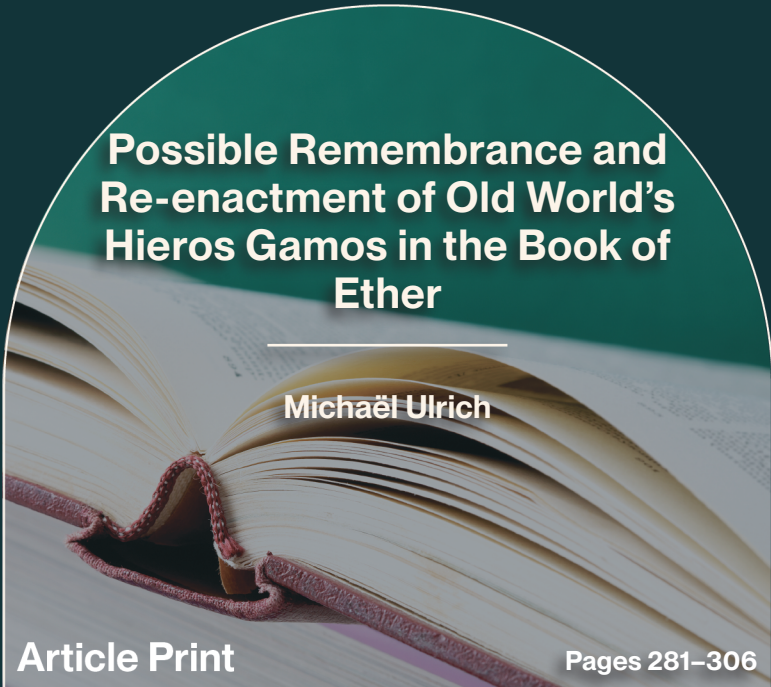


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Possible Remembrance and Re-enactment of Old World's *Hieros Gamos* in the Book of Ether

Michaël Ulrich

Abstract: *This paper explores the conclusions that can be drawn from a Mesopotamian origin theory for the Jaredites. The goal is to show that the story of Jared's daughter in Ether 8 could be a ritual similar to hieros gamos, or sacred marriage, from Mesopotamia. To achieve this, etymologies are given for three names (Jared, Ether, and Akish). These interesting etymologies help substantiate the sacred marriage theory for Ether 8. Finally, a comparison between Ether 3 and Ether 8 show that both illustrate an initiation into the divine. In the former case, it is a righteous initiation into the divine; in the latter, it is an initiation into an idolatrous imitation of the divine.*

The book of Ether introduces the story of an ancient people, the Jaredites, who are said to have come to the Americas not long after the episode of the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11). The book of Ether is a condensed and edited version of the original Jaredite record (see Alma 37:21–31), with Moroni serving as the abridger around the beginning of the fifth century AD (Ether 1).¹ It thus tells us about a much older people than all the other peoples of the Book of Mormon. We know very little of this people, not only because of the scarcity of the material

1. Mosiah 28:11–19 describes how King Mosiah translated the Jaredite record. However, it is unclear from Ether 1 whether Moroni made the book of Ether from King Mosiah's written translation (Mosiah 28:11) or whether he directly used the Jaredite record. The answer to this question might imply one more editorial stratum, namely King Mosiah's translation.

(fifteen chapters), but also because we are reading this history through an edited restatement by Moroni.

This paper aims to compare Ether 3 and 8, demonstrating how both can be seen as an initiation into the divine. Ether 3 is a righteous initiation into a closer proximity with God, whereas Ether 8 is an evil initiation ritual, probably inspired by an idolatrous goddess and aimed at usurping political power. To compare these two chapters as initiations, I will demonstrate that Ether 8 is akin to an initiation ritual that entails a sacred marriage or *hieros gamos*. I will also explore the etymologies of three names—Akish, Ether, and Jared—to further support these arguments. Indeed, I'll show that Akish and Jared could be titles rather than proper names, which is an argument in favor of a ritual context. Moreover, Ether will be seen as related to the idea of the rising star, which is linked to the sacred marriage pattern.

The comparison between the two initiation courses carries theological significance and also contributes to the ongoing conversation about the origin of the Jaredites. Though nothing definite can be stated due to the limited material, demonstrating cultural links between the world of the book of Ether and Mesopotamian contexts—along with providing etymologies rooted in Akkadian and Sumerian languages—supports a possible Mesopotamian origin. This argument is even stronger because the etymologies and the sacred marriage element are coherent with each other in the text.

On Some Etymologies from Ether 3 and 8

This section is dedicated to examining the etymologies of Jared, Ether, and Akish in the context of a possible Sumero-Akkadian origin. These etymologies will then be used to study how Ether 3 and 8 may represent two contrasting initiation rituals.

The name *Jared* from Ether 3 and 8

A notable and intriguing aspect of both chapters is the presence of someone named Jared. In both cases, the person named Jared is not directly involved in the initiation, but someone whose real name we don't know is directly related to it. In Ether 3, this is the brother of Jared, and in Ether 8, it is the daughter of Jared.² This seems to be more than

2. The similarity between the phrases “daughter of Jared” and “brother of Jared” has already been noted by Joseph M. Spencer, “Jared’s Two Daughters,” in *Illuminating the Jaredite Records*, ed. Daniel L. Belnap (Provo, UT: Religious

coincidence. Names reported in the scriptures are not always birth names but are sometimes given later. Is there any possible interpretation of the name *Jared*? It is often seen as linked to Hebrew ירד (*yrd*, "to go down").³ This could make sense in a Mesopotamian context, as the root also exists in Akkadian as (*w*)*arādum*. Such a meaning could refer to the fact that Jared left the land of his residence, thus "going down" from this land in a figurative sense.

Another possible etymology is to compare *Jared* with Sumerian *arad*. From a phonetic point of view, the comparison could make sense, as the /y/ sound is not always indicated in cuneiform script. I provide another example of this, below, when examining the name *Akish* and the Sumerian term *aya*. The word *arad* means "slave, servant."⁴ It seems very unlikely that Jared would have been a slave, as he and his family seem to have had no difficulties in starting their journey and because his brother obviously knows how to write. Writing was an uncommon skill in Mesopotamia, or at least one that would probably not have been part of the life of a slave.

It is possible that the word *arad* was used in a broader sense. For instance, Enkidu, the friend of Gilgamesh in the famous epic, is called his "*arad*,"⁵ even though he obviously was not a slave in the usual sense. Could it be that *arad* designated an assistant, or even a class of functionaries of the palace or of the temple having the role to assist in certain duties? In this case, it would explain why it occurs in both Ether 3 and 8—in both cases the name would designate a ritual or official function related to the initiation.

