

TEACHINGS OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

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Ether 1–2

The Epic Literature of the Book of Ether

I'm going to tell you the subject [for the final]. I've got to formulate a question so it can pin you down. At the end of the hour it may be clearer what the question will be. All the stuff we have would help you in this particular problem or paper. This is definitely on the subject, and all that we've read so far from 3 Nephi, 4 Nephi, Mormon [would apply]; now it's Ether and then it will be Moroni—those five books. There's a central theme that runs all through them. Yesterday I had a long conversation with Brother Oaks. He gave that excellent talk during conference on war and peace, but I say he underplayed the Book of Mormon. That is the greatest thesis on war and peace, the greatest epic on the subject that we have. That's the whole theme, so that's what the subject will be for the paper we're going to write for the final. Now, what would be a good way to formulate it? Let's think at the end of the class how we could make a specific question.

Let's turn to Ether now. The word Ether, *athira*, means “the one who left a trace, the one who left his mark or left a record.” In all Semitic languages it's the same, and it means “to leave a track, to trail somebody.” He left his tracks in the sand, but it was the brother of Jared that left most of them.

This takes us to a new setting, as we said. Imagine having finished 1 Nephi of how they trek through the desert. In that marvelous account of how they go through the desert, everything is very accurate. I've had large classes of nothing but Arab students at this school in the early days. When we had Point Four and President Harris was in charge, half the Near East came to BYU. They were required to take Book of Mormon, so the class had all these Arabs, and boy, did they eat it up. Nephi was their boy. I mean, they knew everything. It was all familiar, and it was all correct.

But having done that, having made that epic story, what about changing the whole thing entirely, as we say here? Now imagine any man insane enough to try after such colossal exertions to write another such story of equal length and detail (the book of Ether is about the same as 1 Nephi, you see), but this time about a totally different race of people living in an age far removed from any other and in a wholly different geographical setting. Everything is different in the book of Ether, except the plot. The plot's the same, and it works out the same. So what's going on? Why is it the same? Because it's always been the same—we'll see that. Not even Joseph Smith ever called attention to this prodigious feat that he's done here—the man who wrote the Book of Mormon. Yes, but who wrote the book of Ether? Well, he couldn't have gotten any help from those sources.

Now every century sees its wars, its treaties, and the troubles and the affairs of men—“yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward” [Job 5:7]—the same types of trouble, the same types of jealousy, the same types of passion. As Ecclesiastes says, nothing changes. It's always the same baloney. This world is always that way, but always in a different setting. This is the point. The setting does make a difference, and we're going into a different setting ourselves. That's why the book of Ether is important, because everything shifts into a climatic change and everything else. So the test of a historical document isn't that it tells you of wars and alarms and rumors of wars, but the setting it puts it in. I mean those casual details that could only be noted by one who was on the scene. It couldn't have been invented by anyone; only an eyewitness could have them. The story of Jared is a marvelous example of that.

There's nothing original in that story of Lehi leaving Jerusalem and wandering through the desert. We've seen that with the Jaredites, but it was also the same in the case of Noah, Enoch, Abraham, Moses, and the Church in the Wilderness, and the Latter-day Saints coming west, etc. It's the same epic of *Das Wandernde Gottesvolk*. In fact, Käsemann wrote a famous book on that subject, *God's Wandering People*. They're always chased out into the desert. This is the same sort of thing. But what strange institutions and practices we find in the book of Ether. It's all very different.

How can we ever be able to check up on such stuff? Well, we can do it. First there is the driving force of the whole thing. In 1966 I wrote an article for a journal. I have been writing quite a bit on the Asiatic background of very early history, and this talks about the migrations that have occurred from time to time. In the present century, the 1930s, H. Munro Chadwick (Chadwick's an important name here if you're going to study the book of Ether) and his wife, who worked with him on these things, pointed out what should have been obvious to everybody all along. All the great civilizations begin with an epic literature, a type of literature known as epic. It's quite different from all the others, and he pointed out that it couldn't possibly be faked. There are fake epics. *The Aeneid*, *The Luciad*, and *Ossian* are good examples. People try to fake epics, but you can't fake them. It sticks out all over the place, this heroic poetry.

Chadwick pointed out what should have been obvious to everyone, namely epic literature—a large and important segment of human history. Why does he [Mormon] bother to bring this in anyway? Just a different setting. Because this is an enormous chunk of history. This represents at least half of what's been going on in the past, and you can't neglect it. It's the same thing with the book of Moses. This takes us back and fits us into the cosmic setting. If this is the gospel, this is the eternal word of God and his dealings with men here. You've got to have more than the Wasatch church and provincial Christianity the way we do. The Christian world is very small compared with the others. You've got to take account of all the others. So we have this, and, as I say, it gives us a very large chunk of history, and it also concerns us. It's [similar to] a time we're coming into today, because, as you know, we're living in one world today. We know much more about Asia today; we're right next door to them. My kids go over to China and central Asia all the time. My son-in-law's down in Budapest, and one son is in Guam. They move around all over the world. It's a bigger world we're living in now, and the book of Ether opens it up in its archaic setting, and it lays down the basic principles of Asiatic "nonsense."

