

# Book of Mormon Study – Ether 6-11

Online zoom Sunday School, 22 Nov 2020

(goto.jayball.name/bofm)

*Ether 6:6-10*

*And it came to pass that 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. And it came to pass that when **they were buried in the deep** there was no water that could hurt them, their vessels being tight like unto a dish, and also they were tight like unto the ark of Noah; therefore when they were encompassed about by many waters they did cry unto the Lord, and he did **bring them forth again upon the top of the waters**. And it came to pass that the wind did never cease to blow towards the promised land while they were upon the waters; and thus they were driven forth before the wind. And they did sing praises unto the Lord; yea, the brother of Jared did sing praises unto the Lord, and he did thank and praise the Lord all the day long; and when the night came, they did not cease to praise the Lord. And thus they were driven forth; and no monster of the sea could break them, neither whale that could mar them; and they did have light continually, whether it was above the water or **under the water**.*

They cried unto the Lord and the barges were brought back *above the waters*. If it's the wind that is carrying them, then how is the wind having any effect on something that is *under the water*? How is something filled with air able to sink under water? How fierce or furious is the storm that is able to drive a vessel filled with air under water? Were the occupants of these vessels wearing seat belts? Did the previous experience in building vessels help prepare them and teach them things to better equip this second set of barges with improvements (see Ether 2:6 and 16)? Is it more the current, rather than the wind, that is carrying them to the land of promise? What role might the wind have in influencing the current that is actually taking them?

I almost get the impression these vessels are rather submarine like. I just have a hard time trying to conceptualize vessels filled with air going under water. I also have a hard time conceptualizing wind having much effect in blowing a round or "tight like unto a dish" shaped vessels.

*the brother of Jared did sing praises unto the Lord, and he did thank and praise the Lord all the day long; and when the night came, they did not cease to praise the Lord.  
(verse 9)*

Note that these praises were sung (we talked about singing in a previous lesson - see note on Morm 7:7). And this praising continued into the night. How did they know day from night inside the barges? Where else do we hear this kind of language being used – crying unto the Lord all the day long and into the night? It reminds me of Enos.

*And my soul hungered; and I kneeled down before my Maker, and I cried unto him in mighty prayer and supplication for mine own soul; and all the day long did I cry unto him; yea, and when the night came I did still raise my voice high that it reached the heavens. (Enos 1:4)*

Makes me wonder if there is more to what is being said in this verse in Ether. Perhaps understanding what was going on with Enos can give better perspective on what we see happening here as well (see earlier lesson on Enos).

*...no monster of the sea could break them, neither whale that could mar them; (verse 10)*

What other things in the sea beside whales are large enough or dangerous enough to break a ship?

*Ether 6:11*

344 days.

The Phoenicia trip in 2008 around Africa took 2 years.

*"Built in 2008, the Phoenicia is an exact replica of a wrecked Phoenician ship found in Marseille. The Phoenicians, an ancient civilization born in the region we now know as Syria nearly 3,000 years ago, were legendary sailors...*

*According to London's "The Phoenicians: The Greatest Sailors Exhibition," as early as "600 BC a fleet of Phoenician ships was said to have embarked on an epic journey to circumnavigate Africa." In 2008, the crew of the newly-built Phoenicia set out to prove that the myth was, in fact, history.*

*After a two year voyage in a copy of a 3,000-year-old ship, the Phoenicia dodged Somalian pirates and extreme weather, sailing into the history books—the epic tale of the Phoenician explorers was no myth. However, not satisfied with one groundbreaking voyage, the crew of the Phoenicia is now on a mission to prove that the Phoenicians sailed to America over 2,000 years before Columbus." (The Phoenicia: A Voyage to Rewrite History, By Madeleine Handaji, Nov 4, 2019.*

*<https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2019/11/286022/phoenicia-voyage-history-america/>*

In Nephi's case, the winds took them as well.

*And it came to pass after we had all gone down into the ship, and had taken with us our provisions and things which had been commanded us, we did put forth into the sea and **were driven forth before the wind** towards the promised land...*

*And it came to pass that I, Nephi, did guide the ship, that we **sailed again** towards the promised land. And it came to pass that **after we had sailed** for the space of many days we did arrive at the promised land; and we went forth upon the land, and did pitch our tents; and we did call it the promised land. (1 Ne 18:8, 22-23)*

After his brothers loosed him from the mast he took the Liahona and it worked and he was able to guide the ship.