Ether and the rising star motif

Exploring the etymology of the name Ether raises interesting questions. The Deseret alphabet transcription of it yields the pronunciation /eɪθɛr/ or /i:θɛr/. The sound /θ/ is not found in Sumerian, so we have to rule out an etymology in this language. This sound can be found, though, in Semitic. Akkadian, the main Semitic language of the region,

Studies Center, Brigham Young University [BYU]; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book), 211. Note that, interestingly, Herodias' daughter remains unnamed, too.

3. See Paul Y. Hoskisson et al., "Jared," in *Book of Mormon Onomasticon*, Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, onoma.lib.byu.edu/.

4. *Electronic Pennsylvania Sumerian Dictionary (ePSD)*, ed. Steve Tinney, University of Pennsylvania Museum (2016), oracc.museum.upenn.edu/epsd2/index.html.

5. See Samuel Noah Kramer, "Death and Nether World According to the Sumerian Literary Texts," *Iraq* 22 (1960): 67n15, doi.org/10.2307/4199669.

had this sound only in its earliest phase. Hasselbach states that “the Proto-Semitic interdental *θ was still partly distinct from *s and *ś in Sargonic Akkadian.”⁶ The presence of this sound in the Jaredite language, as suggested by the name *Ether*, may mean, in the context of a Mesopotamian origin theory, that the Jaredites originated quite early. It is possible they originated during the earliest phases of Akkadian, or even earlier, when the proto-Semitic ʔ (usual notation for the sound /θ/ in Semitic studies) was still in use. We need to rely on a dictionary of proto-Semitic roots to find an equivalent, as this sound, even if present in the earliest stages of Akkadian, was never distinctly written.

It might be possible to relate the name *Ether* to the Semitic root ‘t.t.r, referring to the “gods representing the evening and morning stars.”⁷ The name *Ištar*, the Akkadian equivalent of *Inana*, is probably related to this root, an association that fits well, given that *Ištar/Inana* is often related to the rising star Venus.⁸ To interpret *Ether* as coming from the root ‘t.t.r would mean that the third consonant of the root, t, was dropped. This would not be surprising, as the Canaanite equivalent of *Ištar/Inana* — *Athirat* — probably stems from the same root and similarly dropped the /t/. Given that the final t is the feminine marker in Semitic languages and that vowels are much less significant than consonants, *Ether* would be the masculine version of the name *Athirat*.⁹ Interestingly, the biblical *Esther* could have the same etymology — a point worth noting because, as discussed shortly, the book of *Esther*

6. Rebecca Hasselbach, *Sargonic Akkadian: a historical and comparative study of the syllabic texts* (Otto Harrassowitz Verlag, 2005), 136.

7. John Huehnergard, “t.t.r” in Appendix of Semitic Roots, *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, 5th ed., ahdictionary.com/word/semitic.html.

8. See, for instance, G. E. Kurtik, “The Identification of Inanna with the Planet Venus: A Criterion for the Time Determination of the Recognition of Constellations in Ancient Mesopotamia,” *Astronomical & Astrophysical Transactions* 17, no. 6 (June 1999): 501–13, doi.org/10.1080/10556799908244112; Jeffrey Cooley, “Early Mesopotamian Astral Science and Divination in the Myth of Inana And Šukaletuda,” *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions* 8, no.1 (January 2008): 75–98, doi.org/10.1163/156921208786182446.

9. Eiko Matsushima mentions the possibility that there was originally a masculine Semitic deity *Athtar* that would have been identified with the morning star. Eiko Matsushima, “Ištar and Other Goddesses of the So-Called ‘Sacred Marriage’ in Ancient Mesopotamia,” *Transformation of a Goddess: Ishtar – Astarte – Aphrodite*, ed. David T. Sugimoto (Fribourg, CH: Academic Press Fribourg, 2014), 3n.

may reflect influences from the *hieros gamos* ritual, parallels that are also evident in the book of Ether.¹⁰

It would be surprising, though, that Ether would bear the name of a pagan god, seeing that he was a righteous man. It is true that we know nothing of his father, Coriantor, and of his relationship with God. Coriantor, if he were not a follower of the Lord, could have given to his son the name of a pagan deity. Even so, it would be surprising that Ether would not have changed his name later in his life and that this name would have been remembered in the record.

Notably, the rising star motif has sometimes been associated with Christ. Revelation 2:28 mentions the "morning star" that shall be given to "him that overcometh." The identification between Jesus and the "bright and morning star" is even clearer in Revelation 22:16. In the same way, 2 Peter 1:19 mentions "the day star" that shall "arise in your hearts." These references are quite late, however, as they date from New Testament times—long after Jaredite exodus. One might also consider Numbers 24:17, which speaks of a "Star out of Jacob" and has been interpreted as a Messianic prophecy.¹¹ Even if these elements do not come from the same time or cultural context as the Jaredite record, they show that the identification of Christ with the rising star is a motif that should not come as a surprise.

The title *Akish*

Ether 8 tells of the story of Akish, who, being seduced by the daughter of Jared, creates at her request a secret combination in order to kill the king, Omer, and give the kingdom to Jared. Assuming the name is Sumerian, it would be divided into *a-kish*. The Sumerian *kiš*

10. The link can be made further: Esther could be related to Ishtar, while Mardochoi would be related to the Babylonian god Marduk. For example, see Harald Wahl, "Esther-Forschung," *Theologische Rundschau* 66, no. 1 (2001): 103–30. [jstor.org/stable/26149437](http://www.jstor.org/stable/26149437) or Abraham Winitzer, "The Reversal of Fortune Theme in Esther: Israelite Historiography in Its Ancient Near Eastern Context," *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions* 11, no. 2 (2011): 170–218, doi.org/10.1163/156921211X603940, among others.

11. In a Christian setting, it has been seen as a prophecy about the star of Bethlehem, but Jewish groups also interpreted it messianically. Robert Eisenman argues that "this was the prophecy that was of such importance to resistance groups in this period, including those responsible for the documents at Qumran and the revolutionaries who triggered the war against Rome, not to mention the early Christians." Robert Eisenman, *James the Brother of Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls I: The Historical James, Paul the Enemy, and Jesus' Brothers as Apostles* (Nashville: Grave Distractions Publications, 2012), 10.

has the meaning of “totality, world,” but it might be more interesting to look at the variation *kiš_{i12}*. This has the meaning of “secret,” thus granting an obvious relationship with the Ether 8 story. It can be easily understood how the final “i” could have been dropped over the years in the Jaredite language. Sumerian already had a tendency of dropping some sounds to simplify pronunciation. Thus, for instance, the Sumerian genitive marker “-ak” is reduced to “a” when it is not followed by a vowel, to “k” when it is not preceded by a consonant, and disappears entirely when it is in a “vowel-ak-consonant” environment.

