug. 1978, “Three Jaredites: Contrasting Contemporaries”)

Ezra Taft Benson: Will Durant ... writes an epilogue ... “Why Rome Fell.” ... The author lists the major causes why this great civilization fell apart. ... The first group of causes he termed biological, and no doubt most fundamental. They had to do with the limitation of families, the deferment and avoidance of marriage, the refusal of men and women to shoulder the great responsibilities, God-ordained, of honorable parenthood. He mentioned that sexual excesses were indulged in commonly, both in and outside the marriage covenant. The operation of contraception and abortion was common. This, together with other things, resulted in reduced fertility. Sex ran riot, and moral decay resulted. He mentioned as another cause of Rome's decay, the waste of natural resources in mining, deforestation, erosion, the neglect of irrigation canals but most important of all, the negligence of harassed and discouraged men, the failure to teach high moral principles so necessary for the building of real character. Then he lists with great emphasis the rising costs of government because of armies, doles, public works, expanding bureaucracy, a parasitic court, depreciation of currency, absorption of investment capital by confiscatory taxation. Is there anything suggestive in this summary? ... May we have the courage ... to stand ... for those principles and ideals which guided the founding fathers in the establishment of this great land. (*Conference Report*, Apr 1952, 57-61; <http://scriptures.byu.edu>)

Spencer W. Kimball: It takes faith—unseeing faith—for young people to proceed immediately with their family responsibilities in the face of financial uncertainties. It takes faith for the young woman to bear her family instead of accepting employment, especially when schooling for the young husband is to be finished. It takes faith to observe the Sabbath when ‘time and a half’ can be had working, when profit can be made, when merchandise can be sold. It takes a great faith to pay tithes when funds are scarce and demands are great. It takes faith to fast and have family prayers and to observe the Word of Wisdom. It takes faith to do home teaching, stake missionary work, and other service, when sacrifice is required. It takes faith to fill full-time missions. But know this—that all these are of the planting, while faithful, devout families, spiritual security, peace, and eternal life are the harvest. (*Faith Precedes the Miracle*, 3–5, 10–11)

First Presidency (1941): The Church as a Church does not believe in war and yet since its organization whenever war has come we have done our part ... we do thoroughly believe in building up our home defenses to the maximum extent necessary, but we do not believe that aggression should be carried on in the name and under the false cloak of defense. We therefore look with sorrowing eyes at the present use to which a great part of the funds being raised by taxes and by borrowing is being put ... We believe that our real threat comes from within and not from without, and it comes from the underlying spirit common to Nazism, Fascism, and Communism, namely, the spirit which would array class against class, which would set up a socialistic state of some sort, which would rob the people of the liberties which we possess under the Constitution, and would set up such a reign of terror as exists now in many parts of Europe. (“[A Letter to the Treasury from the LDS First Presidency in 1941](#)”. 20 Nov 2009. Connor’s Conundrums)