This literature that's left us by these various peoples is not the product of an unrestrained poetic fancy—they used to think it was. Since this was written in 1966, a lot has been done on this. It shows that the beginnings of civilization everywhere do not slowly emerge from a primitive background, as my Professor Wilson used to say at Chicago in Egyptology—indefinitely, gradually, and painfully they worked themselves up. For all these species to adapt themselves to their peculiar ways of life, it must have taken millions of generations because it had to be just hit or miss. It had to be natural selection, so it went on so slowly [they claimed]. But the fact is the thing has been interrupted—bang—again and again. Remember we started out mentioning extermination. There have been great extermination periods, and periods very near extermination again and again. Well, this was a thing first pointed out in the sixties by Schindewolf, which he called *neocatastrophism*. He showed how again and again nearly all of the predominant life forms suddenly disappeared, and in their place different ones suddenly emerged. Well, that has to do maybe with meteorites striking the earth or great changes—the iridium layer and all that. We won't go into that now. The thing is that these were real years of terror and gloom through which the entire race had been forced to pass from time to time. We now have good reason to believe that after many years of controversy and discussion, scientific and otherwise, that the violence of the elements forms the somber background of the epic milieu. The book of Ether is an epic milieu. That's the surrounding setting that produces this type of literature.

When I wrote this, I had no idea of the Book of Mormon in mind. Ether never occurred to me until after a doubletake. After the waters of the flood had subsided, there came the great wind floods. There are the three great floods. The flood of water, the flood of wind, and the last will be the flood of fire. This was the great wind flood which converted large areas all over the world into sandy deserts. Haldar considers the Sumerian version of the wind flood to be an excellent example of a text describing historical events in terms of religious language. We get that in the book of Ether, too. These things are not only recorded, but they are recorded geologically. Historical reality is attested by wind-blown deposits being studied everywhere—especially by the Dutch, because all Holland was one of those deposits—can be broadly correlated in some of the major migrations of people. Well here I have a very long footnote with all sorts of references. When the ice thawed in the last Ice Age, great winds blasted out from that, carrying this fine glacial dust that was deposited as loess in China, and on the eastern side in the Hungarian Basin and in eastern Europe and in western China. There were these great deposits of loess from the dust being blown. But the thing is that we get a lot of this in [other places]—we certainly get it in Egypt.

Samuel Noah Kramer is a Sumerologist who went into the earliest Sumerian records that you can find. He said, “Ah, here we have a typical epic milieu. He said this fact was primarily responsible for the more characteristic features of the Greek, Indian, and Teutonic [people]. See, you have this literature of the wandering people. You find it among the Greeks’ epic literature. You find it in the Vedic literature in India, and you find it in the German literature in the epics and the sagas. They’ve neglected it because nobody goes into Celtic very much, and the records aren’t so full. There are lots of old Norse and Icelandic records, as you know. They all tell the same story, although they’re at different times thousands of years apart.

“They were the same characteristic features at work in the ancient Near East as a whole in the earliest recorded times. These factors are always accompanied and aggravated, if not caused, by violent and prolonged atmospheric disturbances,” he said. “Wherever we turn, the earliest records of the race offer a surprisingly uniform portrait of the wandering, storm-driven hero.”

Of course we would naturally include Jared and the brother of Jared. There’s Horus, Enlil, Marduk, Mazda, Zeus, Teshub, the Celtic Mercury, and the Norse Odin, to name but a few. He is mounted on his thunder wagon, leading his toiling hosts across the windy steppes while the earth trembles and the sky gives forth with appalling electrical displays. There are lots and lots of references here; if you want me to read them I will. No point to that. But you’re getting a standard situation here, and somehow this is going to concern us. What is it that drives them? This hostile planet we’re living on. Well, we say the wind, etc. Here we get it very clearly stated in the book of Ether.

The burans of Asia are terrible at all times. Ancient and modern travelers tell almost unbelievable but uniform tales of those appalling winds that almost daily shift vast masses of sand, dust, and even gravel from one part of the continent to the other. Of course, nobody goes out at 4:00 P.M. in the summertime in Egypt because of the violent winds. The *khamzin* is going to begin now, the fifty-day wind that blows the sand and the gravel. That’s why there’s [only] heavy sand left. You walk on a crust of very coarse sand because all the fine stuff has been blown for thousands of years. And it has exposed all the stuff lying around. The great loess deposits on the eastern and western fringes of the vast area bear witness to even more dreadful dust storms (just after the Flood) that accompanied the drying up of the land after the glacial epic. But it is when the world’s weather gets out of hand, as it has a number of times in the course of history, that the blowing sands of Asia bring mighty empires to ruin, bury great cities almost overnight, and scatter the tribes in all directions to overrun and submerge the more favored civilizations of the east and west.