As to the “a” preface in *a-kish*, several words in Sumerian can be pronounced with this form. One meaning is “water, semen, progeny, power, strength, son, etc.”¹² This could give the name an interpretation along the lines of either *a-kiš-(ak)* (power of the world), *a-kiš_{i12}-(ak)* (power of the secret), or *a-kiš_{i12}-(ak)* (progeny/son of the secret). All these meanings could fit within the story. For instance, Akish was indeed a “progeny of the secret,” because the kind of being he became was a result of the secret combinations he established — acts that ultimately corrupted his soul.

However, I suggest a different Sumerian etymology for Akish. The Sumerian language has multiple words for “father,” one of which is *aya*. It could be written in different ways, like *a-a* (with the “y” sound mentally replaced) or *a-ia*, but also sometimes just *a*.¹³ Thus, the name *Akish* could be interpreted as *a-kiš_{i12}*, with the “a” standing for *aya*. The full form would therefore be *aya-kiš_{i12}-(ak)*, or “father of the secret.” This interpretation is particularly fitting, as Akish truly was the father, the initiator, of secret combinations among his people.

It is interesting to note that Akish was written in the Deseret alphabet as $\text{EQ}+\text{D}$ (eɪɪɪ). The fact that the “a” is rendered as /eɪ/ seems to indicate that the “a” corresponded either to a diphthong or at least to a long vowel (long vowel that could result from an assimilation of the “y”). This is consistent with a reading of Akish as *aya-kiš_{i12}-(ak)*.

This possibility is compelling, as there seems to have been at least one precedent for such a name construction in the Old World. Akurgal was a king of Lagaš during the Early Dynasty period. The phrase *kur-gal* literally means “great mountain,” and so the name could be read as *a-kur-gal-[ak]*, meaning “progeny of the great mountain.” But it seems

12. *ePSD*, s.v. “kiš_i.”

13. See *ePSD*, s.v. “aya,” but one of the listed ways to write it is the same Sumerogram as just “a.” To be consistent with the *ePSD*, I will always subsequently designate it as “aya.”

more probable that it should be read as *aya-kur-gal*, meaning "Father Great Mountain."¹⁴ Indeed, Enlil, who was considered at least from the second half of the third millennium BC as the king of the gods,¹⁵ was sometimes mentioned in literary texts with the epithets "*kur-gal aya en-lil₂*,"¹⁶ i.e., "the Great Mountain, Father Enlil." The name of this early Lagaš king seems therefore to be a theophoric reference to Enlil, even though the order of the sequence was reversed.

The case of Akurgal not only indicates that the Sumerogram *a* was likely used in a kingly name to mean *aya*, "the father," but it also indicates that Akish could actually be read as a juxtaposition, not as a genitive construction, such as *aya-kiš_il₂* "Father Secret" instead of *aya-kiš_il₂-(ak)* "father of the secret." Indeed, in the case of Akurgal, if our reading as a reference to Enlil is correct, it would be a juxtaposition. It is "Father Great Mountain," that is Enlil, and not "father of the great mountain." If we retain this reading, *Akish* would be a title, "Father Secret."

It is noteworthy that the devil is called "the father of all lies" (Ether 8:25) — an epithet that seems to echo to the title *Akish*. The phrase "father of all lies" occurs only twice in the Book of Mormon, in 2 Nephi 2:18 and Ether 8:25. If we include the variant "father of lies," a third instance is at 2 Nephi 9:9. Three mentions is sparse for a book of the length of the Book of Mormon. Even more interesting is that two of the three mentions appear in Nephi's record. The phrase is never used by Mormon and only once by Moroni, indicating that "father of (all) lies" was likely not a common expression in the literary repertoire of the final two editors of the Book of Mormon.

14. The *ePSD* lists the sign /a/ as also /aya₂/ ("father"). One could argue that maybe this sign was read "a" to designate "father," but we decide to stick with the notation used by the *ePSD*.

15. Kramer states that "in our available sources reaching to about 2500 B.C. it is the air-god, Enlil, who seems to have taken his place as the leader of the pantheon." Samuel Noah Kramer, "Sumerian Theology and Ethics," *Harvard Theological Review* 49, no. 1 (January 1956): 51, doi.org/10.1017/S001781600002808X.

16. A search for "kur gal a-a" in the *Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature*, University of Oxford, yields fifteen results. For instance, line 200 of "Enki and the world order," etcs1.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcs1.cgi?text=c.1.1.3&display=Crit&charenc=gciro&lineid=c113.200#c113.200. It must be noted that "a-a," that is the reduplication of the signe "a," which is denoted by "aya" in the *ePSD*, (oracc.museum.upenn.edu/epsd2/sux/o0024686) also means father. The *ePSD* denotes by "aya₂" the single sign "a" when used to mean "father," and this is the same meaning as "aya₂" or "a."

Given that *Akish* seems to have been a title meaning something like “Father Secret,” the phrase “father of (all) lies” likewise seems to be a title. In some ways, it appears that the phrase *aya-kiši_{i2}* was the title given to the high priest of the “Father of Lies.” If this interpretation is correct, we could conjecture that the original Jaredite plates contained the titles “Father of (all) Lies” and “Father Secret” in deliberate parallel, each echoing the other. Later, Moroni either began with King Mosiah’s translation of the Jaredite record or translated from the Jaredite plates directly as he composed his account. Either way, Moroni would not have had knowledge of Jaredite language and culture and, thus, would not have understood that *Akish* was a title echoing the phrase “father of all lies.” Either King Mosiah or Moroni would, however, have been impressed by the occurrence of this phrase in connection with *Akish*’s story and would thus have decided to use it in the translation. The fact that he did not understand the wordplay between *Akish* and “father of all lies” means that he would have used this latter phrase in his text without including it into a literary structure that would emphasize the proximity of both titles.

The main problem of the thesis is that the word *kiši_{i2}* appears only in a single lexical tablet,¹⁷ dated from the Neo-Assyrian period between 911 and 612 BC¹⁸ — significantly later than the Jaredite exodus. While its presence in the lexical tablet confirms that the word existed at least by that period, and possibly earlier, it does not appear to have been widely used. Consequently, I acknowledge this as the weakest point of the argument, as we have no way to verify that this word was known or in use before the time of the Jaredite exodus, though nothing makes it impossible either.

The Mesopotamian Sacred Marriage

The term “sacred marriage,” or *hieros gamos* in Greek, refers in the Mesopotamian context to a practice that is described or hinted at in several ancient texts. According to these texts, the love story of some specific deities — most notably the goddess Inana and her lover the god Dumuzi — were re-enacted ritually in the world of humans. During these re-enactments, the king would play the part of the god.¹⁹ It is still

17. ePSD, s.v. “kiši_{i2}.”