*And it came to pass after they had loosed me, behold, I took the compass, and it did work whither I desired it... And it came to pass that I, Nephi, did guide the ship, that we sailed again towards the promised land. (ibid, 21-22)*

If the Lord was causing the winds to take the ship, why did Nephi need to guide it? Were the Jaradites involved in directing or steering their vessels in any similar way? Was there any communication between the members in the eight separate vessels? How great effect does wind have on dish shaped barges without masts? (It seems that current would have a greater effect on moving a dish shaped barge than wind.)

344 days out on the water? How did they survive that long? They brought animals (verse 4).

I'm reminded of the boy and his sheep from *The Alchemist*, by Paul Coelho

*He arose and, taking up his crook, began to awaken the sheep that still slept. He had noticed that, as soon as he awoke, most of his animals also began to stir. It was as if some mysterious energy bound his life to that of the sheep, with whom he had spent the past two years, leading them through the countryside in search of food and water. "They are so used to me that they know my schedule," he muttered. Thinking about that for a moment, he realized that it could be the other way around: that it was he who had become accustomed to their schedule.*

*But there were certain of them who took a bit longer to awaken. The boy prodded them, one by one, with his crook, calling each by name...*

*The day was dawning, and the shepherd urged his sheep in the direction of the sun. They never have to make any decisions, he thought. Maybe that's why they always stay close to me.*

*The only things that concerned the sheep were food and water. As long as the boy knew how to find the best pastures in Andalusia, they would be his friends. Yes, their days were all the same, with the seemingly endless hours between sunrise and dusk; and they had never read a book in their young lives, and didn't understand when the boy told them about the sights of the cities. They were content with just food and water, and, in exchange, they generously gave of their wool, their company, and--once in a while--their meat.*

*If I became a monster today, and decided to kill them, one by one, they would become aware only after most of the flock had been slaughtered, thought the boy. They trust me, and they've forgotten how to rely on their own instincts, because I lead them to nourishment.*

Some years ago I met a guy from Trenton who raised rabbits for meat. He told me that on slaughter day he could tell that the animals knew, yet they exhibited a calmness and acceptance of this fate. There was no sense of anxiety or fear in them.

If people are going to choose to eat meat, which many do, then as Temple Grandin says "We owe it to them" to ensure that they have a happy, healthy and cruelty free life. We also must ensure that their end of life process upholds the Humane Slaughter Act, and we implement the strictest and most humane ways possible to avoid pain and suffering.

When asked if her work in slaughter houses makes her sad, she said, "Well no, everything dies. Nature can be harsh. Those cattle wouldn't have existed if they had not been bred."

Consider the example being presented in this. The animal lives their life in the moment, being taken care of. It does not worry or fret about where the next meal is coming from. Doesn't concern itself with the things of tomorrow, "*Take therefore no thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself.*" (Matt 6:34)

Animals live in the present moment, trusting when hunger comes food will be there. And it is. The animal is provided for. Then one day we may expect, like Joseph, to be led like a lamb to the slaughter. Think about that. To go, willingly, wittingly, and be at peace with it. It's a powerful example what we learn from animals. From an animal's perspective, life is good, and death is just part of it all. No worries.

I know this is easy to say, yet we still worry. If you think that your burdens that you carry are great, remember the burdens carried by the Son. He faced burdens inordinately greater than yours. All of us should be tested to our limit. All of us should be "proven" by the experiences we endure. The only way to test some things is to destroy them. The only way to test you through mortality is to cause mortality itself, with the eventual coming of death. That is the way this probation works.

#### *Ether 6:17*

*And they were taught to walk humbly before the Lord; and they were also taught from on high.*

What does it mean to be taught from on high? Could it be anything like what Nephi taught in 2 Ne 32:5-6?

#### *Ether 6:19*

*And the brother of Jared began to be old, and saw that he must soon go down to the grave; wherefore he said unto Jared: Let us gather together our people that we may number them*

They numbered their people before they went down to their graves. Yet for David in 2 Sam 24, numbering the people was a sin?

*And David's heart smote him after that he had numbered the people. And David said unto the Lord, I have sinned greatly in that I have done: and now, I beseech thee, O Lord, take away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly. (2 Sam 24:10)*

So if it's a small number it's ok, but if it's a large number it's not? The account of David in 2 Sam 24 is confusing to me. I see this as a completely sensible thing for Jared and his brother to do. Number your people, count them. How many grandkids do I have?