It's a very interesting thing. All the diggings and works that have been piled up in previous years by BYU couldn't be found anymore. They're completely covered under the sand, so these things just pass away. The weather of Asia is the central driving mechanism of world history. Huntington did a famous study on climate and civilization that came out in the thirties and was quite sensational. Professor Huntington's study showed that the driving clock of history is the climate. There are certain things you can't do when the weather misbehaves.

It is only in recent years that men have begun to correlate the great migrations of history, with their attendant wars and revolutions, with those major weather crises such as the great wind and drought of 2300–2200 B.C., the terrible droughts of 1700 B.C., the world floods of 1300 B.C., the great drought of 1000 B.C., the *Fimbulwinter* of 850 B.C., or the terrible winter of 1600 at the time of Elizabeth I, when the Thames seems to have frozen right to the bottom. (I was reading Virginia Woolf's book on it.) Students of society have become hypnotized by the ease and directness of Victorian evolution as a slow, gradual thing. But you have to realize if this is violently interrupted from time to time, how can you have that long, steady, undisturbed growth taking place? Only in the jungles where conditions, we're told, haven't changed for millions of years—but have they? I mean a particular frog can only live in the water deposited on a large leaf. How many dry years would it take to make him extinct? Something's going on here anyway.

We have two massive works here by Sir Aurel Stein on *Innermost Asia*. He was the first to enter Lou-Lan and the Lop Nor Basin. He described the deserted houses and streets of that city standing exactly as they did fourteen centuries ago when their inhabitants were driven forth by droughts so sudden and severe that neither the wood of the fruit trees nor the most delicate fabrics have rotted since then. (That also applies to Egypt—if you dig deep enough, everything is just the way it was.) The mighty city of Etsina was suddenly deserted 600 years ago and not found until 1909. He said, "All natural life died. The trees of the forest threw themselves to the ground, . . . and storms arose which soon buried the country in sand." To this day the trees remain undecayed, "like sun-dried mummies, dead, naked and grey. . . . Over a vast area, once shady forest, they lay in thousands. . . . We passed other ruins of deserted strong-holds, and with strange sensations dug up objects that no human being had touched for more than six hundred years."

Well, there are times when you can walk across the surface and find where a camel has passed 1400 years before. There was one case in Lop Nor where a bag of gold had broken, and the coins were deposited all along. The driver was not aware of it, and they were covered up by the wind. They've been uncovered now, and there they are in a nice bright line for a mile or two—all these bright gold coins. All you have to do is pick them up. Quoting from Stein again:

Once we came upon an abandoned Sart village, where newly thrown-up dams and uncompleted excavations bore witness to the departed populations' desperate struggle to retain the vanishing water. . . . But a day had come when there was no more water to be had. [It's been suggested quite seriously now that we turn the large parts of the Middle West back to grasslands.] The animals stood by the watering places and sought in vain for moisture, the women wept in the houses, and the men gathered at the mosque to pray to Allah for the miracle that alone would save their homes. But no miracle happened; the village got no water, and in the last extremity of famine, the people had thrown their most indispensable possessions on the remaining horses and donkeys and hastily left their homes and the lands of their fathers to follow their *aksakal* [that's their village elder, the brother of Jared, you see] out into the parched country around in a desperate search for water.

Well, they still do that. In Africa, large numbers of the population have simply piled up, left their villages in Ethiopia forever, and gone on to those assembly centers (it's made worse by war), where they might get something to eat. That's all—just to stay alive at all. Hundreds of thousands

of Ethiopians have had to do that in our own time. He [Stein] gives various examples. The Etruscans did the same thing. There's the great epic of the *Bani Hilāl* I have a copy of it here. Remember Abraham; the famine waxed sore throughout all Abraham's land. There was corn in Egypt. That was the only place where there was corn, so everybody went to Egypt. Just as suddenly, calamity struck and overtook an Asian village in 1927, we're told. "When the storm laid itself to rest, the flying sand solidified again and the terrified nomads found the whole face of nature changed into new shapes." And, of course, Babylon or Babel, the city of the tower, has left behind the richest deposits of legend and tradition. I give various examples here. In the Sybilline books, in Eusebius's *Chronicon*, [we read:] "When all men were of one tongue, some of them built a high tower so as to mount to heaven, but God destroyed the tower by mighty winds."

[Quoting from Theophilus of Antioch:] "But when the threats of the great God were fulfilled, of which he had warned mortal men at the time, they built a tower in the Assyrian land. They all at once spoke the same language and wanted to mount up to the starry heavens. But forthwith the Immortal One laid great stress upon the blasts, so that the wind overthrew the mighty tower, and drove mortals to strive with one another. And when the tower had fallen, the languages of men were divided up into many dialects, so that the earth became filled with different kingdoms of men." You form dialects when people come together and when people separate. Both those effects are what change language, of course. You get new language when people come together. You get new language when people separate. Both happened at the tower.