18. Cuneiform Digital Library Initiative (CDLI), *Artifact P240227*, cdli.mpiwg-berlin.mpg.de/artifacts/240227.

19. See the very good discussion in Stéphane Beaulieu, “Eve’s Ritual: The Judahite Sacred Marriage Rite” (Ottawa, Library and Archives Canada =

very much disputed whether the re-enactment implied actual sexual intercourse or if such texts are only "intellectual constructs"²⁰ without referring to anything that was ever practiced. It has also been suggested that the practice existed but only in a symbolical way.²¹ If the re-enactments involved actual intercourse, it is also unclear who stood in for the goddess, though several classes of priestesses have been suggested, such as the *nu-gig*.²² It has also been suggested that the queen herself took up Inana's part. Maybe the ritual was literally enacted when first introduced and, in process of time, became replaced with a symbolic ceremony, to be finally dropped and recorded only in literary texts.

However it was re-enacted, it seems that the ritual served several purposes:

- Renewing the fertility of the land.
- Uniting the worlds of humans and of gods.
- Legitimizing the king by imbuing him with a divine nature as he stood in for Dumuzi and became the husband of the goddess Inana.²³

Finally, though very much debated, it is possible that the ritual served to provide for an heir, the crown prince, at least during certain periods of Mesopotamian history.

Texts describing a *hieros gamos* are not consistent in the ritual elements implied, but the following elements are usually included: the presentation of gifts to the goddess, special garments for either the king or the goddess, erotic poetry in which the goddess expresses her desire for her husband-to-be, bathing and special preparation of

Bibliothèque et Archives Canada, 2009) about the Mesopotamian sacred marriage ritual.

20. Philip Jones, "Embracing Inana: Legitimation and Mediation in the Ancient Mesopotamian Sacred Marriage Hymn Iddin-Dagan A," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 123, no. 2 (April 2003): 291, doi.org/10.2307/3217685.

21. For different possibilities, see Kathleen McCaffrey, "The Sumerian Sacred Marriage: Texts and Images," *The Sumerian World*, ed. Harriet Crawford (London: Routledge, 2013), or Matsushima, "Ištar and Other Goddesses."

22. For an examination of this question, see Rudolf Römer, "Einige Überlegungen zur 'heiligen Hochzeit' nach altorientalischen Texten," in *Von Kanaan bis Kerala*, AOAT 211 (Münster, DE: Ugarit-Verlag, 1982). See also Yitzhak Sefati, *Love Songs in Sumerian Literature: Critical Edition of the Dumuzi-Inanna Songs*, Bar-Ilan Studies in Near Eastern Languages and Culture (Ramat Gan, IL: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1998).

23. Matsushima, "Ištar and Other Goddesses"

the goddess, the preparation of the nuptial bed with aromatic herbs, a procession featuring dance,²⁴ the consummation of the marriage, and a banquet. The description of the consummation of the marriage is often accompanied with the metaphor of gardening: the king-Dumuzi is the gardener of his wife, and their sexual encounter produces flowering and fruitfulness, which probably points to the role of the ceremony as bringing about fertility in the land. Usually, after the union, Inanna provides a blessing for the king in terms of a long life, fertility, and so forth.

If the ceremony was practiced, its frequency remains uncertain. Was it performed annually or just once, maybe at the beginning of the reign of a new king?²⁵

Let us also say a word about the goddess associated with this ceremony. Inanna is the goddess of love, specifically embodying its sensual and erotic aspects. E. Matsushima sums it up saying that “she is the goddess of sexual love and behavior, connected with extramarital sex.”²⁶ She is not, therefore, a mother figure. Though Dumuzi is a well-known lover of Inanna and the figure whose role the king played in the *hieros gamos* ceremony, he is by no means exclusive, and his relationship to her is somewhat ambiguous.

A sacred marriage in Ether 8

In Ether 8, Jared succeeds in a first attempt to dethrone his father, but he is eventually overcome by his brothers after several years and must relinquish his usurped power. Being “exceedingly sorrowful because of the loss of the kingdom” (Ether 8:7), his daughter suggests a course of action: acting like “them of old” (v. 9), Jared’s daughter will dance for Akish and, when he will desire her for wife, the price will be the head of Omer the king. The plan works almost as intended, though Omer is warned “in a dream” to escape (Ether 9:3) and thus is not killed. The result, however, is the same — Jared regains the kingdom. This episode also introduces a system of secret combinations among the Jaredites.

Earlier I suggested that *Akish* might come from the Sumerian *aya-kiši₁₂* (“Father Secret”) and might be a title used by the head of a secret combination. The use of a title validates the study of the whole chapter in a ritual context.

24. Beaulieu, “Eve’s Ritual,” has a good discussion on these points.

25. See Sefati, *Love Songs*, 47–48.

26. See Matsushima, “Ištar and Other Goddesses,” 3.

Several aspects can lead us to draw a parallel with the Mesopotamian *hieros gamos* rituals. First and foremost, the context is the same. Whereas the *hieros gamos* drama focuses on the love story and marriage of Inana and Dumuzi, relying heavily on an erotic focus, Ether 8 narrates the infatuation of Akish with Jared's daughter and what seems to be his erotic lust for her. The erotic aspect of the Akish story is amply proven by the phrase "he will desire me to wife" which occurs three times in the short space of verses 10 and 11. In the same idea of eroticism, we have the phrases "she pleased him" and "I am fair," all present in these two verses. As for the *hieros gamos* ritual, physical desire seems more important than love. Moreover, the sacred marriage was preoccupied with the legitimacy claims of the king, whereas Ether 8 presents the narration as aiming to put Jared back on the throne.

Certain details in the Ether account may also evoke parallels with Mesopotamian traditions, though these links are somewhat more tenuous. It is worth recalling, as previously noted, that the Book of Ether is a summary of Jaredite history compiled by Mormon. This summary—and the fact that Mormon probably was no expert on Jaredite culture—means that parallels that may have been obvious in the original record are only vague in Mormon's summary. But the insistence on Jared's daughter being "fair" (vv. 9 and 10) might echo the preparation—such as bathing and other makeup—that Inana accomplished before the ritual. Her dancing might reflect the procession, including songs and dances, that happened in the Old-World ceremony. Finally, asking for the head of Jared's father might be a parallel to the bringing of gifts in the *hieros gamos*, though here it certainly is a very morbid one.²⁷

Another important element is that, in Mesopotamia, it was not unusual for a king's daughter to be consecrated as a priestess.²⁸ Thus,

27. The banquet element is not explicitly present in Ether 8. Nevertheless, it is difficult not to think about the parallel episode of Salome in the New Testament, which, indeed, happened during a meal.