The numbering of the people was something God told Moses to do:

*And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, When thou takest the sum of the children of Israel after their number, then shall they give every man a ransom for his soul unto the Lord, when thou numberest them; that there be no plague among them, when thou numberest them. (Ex 30:11-12)*

This verse in Exodus 30 is the basis for a "Temple tax" among the Jews. This Temple tax is mentioned in 4 Maccabees. Footnote for 4 Maccabees 3:20 in OTP refers to the "Temple tax" as "the annual half-shekel as paid by the Jews to the priests: Ex 30:12; 2Chr 24:6". But Dead Sea Scrolls 4Q159 Frag 1 Col 2:6-7 says:

*[... concer]ning [the Ransom:] the money of the valuation which a man gives a ransom for his life shall be half [a shekel in accordance with the shekel of the sanctuary]. He shall give it only o[nce] in his life. (DSSNT pg 205)*

Did the Jews twist something over time where culture and traditions have turned it into something more than what it was originally meant to be? Are such things possible in our time? Is over 150 plus years long enough for culture and traditions to affect and twist some things that Joseph Smith revealed? (The Word of Wisdom is one thing that comes to mind.)

There seems to be more going on in the 2 Sam 24 account with David than a judgement upon David and Israel for taking a census of the people. David intercedes for the people and the plague was stopped (2 Sam 24:15-25). David purchased the threshing floor upon which the temple would be built (ibid 24-25). The record in Chronicles places this right after a great victory over the Philistines. The 1 Chronicles account actually gives a reason for this being a sin, it was because Levi and Benjamin were not counted.

*And Joab gave the sum of the number of the people unto David. And all they of Israel were a thousand thousand and an hundred thousand men that drew sword: and Judah was four hundred threescore and ten thousand men that drew sword. But Levi and Benjamin counted he not among them: for the king's word was abominable to Joab. And God was displeased with this thing; therefore he smote Israel. (1 Chronicles 21:5-7)*

Other references to this account in the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha may add some additional insight:

*And I saw and implored in the Lord's presence and said, "Let it be enough, Lord, to make your hand heavy on Jerusalem by bringing gentiles (upon her)."*

*For they ridiculed (her) and did not refrain in anger and vicious rage, and they will be finished unless you, Lord, censure them (= gentiles) in your anger. (Pss of Sol 2:22-23, OTP)*

And this account from Eupolemus:

*Then David, his son, assumed power. He subdued the Syrians dwelling by the river Euphrates and in the region of Commagene and the Assyrians in Galadene and the Phoenicians; he also fought against the Idumaeans, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Itureans, the Nabataeans and the Nabdaeans, he further waged war against Souron, the king of Tyre and Phoenicia; and he compelled them to pay tribute to the Jews. With Vapors, the king of Egypt, he made a treaty of friendship. Since David wanted to build a temple for God, he asked God to show him a place for the altar. Then an angel appeared to him standing above the place where the altar is set up in Jerusalem and ordered him not to set up the temple, because he was defiled with human blood and had waged war for many years. His name was Dantean. He gave him a command that he should entrust the building to his son but that he should get ready the materials suitable for the construction: gold, silver, bronze, stones, cypress and cedar trees. (Eupolemus 30:3-6, OTP)*

#### *Ether 6:30*

*And it came to pass that Orihah did walk humbly before the Lord, and did remember **how** great things the Lord had done for his father, and also taught his people **how** great things the Lord had done for their fathers.*

What is the difference between *how* great things the Lord has done and *what* great things the Lord has done? Does D&C 93 give us any insight on this?

*I give unto you these sayings that you may understand and know **how** to worship, and know **what** you worship, that you may come unto the Father in my name, and in due time receive of his fulness. (D&C 93:19)*

#### *Ether 7:4*

*And when Corihor was thirty and two years old he rebelled against his father, and went over and dwelt in the land of Nehor; and he begat sons and daughters, and they became exceedingly fair; wherefore Corihor drew away many people after him.*

Corihor, appears to be the first (of many) of the Jaradites to rebel against his father. If the people since the time of King Benjamin had a more complete account of this record (book of Ether), at least those portions that were permitted, then it could have been known more about the person after whom the land of Nehor was named. Could the Nehor in Alma have taken on himself the name of Nehor as sort of a title, based on something he might have known from existing writings of his day? How much of Nephite culture has been shaped and influenced by the Jaradite record. We see evidence of its influence throughout the Book of Mormon.