And from the Book of Jubilees: "The Lord sent a mighty wind against the tower and overthrew it upon the earth, and behold, it was between Asshur and Babylon in the land of Shinar, and they called its name 'Overthrow.'"

My favorite source, the zealous learned Persian Tha'labī, records that the people were scattered from the tower by an awful drought accompanied by winds of such velocity as actually blew down the tower. Bar Hebraeus, who was the great collector of Central Asiatic lore from the Middle Ages, said that forty years after the tower had been finished God sent a wind, the tower was overturned, and Nimrod died in it. There's no reason for doubting that a great city called Babel once long ago suffered the same fate as the people of 'Ād, and Thamūd, of Lou Lan, Etsingol, or the Nasamonians and others.

So we have in the history of the Jaredites a very freakish state of things. The Lord commanded Nephi to build a ship, you know, but it was an ordinary ship. Lehi's people had to cross water at least twice as much—probably three or four times as much—as the Jaredites. They took the short North Pacific route. But the Jaredite ships were altogether unusual vessels. The Lord gave the builder special instructions for every detail. They had to be submersible yet ride very lightly on the surface of the waves. They were small, and they were light upon the water, we're told, yet built to stand terrific pressure—exceedingly tight, tight like unto a dish, with special sealed vent holes that could not be opened when the water pressure on the outside was greater than the air pressure within. The Lord explained that it would be necessary to build such peculiar vessels because he was about to loose winds of incredible violence that would make the crossing a frightful ordeal at best. Any windows, he warned, would be dashed to pieces. Fire would be out of the question. Ether 2:24–25: "Ye shall be as a whale in the midst of the sea; for the mountain waves shall dash upon you. . . . Ye cannot cross this great deep save I prepare you against the waves of the sea, and the winds which have gone forth, and the floods which shall come. Therefore what will ye that I should prepare for you that ye may have light when ye are swallowed up in the depths of the sea?"

See, the book of Ether enters right into the scene. This is exactly the situation we find, this violence etc., and the Lord talking. You say, well how could they endure? Ether 6:8 says, "The wind did never cease to blow towards the promised land while they were upon the waters." That's 344 days of these violent winds. Verses 5–6: "And it came to pass that the Lord God caused that

there should be a furious wind blow upon the face of the waters, . . . and they were many times buried in the depths of the sea, because of the mountain waves which broke upon them, and also the great and terrible tempests which were caused by the fierceness of the wind.”

Well, you see the violence of the elements at the end of the last Ice Age. That’s one of the remarkable discoveries about the Ice Age, as you know. Not only the number of them but how quickly they ended—almost overnight they were over, but with great violence. And this is what you have here. There were [world] windstorms in 2200 and 1000 B.C., as I said, the great *Fimbulwinter* [in 850 B.C.], etc. We have Qazwini’s account of the great dome of Bagdad. Now this is an interesting thing, the great dome of Bagdad. This was in the Middle Ages, and it was, he says, “the symbol (*‘ālam*) of Baghdad and the crown of the country, and the principle achievement of the sons of Abbas,” the Abbasids, and yet it collapsed during a great windstorm. The interesting thing is that from that tower, that dome (that was the green dome) people wanted to reach heaven. They wanted to fly to heaven. All through the Middle Ages if you wanted to go to heaven and be blessed, you took off from the top of the green dome. Well, see, that’s why they wanted the Tower of Babel—to get to heaven. Thousands of years later in the Middle Ages they were doing the same thing, and it was blown down by the wind in spite of its massive build, etc.

Well, this is a significant thing, this setting we’re going to get here [in Ether]. This gives us what we call the Heroic Age. What type of world was the Heroic Age? What is the evidence for heroic ages and what characterizes them? Kramer says it’s contained in the fragments of nine epic poems from the Sumerians and shows that in their early histories as the Sumerians pass through a cultural stage now commonly known as the Heroic Age. You’ll notice everything about the book of Ether is the Heroic Age. It starts out with a superhero, the brother of Jared. The hero is never the leader; he always is the brother of the leader. It’s a very interesting thing that they follow into this pattern. The secondary hero is a relative and does glorious things, but he’s not the king or the leader. He’s a rather colorless character. Who was Jared? What did he do? Ah, but the brother Jared—we know all about him.

Well, he says, “Once the existence of a Sumerian Heroic Age had been determined, it was possible to adduce its cultural pattern and historical background on analogy with such long-known heroic ages as those of Greek, Indian, and Teutonic peoples.” He says he feels “that the reality of the epic milieu actually permitted a reinterpretation of the earliest history of Mesopotamia, which may prove closer to the truth than those suggested hitherto.” And with Egypt even more so. They’re all the followers of Horus. They come in the way of Horus from the northeast, and the civilization emerges overnight. There’s no primitive background to Egyptian civilization.