28. Hugh Nibley, *The World of the Jaredites* (Provo, UT: Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, 1988). Nibley argues that the episode of the daughter of Jared, as well as the episode of Salome dancing, is related to a so-called "*salme*" priestess in Babylonia. He gives as reference for this a talk he gave at the Pacific Coast Meeting of the American Historical Association (AHA) in 1940. Unfortunately, no transcript of this talk exists. I could only find the name of the talk (*The Origin of the Roman Dole*) in the 1940 AHA report. I want to thank Matthew T. Keough, from the AHA, for helping me in my attempts

for instance, Enĥeduanna, daughter of king Sargon of Akkad, was a priestess and known for the religious poetry she composed. She is the earliest named writer in the history of mankind. Jared had been king for a short time before his father Omer was restored to his legitimate position. May it be that he consecrated his daughter during his short term as a priestess to some Jaredite equivalent of Inanna? We could then imagine that when King Omer came back to power he would have done away with the worship of this Jaredite goddess because the text seems to imply that he was a just man—at least, righteous enough to have been warned by the Lord in a dream to “depart out of the land”—and thus he probably would not have indulged in the worship of a goddess. The probability decreases even further if the worship implied sexual promiscuity.

Thus, the daughter of Jared would have introduced this scheme to her father both out of concern for him and to restore the authority of her cult. This episode may contain not only a struggle for power but also the struggle between two religious conceptions—one promoted by King Omer based on the revelations of the Lord to his ancestors and another advocated by Jared’s daughter, of which we know virtually nothing but that probably would have been closer to Mesopotamian religious conceptions.

At this point, it is worth considering the literary analysis of Ether 8 made by Joseph Spencer.²⁹ He makes a compelling argument for two different sources in Ether 8, one called DW and one called SC. If this is the case, it seems that it could put into question my analysis, especially since I see the different names (Akish and Jared) combining in a united ritual context. In Spencer’s view, the names come in two literary strands. Indeed, the problem is that the name *Akish* does not appear in DW and the dancing of Jared’s daughter appears only in DW. So, it seems that the ritual that we thought to identify is actually split over the two sources.

Assuming Spencer is correct, DW and SC were most probably combined by Ether, which in turn was edited in summary by Moroni. This means that Ether’s edition formed a literary text with its own coherence and just minor incoherences that allow us to assume the

to locate a transcript of the talk. Concerning the high priestess question, see Lloyd Graham, “King’s Daughter, God’s Wife: The Princess as High Priestess in Mesopotamia (Ur, ca. 2300–1100 BCE) and Egypt (Thebes, ca. 1550–525 BCE),” *Academia* (website), academia.edu/34248896.

29. Spencer, “Jared’s Two Daughters.”

existence of DW and SC. Moreover, it seems that SC and DW had differing literary concerns. The source SC could be seen as the political source, focusing on the creation of secret combinations and maybe the legitimation concern of Jared, whereas source DW could be seen as religious, focusing on the sacred marriage ritual and maybe the concern of reinstating the cult of which Jared's daughter was a priestess. The two sources could then have been two reports of the same event, with two different lenses. In other words, the same event would have been reported in two different sources (SC and DW) for two different audiences with two different concerns. The sources would have been combined by Ether, and this combination would then have served as the source that was summarized by Moroni. As can be seen, the possible existence of two sources does not necessarily call into question the analysis presented in this paper.

Finally, given the role that the *hieros gamos* played in legitimizing a king, introducing Akish into this ceremony would have meant implicitly recognizing him as the king. This seems at odds with Jared's desire for power, but the sacred marriage ceremony was practiced by the designated heir to confer legitimacy. Thus, Jared's goal with this ceremony could have been both to secure power and to recognize Akish as his successor. However, the plan backfired when Akish proved impatient and did not wait for Jared's natural demise.

Comparison with other sacred marriage texts in the scriptures

I've made a point of comparing the story of Jared's daughter and Akish to the sacred marriage motif. Additionally, several other scriptural passages bear resemblance to this motif, particularly those in Ether 8. For example, compare Ether 8 with the story of the daughter of Herodias in Matthew and Mark,³⁰ the story of Esther, and the story of Judith.³¹ It is important to make these comparisons because, although not the primary focus of this article, the similarity between the so-called Salomé episode and the story of Jared's daughter has long been recognized.

I summarize the common elements of these stories in table 1. Boxes are colored in blue when the item does not appear in the story and are highlighted in light yellow when a similar—but not identical—element

30. See Matthew 14; Mark 6:17–28. The name *Salome* is not biblical but comes from Josephus.

31. Judith 9–12 (New Catholic Bible), biblegateway.com. The book of Judith is part of the Apocrypha, recognized as canonical by the Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Oriental Orthodox churches.

is present. Thus, for instance, one could identify a pseudo-erotic dimension in the fact that King Ahasuerus thinks that Haman is trying to rape Esther, even though he is only trying to supplicate her. In the same vein, Esther’s story displays the killing of someone, even though the act of killing happens by hanging instead of beheading.

One could take also the Song of Solomon as a possible example of a literary text akin to the *hieros gamos*.³² This book is much farther removed from Ether 8, though, so I did not include it in table 1.

Table 1. Comparison between different scriptural texts having a possible link with *hieros gamos*.

	Jared’s daughter (Ether 8–9)	Daughter of Herodias (Mark 6:17–28; Matthew 14)	Esther (Esther 4–5, 7–9)	Judith (Judith 9–12, translation <i>New Catholic Bible</i>)
Getting acquainted with the divine	Possibly with a goddess’s priestess			
Unnamed female protagonist	Jared’s daughter	Herodias’ daughter		
Power	Akish gains political power (9:1, 5)	Herodias gains revenge against her critic, John the Baptist	The Jews gain power over their adversaries (9)	The Jews gain the power of deliverance from Holofernes’ army
Setting			The palace	Holofernes’ tent
Prayer before acting			Esther fasts with all the Jewish people (4:16)	Judith 9

32. For an analysis of the relationship between the Song of Solomon and Sacred Marriage, see Martti Nissinen, “Song of Songs and Sacred Marriage,” in *Sacred Marriages: The Divine-Human Sexual Metaphor from Sumer to Early Christianity*, ed. Martti Nissinen and Uro Risto (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2008), 173–218.