What are the characteristics? We can go through and list some of the stock characters of heroic ages. (This is from Chadwick.) First of all, “The Heroic Age coincided with a period of upheaval.” Well, that should be clear by now, and certainly clear from the book of Ether. They have to leave—they don’t want to leave. Then we get this violent weather: “a period of upheaval generally known as the age [a bad translation, but we can’t do any better] of the national migrations.”

The “swarming time” it’s called. There are times when all the people in the world are in motion—this has happened. You should have stood at crossroads in central Europe, as I did, to check people who were passing after the war. You’d find everybody passing. All the people had been uprooted and taken into Nazi Germany—Russian girls to work there, Poles—everybody was scattered. Everybody was going home—pushing baby buggies, carrying things on their back, hauling wagons, etc., and speaking every language you can imagine. We had lots of people, such as Azerbaijanians, because the coastal troops of the Germans were people from Central Asia who had been actually chained into their positions. Most of them didn’t know where they were. Some of them thought they were in America, and some thought they were in Africa. The world was all mixed up, and it could certainly happen again, couldn’t it, the way things are?

The background that produces the epic milieu is the Heroic Age, and that's what we're dealing with here, because it has heroic dimensions. It's tragic, it's gloomy, and people live terrible lives. It's an awful time. Remember what Goethe says about the *Iliad* and Homer? He says, "The *Iliad* proves to us that life on this earth is a hell." And it is—there's nothing happy about the Heroic Age, believe me.

Then Kramer says "The factors primarily responsible for the more characteristic features of the Heroic Age are two: in the first place, heroic ages coincide with a period of national migrations, a wandering of the people. Secondly, and this is by far more significant, these people have come in contact with civilized power in the process of disintegration." World civilization is collapsing, and that's why they have to move. Everybody has to move. "The reports come from all sides on this."

We have the epic literature of the Heroic Age which is described from two sides. We have a very large literature by the heroes themselves describing the heroic deeds of their leaders, etc. Their traditions are handed down by bards and sung for thousands of years. The other [description] is from the victims, and that's the great lamentation literature. We have a very rich literature of this. The earliest literature we have from Sumeria, Mesopotamia, and Egypt is the lamentation literature—the man's conversation with his soul, the one that Brother Gardner edited, and others. So, the reports come from both sides. "The victims describe in chronicles of woe how the barbarians move in on them, while the invaders glorify the same exploits in epic song. Real epic poetry always describes conditions prevailing in times of world upheaval and mass migration." That's Chadwick's first point. The second point with Chadwick is "feeling for nationality is of no account in heroic poetry or sagas." Everything centers around a great heroic figure, as it does throughout the book of *Ether*, you know. You draw people off to your side; we'll see about that. "Love of home and duty of defending it are, of course, recognized, but interest is always concentrated on the doings or experiences of individuals."

And this is the way Samuel Noah Kramer describes the situation:

Now the most characteristic feature of all four of our heroic ages is this: they represent a rather barbarous cultural stage in the life of people which has come far indeed from primitive but has not yet attained the maturity and stability of a civilized people. Its dominant element is rather a numerous military class [of course, all they do throughout the book of *Ether* is fight] to whom the underlying bulk of the population counts for very little. These are kingly aristocrats who have freed themselves from tribal obligations and ideas which govern the more primitive people. At the same time they have developed no true national organization and are inspired by little if any national feeling [they're led by the hero, you see]. Their success and failure depend on personal prowess and their leaders and kings whom they follow, but from whom they are ready to drift away if these tend to turn too peaceful or become ungenerous in their rewards.

Or especially if they get beaten. Then you belong to the other person, as it's set forth very clearly in the book of *Ether*. Well, in every case something forced them to move, whenever these people are on the move. It certainly did the Jaredites. If they come to the stage rather shabbily equipped, it's not because they began life that way but because something happened that made them pull up stakes in a hurry and clear out with just enough stuff for a forced march. You have to leave behind what you had. That's too bad—you have to junk it. We see that's going to happen. Remember, these people are not habitual nomads. They are moving because they have to. Remember the brother of Jared? Please, ask the Lord not to make us move if we don't have to. If we have to, then he says, give us a promised land and see to it that we will not be confounded. When people are confounded, that's when the language is confounded. He says the people are

confounded here, and that's what makes it happen. In every case they're looking for lands to settle.

Yesterday from Switzerland they had an international council of nations going on, a very important sort of thing. They had a desk where translators were translating the language being spoken in the meeting into 19 different languages. They were speaking 19 different languages at this meeting. These people now are having to work together for the first time, all of them, much more closely. The language has developed only because they lived in isolation and were closely knit culturally among themselves. Lithuanian is the oldest language in the world. It is the primal, original Indo-European language. as near as you can get to it— that's in theory. But see, if you work back to all the stems and forms, etc., Lithuanian is older than Sanskrit or Greek and older than any language we have. This shows what a long time they've maintained their integrity as people. It's an astonishing thing. Now it's just like the tower of Babel, isn't it. We've got to have some common language, but now we have some gadgets to do those things. It's going to be like some of these space thrillers on the TV where everybody knows English. No matter where you go in the universe, they all speak the same language.

So these people are not habitual nomads; they are forced [to leave] because they have to. In every case they're looking for lands to settle, and they're always looking for the promised land. There are the marvelous poems of the first Greeks. Hesiod and Alcman talk about that—we didn't come here of our choice. He says we came to windy Arenos because we were driven to do so. And Hesiod, who was a contemporary of Homer, wrote about it. He said, we came to this land because we were driven, because we had to. We didn't take it seeking riches at all, but because we lost everything we had, and we had to come. "So we came to Ischia where we live now," he said, "a bad place in winter, a vile place in summer, a good time never." They had to settle. They had no choice, he said, and their life had been very hard since. That's why he wrote a poem called *Works and Days* to his brother, who had gone off and made a lot of money in the market. He says there's no character and there's no stability in that. He says the only thing is to work. It's the catalog of the work of the farmer, the farmer's almanac, that he wrote telling his brother how he should work. Well, that's a typical example. They were forced to move, and they settled where they could. Alcman tells the same story—how they came down to Sparta the same way from windy Arenos. It mentions the wind.

"Now it is granted that these people, wherever they go, find civilization in the process of disintegration." Everything is disintegrating wherever they go, so it's easy to overrun—or is it? It's a time of world calamity. What reason have we, therefore, to doubt that it was the disintegration of their own less stable civilization that forced them to move in the first place? If they move in on a world in collapse, you can be perfectly sure they left one behind as well. Otherwise they would never have migrated.

And the evidence? Well, the mere fact that our heroes do not enjoy what they are doing. They want to get the business over and settle down as soon as possible. I have some examples here. E. V. Gordon wrote the classic work on the Norse sagas. The word *Norway* means by the north way. They came to the Baltic by the north way. These people [the Norse] who came and settled were the people that came via the north way, and they came from Central Asia back there. Their home is still Norway. E. V. Gordon says, "A good resistance against overpowering odds was made the characteristic situation of heroic literature. The gods themselves knew that they would in the end be overwhelmed by evil powers [this is a gloomy note], but they were prepared to resist to the last. Every religious-minded man of the heathen age believed that he existed for the sake of that hopeless cause." It's not a very cheery sort of thing.

The third point that Chadwick makes is, "Epic is concerned not only with individuals, but primarily with individuals who are princes. The cast of characters consists almost wholly of princes and their military followers [as the book of *Ether* does]. Among these there is usually one

character whose adventures form the chief subject of interest [another score, you see]. He's always a mortal and human, and he always occupies a position of subordination [that's an interesting thing because that's exactly what the brother of Jared does—he's not the leader, but he's the only one we hear about] taking orders from a relatively colorless king or commander." Remember, it's Jared who says to his brother, go and ask the Lord whether we'll have to move or not. It's the brother of Jared who asks him, but his brother commands him to. Well, why is it called the book of Ether instead of Mahonri Moriancumr, or whatever it was. Well, because he was the first in the patriarchal line; he was the oldest. That's why the book's named after him, and the people are the people of Ether, but it's the other one who is the hero.

He "takes orders from a relatively colorless king or commander. He is almost superhuman but never supernatural [again, his strength] and yet from time to time he receives supernatural aid—altogether a strange and impressive figure."

It's rather remarkable that the only really heroic figures in the Book of Mormon are found in Ether. Lehi, Nephi, King Benjamin, King Noah are certainly great men, but they're not out-sized the way the heroes are in the book of Ether. Now this is an interesting thing, too, that's characteristic of the book of Ether. We're quoting from Chadwick: "Even though the most ferocious and even depraved characters occupy the stage of epic, there is no character who appears uniformly in an unfavorable light." They're all human beings, and their weaknesses are all recognized, but nobody is completely vicious as we like to imagine our enemies, totally depraved. We're the totally good; they are the totally bad. There is none of that in it because, after all, they have a common experience.

Remember another famous one who was driven out was Queen Dido and her sister Melyssa. They left Phoenicia around 800 B.C. and settled Carthage. When Aeneas comes to visit them in Carthage, she says we've had our hard times, and we know how to be good to wandering people because we know what you've suffered. She says we're all in the sort of thing together, so we have to be more or less charitable with each other. That's why the Arabs, who are so ferocious and bloodthirsty at the drop of a hat, nevertheless have the strictest laws of hospitality—because they know what it is to be lost in the desert. They know what it is to depend for your life on somebody else's hospitality. So the first of all of Abraham's virtues was hospitality. He was the friend of man, which made him the friend of God, we're told. These people know how to get along with each other because they're all in the "swim" together. They're all moving around together. There are times when you don't feel superior because you're taking an awful beating yourself.