	Jared's daughter (Ether 8–9)	Daughter of Herodias (Mark 6:17–28; Matthew 14)	Esther (Esther 4–5, 7–9)	Judith (Judith 9–12, translation <i>New Catholic Bible</i>)
Erotic dimension	"he will desire me to wife"; "she pleased him"; "I am fair" (8:10–11)	"pleased Herod" (Mark 6:22; Matthew 14:6)	Haman falls on Esther's bed to supplicate her (7:8)	<i>"We would be disgraced if we let such a woman go without enjoying her favors. If we do not seduce her, she will laugh us to scorn."</i> (12:12, also 12:16)
Dancing	"I will dance before him" (8:10)	"And when the daughter of the said Herodias came in, and danced" (Mark 6:22; Matthew 14:6)		
Banquet		"Herod on his birthday made a supper to his lords" (Mark 6:21; Matthew 14:6)	The scene takes place at a banquet prepared by Esther	Holofernes holds a banquet (12:10–11)
Offer to ask what is wanted without any limit	"if he shall desire of thee that ye shall give unto him me to wife" (8; 10)	"Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee." (Mark 6:22; Matthew 14:7)	"what is thy request? even to the half of the kingdom it shall be performed." (5:6, also 7:2)	
Oaths	Jared's friends swear to him not to divulge anything (8:13–15)	"And he sware unto her, Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, unto the half of my kingdom." (Mark 6:23; Matthew 14:7)		

	Jared's daughter (Ether 8–9)	Daughter of Herodias (Mark 6:17–28; Matthew 14)	Esther (Esther 4–5, 7–9)	Judith (Judith 9–12, translation New Catholic Bible)
Beheading	Failed beheading of Omer; beheading of Jared (9:1–3 and 9:5)	John's beheading (Mark 6:27–28; Matthew 14:10–11)	Attempted hanging of Mordecai; hanging of Haman (7:9)	Beheading of Holofernes (13:9)

What can be made of this comparison? First, the *hieros gamos* motif seems to appear several times in the scriptures, and in very different fashion. One of the ways in which it appears seems to be in the recounting of a woman seducing a man in order to incite the killing of someone.

One can ask whether it is truly justified to link all of these passages to a sacred marriage pattern. I believe this topic deserves far more attention than can be provided here, especially since these other texts are not the main interest of this paper. Nevertheless, a couple of elements seem to make credible the fact of seeing in all four passages an influence of the *hieros gamos*, albeit in an adapted fashion. First, they all have an erotic dimension, even though the one in Esther appears in an unusual way. They also all speak about a banquet, except for Ether 8. Moreover, as we have already seen, the name *Esther* might be of the root signifying “evening or morning star,” thus possibly playing with Inanna as the Venus goddess and justifying a possible proximity between Esther’s story and the *hieros gamos* ritual.

Of course, the similarities listed in table 1 should not hide the real differences. For instance, as Frederick points out, the daughter of Jared is active in her story whereas Herodias’ daughter is passive in hers, merely obeying her mother’s voice.³³ This is emphasized by the use of the Greek word *korasion*, “little girl,” to designate Herodias’ daughter.³⁴

33. Nicholas J. Frederick, “Whence the Daughter of Jared? Text and Context,” in *Illuminating the Jaredite Records*, ed. Daniel L. Belnap (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, BYU; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2020), 235–52.

34. For additional examples of such stories from antiquity, see Alan Goff, “The Dance of Reader and Text: Salomé, the Daughter of Jared, and the Regal Dance of Death,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-Day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 57 (2023), journal.interpreterfoundation.org/the-dance-of-reader-and-text-salome-the-daughter-of-jared-and-the-regal-dance-of-death/ and Frederick, “Whence the Daughter of Jared.”

Also, two of the stories feature a wicked woman, whereas the other two feature a woman trying to liberate her people.

Nevertheless, the comparison between these four scriptural stories helps clarify what might have happened in Ether 8. Table 1 shows enough similarity between the stories to allow us to read them together. As for the setting, Esther acts in the royal palace, while Judith kills her enemy in his tent—a space that similarly serves as a form of residence for royalty or nobility. Nothing is explicitly stated about the place where Herodias' daughter danced, but it seems very plausible to be the palace of Herod, as he was celebrating his birthday. The comparison might mean that there is a fair chance that Jared's daughter also acted in a palace, maybe that of her father. This is coherent with the fact that Jared "sen[t] for Akish" (Ether 8:10), conveying the idea that Akish had to come to the place where Jared lived.

Of course, it is not possible to assume a direct connection between the texts. After all, the stories of Esther, Judith, and Salomé are all post-exilic productions, whereas the Jaredites left the Old World pre-exile. We can safely assume, however, that the stories are representative of an ancient textual motif.³⁵ It is difficult to know how early the motif first appeared, but it could have been used by the Jaredite writers to cast the story of Akish and Jared's daughter.

Evil and righteous initiation rituals in Ether 3 and 8

The *hieros gamos* can be understood as a ritual of initiation into greater knowledge and power.³⁶ This can be seen, for instance, in the fact that the king joins the divine world and thereby receives his legitimacy to rule. Thus, Ether 8 could be read as an initiation ritual, if we accept that it is an instance of sacred marriage.

We can notice that Ether 3 also seems to describe an initiation experience. There, the brother of another Jared comes to the Lord to ask for directions towards the promised land preparatory to the crossing of the deep sea. While he seeks knowledge from the Lord, his faith leads him to a personal encounter, first seeing the "finger of the Lord" (v. 8) and then seeing him entirely.

Ether 3 and 8 are the only chapters that can convincingly be seen as initiation experiences in the book of Ether. It is therefore legitimate to ask if these chapters are supposed to echo each other: the righteous initiation into a closer experience with God opposed to the evil initiation

35. Goff, "The Dance of Reader and Text."

36. Beaulieu, "Eve's Ritual."

into the mysteries of the “father of all lies” (Ether 8:25). While comparing these two chapters (see table 2), it is helpful to remember that we are reading the Jaredite record through the lens of Moroni, who probably was not acquainted with that civilization. Some parallels, word plays, or cultural references, which might have been clear and understandable to a Jaredite composing the original twenty-four plates may have come to us in Moroni’s record only as vestiges of the original. To have more material for comparison, we will therefore assume that Ether 8 is related to a Mesopotamian sacred marriage ceremony. We can thus accept parallels between the brother of Jared’s experience in Ether 3 and known elements of the *hieros gamos*.

Table 2. Comparison between Ether 3 and Ether 8.

	Ether 3	Ether 8:7–9:5
Getting acquainted with the divine	With God	With a goddess’s priestess
Power and knowledge	Cannot be kept outside of the veil; is shown inhabitants of the earth (3:6, 13, 17, 19–20)	Gains political power (9:1, 5)
Setting	A mountain, with a name suggesting wholeness (3:1)	Possibly palace or the temple (8:10)
Writing	The brother of Jared is commanded to write what happened (3:22)	The secret combinations are taken out of the records transmitted down (8:9)
Someone unknown related to a certain Jared	The brother of Jared	The daughter of Jared

The first parallel is structural: in both cases, as previously noted, we have a process of getting acquainted with the divine. The brother of Jared approaches God with a question and, through faith, has an encounter with the Lord. This progression is linked with acquisition of knowledge and power: he was shown “all the inhabitants of the earth” (Ether 3:25) and “he could not be kept from beholding within the veil” (v. 19). Moreover, there is a mention of “two stones” (v. 23), probably similar to the Nephite interpreters, that give knowledge about languages that have been forgotten. On the other hand, Akish is clearly in a search for power—of a political nature this time. Moreover, if we accept the Sumerian parallel of the story, Akish has a personal encounter with Inana—or her Jaredite counterpart—through her

earthly representative, Jared's daughter, with this encounter likely being of a sexual nature.

We are thus presented with two trajectories: one ascending toward sanctification, God, and divine power; the other, descending toward political power and selfish ambition — illustrated by Akish ultimately murdering his father-in-law to seize the kingdom. In both cases there is a direct encounter, either with the Lord (Jared's brother) or with an idolatrous goddess through her representative (Akish).

The settings of the "initiation ritual" can also be compared. Sumerian *hieros gamos* usually took place in the palace or in a temple dedicated to the goddess.³⁷ Though we have no indication as to where Jared's daughter danced for Akish, we are told that Jared "sen[t] for Akish" (Ether 8:10), therefore giving the idea that Akish had to go to a specific location, maybe the palace of Jared or a temple. This possibility is reinforced, as was seen in the previous section, by comparing the stories of Esther and Judith. Ether 3 takes place on a "mount" (v. 1) of "exceeding height." Mountains have often been symbols of the temple — one needs only to think about Mount Zion or Mount Horeb. Moreover, the name of the mountain, Shelem, could be related to the Proto-Semitic³⁸ root š.l.m meaning "to be whole, sound." This root is found in Hebrew שָׁלוֹם (*shalom*, peace) and שָׁלֵם (*shalem*, perfect), in Arabic سَلَام (*salām*, peace), and in Akkadian *šalāmu* ("to be(come) healthy, intact"³⁹). The meanings of *peace*, *completeness*, *health*, and *perfection* are very fitting to a temple setting.⁴⁰ Besides this semitic meaning, the Book of

37. Pirjo Lapinkivi, "The Sumerian Sacred Marriage and its Aftermath in Later Sources," in *Sacred Marriages: The Divine-Human Sexual Metaphor from Sumer to Early Christianity* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008), 22.

38. The American Heritage Dictionary Semitic Roots Appendix, ahdictionary.com/word/semitic.html.

39. Translation given according to Jeremy Black, Andrew George, and J.N. Postgate, *A Concise Dictionary of Akkadian*, 2nd corrected printing (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2000).

40. Interestingly, the Song of Solomon features a female character named Shulamit, a name that appears to share the same etymological roots as those we have discussed. As previously noted, the Song of Solomon seems to be part of the *hieros gamos* type of literature, and Shulamit could be a vestige of the fertility goddess found in Mesopotamian sacred marriage rituals. This connection is particularly significant within our context. For more about Shulamit, *hieros gamos* and the Song of Songs, see Edwin Yamauchi, "Cultic Clues in Canticles," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society (JETS)* 4, no. 3 (November 1961): 80–88, etsjets.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/files_JETS-PDFs_4_4-3_BETS_4-3_80-88_Yamauchi.pdf; and G. Lloyd

Mormon Onomasticon also proposes the Akkadian *simmiltu* meaning “ladder (of heaven).” This meaning also fits a temple setting.

Both Ether 3 and 8 demonstrate an interest in records. Jared’s daughter refers to “the record which our fathers brought across the great deep” (Ether 8:9), and the Lord commands Jared’s brother to “write these things” so that he can “show them in [his] own due time” (Ether 3:27). The records are different—one has been handed down the ages, whereas the other is to be created—but in both cases these records relate the initiation experience: the initiation into “secret plans” to “obtain kingdoms” (Ether 8:9) or the initiation into divine knowledge.

To finish, note that the etymology of Ether is interesting in the context of the two courses—the one going towards God and the one going to power lust and idolatry. Indeed, the etymology of the name associated with the rising star is associated in the Old World with Inana, the goddess of sacred marriage. In addition, this motif has been used at times in the Bible as a symbol for the Son of God.

We can assume that the symbol of the rising star continued throughout the whole of Jaredite history, interpreted in two opposing ways according to the religious affiliation of the person. On one side were those who followed in the footsteps of the old Mesopotamian religion—or, at least, of the Jaredite version of it—and saw the rising star as a symbol for the goddess of love and war who conferred legitimacy upon kings. On the other side were those who followed Christ and saw the rising star as a symbol for the coming Messiah.

Two things, then, need to be noted. First, it should not be surprising that such a cultural motif could permeate a long history, though with some changes in its details. The idea of sacred marriage itself can also be found in very different places and times.⁴¹ It seems that certain ideas are particularly compelling to the human mind and thus have a greater tendency to cultural stability.

Second, the rising star motif does not appear in Ether 3, so the argument that I just mentioned cannot be used in the comparison between chapters 3 and 8. But, if we are right to identify Ether 8 with a sacred marriage ritual, then it would seem odd to have both a

Carr, “Is The Song Of Songs A ‘Sacred Marriage’ Drama?,” *JETS* 22, no. 2 (June 1979):103–14, etsjets.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/files_JETS-PDFs_22_22-2_22-2-pp103-114_JETS.pdf.

41. Martti Nissinen and Uro Risto, *Sacred Marriages: The Divine-Human Sexual Metaphor from Sumer to Early Christianity* (University Park, P: Penn State University Press, 2008).

reference to the rising star in Ether 8 via the *hieros gamos* and later on via the name Ether. Could it be that Ether's record showed in a much more explicit way the contrast between the righteous and the evil use of this motif, but that it does not appear as such in our current book of Ether because Moroni did not understand the cultural reference? This is, then, pure speculation and it is likely that we will never have the answer.

Conclusion

In this paper I have presented the conjecture that a *hieros gamos* type of ritual is presented in Ether 8 and put in opposition to the spiritual course of the righteous brother of Jared introduced in Ether 3. Further, I suggest the name *Ether* is a reference to the rising star, which would have been seen either as a symbol of Christ or as a symbol of a pagan deity, according to the religious conviction of the person.

It is almost impossible to come to a certain conclusion regarding the origin of the Jaredites, given the scarcity of the material and that we have access to it only through the editing work of Moroni. All we can do is work towards conjectures with more or less plausibility. The difficulty of the task should not, however, prevent us from trying to see what can be found. Indeed, it is only by making attempts that we can hope to discover some traces of what once was. Moreover, it is my hope that this paper will trigger more research in this direction and give way to more articles on possible rituals and other cultural elements of a Mesopotamian origin in the book of Ether.

Besides the historical question, I also believe that this paper has another interest. It is possible to study a text in a diachronic or in a synchronic way. While the diachronic approach focuses on the textual history and tries to uncover the various stages and sources, the synchronic viewpoint takes the text as it is and tries to draw conclusions as to literary and theological questions. Though I believe that study provides valuable insights into the textual history of the Book of Ether, I also believe that, seen from a synchronic perspective, it offers meaningful theological insights. The contrast between Jared's brother and Jared's daughter underscores the choices available to all of us: to follow a godly, upward path leading to communion with God, or a selfish, worldly downward path marked by violence and strife. The use of the rising star motif in both paths highlights that the difference between these two courses is often small.