We find it also true of the Jaredite monsters. Well, there's a touch of admiration—even sympathy—for Shiz and Coriantumr, these heroes in the Book of Mormon. The licentious tyrants like Noah and Riplakish are not only real patrons of the arts, they have a touch of real magnificence. Chadwick rings a bell here. He says, "The behavior of the heroes often strikes the reader as childish or brutal. But in their dealings with one another a dignified and fastidious tone prevails, even between bitter rivals." All throughout the book of Ether, you challenge a person to a duel. He doesn't have to have the duel, but the story of Ether is one continual series of duels, as you know, but they're on this chivalric level. Actually chivalry—people wandering around with their horses. So they put up with each other.

Chadwick says, "Warfare is an essential rather than an accessory of heroic life." That leads to our next point, that "the scene of action in epics is confined exclusively to the battlefield, the court, the hunt, or some place of adventure, usually a wilderness." Of course, when you say *wilderness*, that puts you in mind of Ether, and that's fair game, too.

"But in this rough society, the cardinal virtues of the hero are courage, loyalty, and generosity. The courage is strictly physical—bravery in the field. Loyalty is purely personal [as long as the person can hold it]. It involves duty or vengeance as well as protection. As to generosity, it's

always a matter of policy—the generosity of a chief to his followers, a princely bribe with admitted intent to buy and support supporters by gifts.” Remember how *Beowulf* begins: “Oft Scyld Scefing he gave out his gold rings to his faithful followers.” And it says, “That was a good king.” That’s why you’re running your raids—to get the junk to pay the people.

Well, let’s give some modern examples here. There’s a very good one. Well, I’ll quote this one from Chadwick because it’s so close to our Ether book. “Plunder is a necessity for the hero who wishes to maintain an active force of armed followers. Plundering raids appear to be a characteristic feature of the Heroic Age everywhere. Indeed, we may say an essential feature. The booty derived therefrom enabled active and ambitious princes to attract to themselves and maintain large bodies of followers without which they were at the mercy of their neighbors.”

Before I go on with this other stuff, why does this apply to us? Well, look at our book of Ether here now. He starts out with that negative tone. Notice the first verse. (You better have your Book of Mormon because we’re on Ether now. We have a very convenient handbook to go by.) Moroni is giving the “account of those ancient inhabitants who were destroyed . . . upon the face of this north country” [Ether 1:1]. See, they make the north crossing. They belong in the north country. He took them from the 24 plates of the book of Ether. The first part of the record he’s leaving out—that’s biblical. Verse 5: “I give not the full account, but a part of the account I give, from the tower down until they were destroyed.” Then he gives this long genealogy, but notice occasionally he says, as in verse 16, “And Aaron was a descendant of Heth, who was the son of Hearthom.” Descendants—you could introduce 20 generations between if you wanted to. Then you come down to verse 23: “And Morianton was a descendant of Riplakish.” *Riplakish*—there’s a good archaic name, “lord of Lakish.” There are at least five ancient cities named that. In fact the oldest city in Mesopotamia is supposed to have been called Lakish. This is Riplakish, which means “lord of Lakish.” He was a descendant of Riplakish. Let’s not worry about chronology here. It goes way back; I can tell you that. The Lord “swore in his wrath [now we’re getting this grim, heroic situation] that they should be scattered upon all the face of the earth.” It sounds like the *Nibelungenlied*, doesn’t it.

Verse 34: “And the brother of Jared being a large and mighty man [notice, this is the brother of Jared who is going to be the hero now] highly favored of the Lord, Jared, his brother said unto him: Cry unto the Lord.” See, he has to ask his brother to do it, but it’s by way of command. He’s the one who gives orders here. He said, “Cry unto the Lord, that he will not confound us.” Our words will only be confounded if we’re confounded. *Confound* means “to mix up together.” If we get mixed together with other people (of course they’re speaking different dialects and languages), we’ll have an awful time trying to understand each other. It’s very much like the ward in Cairo where we have a dozen African languages there, and some of them speak nothing else. We have services in Arabic, and we’re confounded and mixed up. We have an awful time understanding each other. That’s what they’re talking about here—what happened at the tower when people were forced to move. “Cry again unto the Lord.” Notice, this is going to be a large migration, and he is going to get a company. He’s not like Lehi, a family job. This is something else.

Verse 37: “And it came to pass that the brother of Jared did cry unto the Lord, and the Lord had compassion upon their friends and their families also, that they were not confounded [it’s going to be a large group that moves out]. . . . Go and inquire of the Lord whether he will drive us out of the land, and if he will drive us out of the land, cry unto him whither we shall go [if he does]. And who knoweth but the Lord will carry us forth into a land which is choice above all the earth?” When they looked for a promised land, they didn’t very often find it. That’s when they wandered. Remember, he visits the queen in Carthage, and he says, “Through various violent experiences, through rough clashes and wars, struggles against nations, so many showdowns and fights, we are looking for a place where we can find a quiet place to settle [which is to become glorious Rome], whose empire will terminate only with the bounds of the ocean and whose glory

shall reach beyond the stars.” This is the promised land theme. They all have this promised land theme, because if you were wandering, you were cast out, you’d want to go to a better land. You’d want a good one and would say, for heaven’s sake, when can we settle? When will we be in Zion? When will we reach there? So this happens again. They’re doing it all the time. Will it be a land choice above all the others? Verse 40: “And it came to pass that the Lord did hear the brother of Jared [and this is what he says]: . . . Go to and gather together thy flocks.” Notice they move on a vast front.

We have from the thirteenth century B.C. marvelous accounts of the coming of the people of the sea along the north coast of Africa and along the coast of Europe. They came from the West, because the climate drove them, and we have pictures of them. Their ships followed along by sea, and they followed along by land. They went clear up into Palestine. They were beaten by Merneptah in a battle at the delta, so they couldn’t settle in Egypt. But they came by the thousands with these huge ox carts loaded, along with their families and all the goods they owned. They lumbered along the coast while their ships accompanied them. That’s the way the Vikings used to do, too. Thousands of years later our own ancestors did the same thing. They [the people of the sea] settled clear down in Italy, and they got to Palestine. It’s funny these things that go on. You say, this is where I came in. This is the same old story again. Well, this is a part of history we can’t afford to ignore.

So he goes on in this first chapter, “Gather together thy flocks, both male and female, of every kind; and also of the seed of the earth of every kind; and thy families; and also Jared thy brother and his family [get everybody together you can—see, this is going to be a big crowd]. . . . Thou shalt go at the head of them down into the valley which is northward.” Then it says “where there never had man been.” I’m leaving out all sorts of things here. Verses 42–43: “And there will I meet thee . . . and raise up unto me . . . a great nation. And there shall be none greater.” This is what they wanted.

Ether 2:1: So they “went down into the valley which was northward,” which was the valley of Nimrod. It’s very interesting that in the north end of Mesopotamia all the places bear the name *Nimrod*. There’s Bir Nimrod and dozens of Nimrod names up north in Mesopotamia where you go through. Then you go east and what do you do? You cross many waters. “And they did also lay snares and catch fowls of the air; and they did also prepare a vessel, in which they did carry with them the fish of the waters [we give examples of these things]. And they did also carry with them deseret, which, by interpretation, is a honey bee.” We mentioned the fact that *deseret* is the mystic, secret name given to the honey bee by the Egyptians, too. The Egyptians were moving in the same direction. They moved with the honey bee. He was their leader when they moved in the other direction. They moved toward the southwest, and these people moved toward the northeast in opposite directions. Remember, it was the descendant of Noah, Egyptus, who led her people into Egypt. They settled there in the opposite direction at this time, and deseret was their beacon, their sign.

You can see the family about ready to depart; they’ve packed all the baggage and everything for all these people. Somebody is running around among the wagons saying, “What happened to little deseret?” Deseret always gets lost when they’re going to go. It means “hives of bees,” and they do take hives of bees with them. It’s a very interesting thing. You remember there were no bees in the New World. There were no bees in Mesopotamia until quite late. Bees were first found in Palestine and Egypt. They’re not spread around universally, as you might think. In the *Chilam Balam* you’ll find them in the New World when they were brought here. It’s very interesting, the distribution of bees. There’s been a good deal written about that.

But anyway, the Lord talked with the brother of Jared, and they went “forth into the wilderness, yea, into that quarter where there never had man been.” Well, you get the idea that there’s quite a world population at this time, but they went into virgin territory where there’d never been

anyone. As they traveled in the wilderness, they built shallow barges. A very recent *National Geographic*, which I wish I'd brought along, shows the shrinking of the great Aral Sea in Central Asia. It's just east of the Caspian, which is practically shrinking to nothing. That's a huge sea. There were these huge shallow seas. Then you go further west, and there are many seas. All of western Asia was drying out at this time. In 1906 Raphael Pompelli—we have his vast work published by the Smithsonian here—made an exploration of those central Asiatic regions, and it was all shallow water. It was all under water. Well, they still tell you in documentaries about a wandering lake in central Asia. Because of the winds the lake actually wanders around. It's so shallow. It was full of shallow water, and at the time of the Jaredites, just after the flood, they seemed to be much deeper, but they built these barges of shallow draft because they had to cross a lot of water on their passing. Then when they got to the ocean they had to build a different type of boat entirely. But all these things that he's talking about are geographically correct. You get Pompelli's book. I might put it out.

Oh, I was going to tell you what subject we're going to write about. These things are really quite remarkable that Joseph has given us here, you know. The Lord talked to him, and they built their many barges. But you'll notice (verse 7), he "would not suffer that they should stop beyond the sea in the wilderness." They had to cross the Caspian, which was a vast sea at that time, twice as large, at least 2,000 miles long. It was huge, and after they'd crossed it, he said they had to keep going. They hadn't arrived yet. So that's the picture we get.