Appendix: What Would We Need to Be Able to Assert Anything about the Jaredites?

Several natural questions arise about the Jaredites: Where did they come from? Which language(s) did they speak? What were their practices? When did they live? We will define a “theory” as any coherent attempt to answer these questions. For instance, positing a Mesopotamian origin with a Sumerian-Akkadian linguistic background is one such theory.

One method to test whether a theory rises above mere conjecture has been proposed by K. Lawson Younger Jr.⁴² According to Younger, a theory connecting a text to influences from a proposed culture and people would need to fulfill the criteria described in the following sections.

Linguistic criterion

A theory would need to give a plausible linguistic setting connecting the text to the proposed culture. The book of Ether has sixty or so proper names, and these would need to be checked against the suggested origin language. When doing that, we should keep in mind several things.

First, the proper names found in Ether not only need to have a plausible etymological link to the suggested origin language, but they should also be in conformity with known name-giving practices in the suggested language and in the suggested origin culture. If a link to the name-giving practices can be established, the theory is much stronger than if there are only plausible etymologies.

Second, it must be remembered that the Jaredite civilization spanned at least 750 years, and languages evolve over time. A modern American would have a hard time understanding someone speaking English from 750 years ago in the thirteenth century. Thus, we would expect that more proper names could find an etymology in the theory for the earliest names of the book of Ether rather than for the latest. The same holds true for name-giving practices. A theory that fits this condition would be given greater weight. In the ideal condition (but probably unrealistic given the material we have), the theory would

42. K. Lawson Younger, “The ‘Contextual Method’: Some West Semitic Reflections,” in *The Context of Scripture*, vol. 3, ed. William W. Hallo and K. Lawson Younger Jr. (Leiden, NL: Brill, 2002), xxxv–xlii.

even be able to explain some of the evolution of the language over time, such as phonetic rules.

We can also note that rituals often use more ancient speech forms. Thus, if we identify a ritual context, it can be expected to have names whose etymologies are closer to the origin language.

Chronological criterion

The proposed cultural connection needs to be chronologically coherent with what the book of Ether has to say. Even if the book does not have many chronological details, it nonetheless contains a genealogical list in its first chapter that mentions 30 names, beginning with Ether and going back from father to son. Among these 30 names, three are not the sons of someone else, but their descendants. It is therefore difficult to know how many generations separate them. Thus, setting a time for the migration of Jared would be a very difficult undertaking.

Even dating the demise of the Jaredites is difficult. We only know that the last Jaredite, Coriantumr, "dwelt with [the people of Zarahemla] for the space of nine moons" (Omni 1:21). However, it's unclear how long this occurred before the arrival of King Mosiah. It appears to have been a considerable time earlier, as Mosiah seems to have learned about Coriantumr not through the living memory of the people of Zarahemla, but from the discovery of a "large stone" (Omni 1:20).

So, it remains difficult to have an end date or a beginning date for the Jaredite civilization. But we can at least have a date *ante quem*. Indeed, if we consider that everyone in the genealogical table of Ether 1 was only a "son" in the proper sense and if we count twenty-five years for a generation, we come to $25 \times 30 = 750$ years of history. If we omit any time between the discovery of Coriantumr by the people of Zarahemla and the discovery of the latter by Mosiah's people, this means that the beginning of the Jaredites cannot have been later than 750 years before the coming of Mosiah in the land of Zarahemla. Mosiah's arrival is also somewhat difficult to date, but there are some constraints on it in the chronological indications given elsewhere in the Book of Mormon. All of this means that a theory cannot suggest a linguistic origin with a language that is more recent than that.

The implication of all of this for a Mesopotamian origin theory is that the chronology cannot exclude the possibility of this theory being true, as Akkadian (or its variants Babylonian and Assyrian) began to

be replaced by Aramaic probably in the mid-first millennium BC.⁴³ If we look at the chronological indication given in the current standard edition of the Book of Mormon, King Benjamin would have made his famous speech around 130 BC. Mosiah was his father. So, the travels of the first Jaredites and their entry into the New World must have occurred much before $750 + 130 = 880$ BC. Let us note that this is probably too recent a date, as it considers neither the time separating Mosiah and Benjamin, nor the time between the demise of the Jaredites and the coming of Mosiah into the land of Zarahemla, nor the difference between “son” and “descendant” in the genealogical tables of the book of Ether. But it indicates that the Jaredites must have come much before the mid-first millennium BC, when Akkadian was still spoken.

As for Sumerian, it is one of the most ancient languages that we know of, with the earliest unearthed documents dating to the end of the fourth millennium BC. It is unclear when it ceased to be a spoken language. Scholarly opinions range from 2350 BC with the rise of Sargon’s kingdom to 1800 BC with the Old Babylonian era.⁴⁴ However, it continued to be a cultural and liturgical language used in written form until 300 BC, even though the literary production is much less fruitful during the so-called Post-Sumerian period, from 1600 BC to 300 BC. In other words, it might or might not have been spoken at the time of the Jaredite exodus, but it will probably still have had at least a cultural influence, and especially so in ritual contexts.

Geographical criterion

A theory that can explain how some people from the suggested origin civilization came to the New World, in a way coherent with what is being told in the book of Ether, of course gains weight.

Cultural criterion

A theory that can discern cultural practices in the book of Ether akin to those of the suggested origin civilization gains in weight. In this paper, I show that there might have been ritual practices similar to the *hieros*

43. See, John Huehnergard, *A Grammar of Akkadian*, 3rd ed. (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011) xxiii–xxiv.

44. See e.g. Abraham Hendrik Jagersma, “The death of Sumerian,” in *A Descriptive Grammar of Sumerian* (PhD diss. (Leiden, NL: Universiteit Leiden, 2010), 9, theswissbay.ch/pdf/Books/Linguistics/A%20descriptive%20grammar%20of%20Sumerian%20-%20Abraham%20Hendrik%20Jagersma.pdf.

gamos. Again, it must be considered that the book of Ether was written by Moroni who had access to original Jaredite material but who most probably was not an insider of Jaredite culture. This means that possible cultural arguments are probably buried under Moroni's redaction.

Literary criterion

This criterion is similar to the cultural criterion. A theory that can discern under Moroni's redaction some of the original Jaredite material will have more weight. In this paper I suggest that the phrase "father of (all) lies" used in the book of Ether might be of Jaredite origin.

To be considered as interesting or having a non-zero degree of plausibility a theory does not need to fulfill all the criteria mentioned in this appendix. But the more it fulfills the more it gains in credibility. By studying the two personages of Jared we give linguistic (some new etymologies) and cultural (relations to Mesopotamian practices and literary patterns) arguments consistent with a Mesopotamian origin theory.



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