See heading of chapter 10 and 11 for a synopsis of the Jaradites. Notice King Benjamin's speech and how after translating this record he sets up a system of judges among the people.

*Ether 8:5*

*And it came to pass that they did give battle unto him by night.*

And behold they did give battle to them by night. This passage is mentioned, not as a passing thought, but deliberately. I wonder what significance Moroni had in mind for us in being deliberate in pointing out this detail.

*Ether 8:11*

*And now Omer was a friend to Akish; wherefore, when Jared had sent for Akish, the daughter of Jared danced before him that she pleased him, insomuch that he desired her to wife. And it came to pass that he said unto Jared: Give her unto me to wife.*

Was Herodias likewise inspired by secret plans of old?

*But when Herod's birthday was kept, the daughter of Herodias danced before them and pleased Herod, whereupon he promised with an oath to give her whatever she would ask. (Matt 14:6-7)*

*Ether 8:23-24*

*Wherefore, O ye Gentiles, it is wisdom in God that these things should be shown unto you, that thereby ye may repent of your sins, and suffer not that these murderous combinations shall get above you...*

*Wherefore, the Lord commandeth you, when ye shall see these things come among you that ye shall awake to a sense of your awful situation,*

The greatest way the adversary keeps us in a state of slumber is to prevent us from looking about and awakening to the awful situation we find ourselves. Hugh Nibley commented on more than one occasion that there is nothing quite as annoying as being awakened out of a deep sleep. No one really likes that. When it comes right down to it, unconsciousness is a very pleasurable thing, particularly when you awaken to what we face here.

Every one of us should walk fearfully before God, not because God is not generous, but because what He offers can turn you into a devil. The only way to be prepared and not fall is to realize the enormous peril you potentially present to the universe. Before you get in a position to enjoy the status God offers to us all, you need to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, exactly like Paul said (Philippians 2:12).

"What God offers can turn you into a devil." - It's what we have seen happen with watchers, or Cain, or any of these secret combinations are attempting to do. This knowledge, when abused or wrongfully applied, or in the wrong hands, is dangerous. God trusts us. It's what the parable *The Great Competition* teaches. It's not that God is threatened when such knowledge gets in the wrong hands. I think it's more of a mercy that God reserves some things and holds them back until a person has proven themselves worthy of it.

*Ether 8:25*

*For it cometh to pass that whoso buildeth it up seeketh to overthrow the freedom of all lands, nations, and countries; and it bringeth to pass the destruction of all people,*

We should realize that in our day, whatever it means by secret combinations, it will be something that affects all nations. As if that isn't clear enough, it's worth repeating. One important message that we are getting from the Book of Ether, specifically in the commentary by Moroni, to **us**, specifically directed to us as gentiles in our day, is to be warned about secret combinations in the last day that will seek to overthrow all nations. Why are we not talking more about this real threat in our meetings and lessons? Why is there a concerted effort to use the label "conspiracy theorist" as a negative or derisive phrase in our society today?

Bret Weinstein, *How the Magic Trick is Done* (<https://youtu.be/bz0oxlZ3xlg>)

*(53:57 min) And finally, a related point is there is an assumption that when your opponent makes gains, there has been a conspiracy. Now, we have to deal with this issue of conspiracy a little carefully because it is one of those third rail issues that divides every room. But the fact is, we all know conspiracies happen. There are real conspiracies. And we all know that many allegations of conspiracy are false. The difficulty is that conspiracy is a challenge to Occam's razor which is an essential principal to figuring out what is true. Conspiracies confound Occam's razor. They game Occam's razor. But I now find myself in a very funny position which is, because I have many friends left at Evergreen on the faculty, among the students, and on the staff, I hear things about what's taking place on the campus. There's currently a conspiracy theory that involves me. And why I was successful at surviving their challenge. And I know its false. I can't necessarily convince anybody else this, but, the very fact that I'm in a position to say well that conspiracy didn't happen and that I'm one of very few people who can say for sure that that's the case, is a very powerful position to be in. Nonetheless, to hear that conspiracy theory bubbling through the campus as an explanation for why they found themselves so embarrassed, in the case of their protest against me is fascinating. So their assumption is, if you make gains against them, you have engaged in some kind of conspiracy.*

We looked at some of Weinstein's observations earlier in lesson on Alma 43-52 (see note on Alma 46:1-8):

*Were it the objective of this social justice movement to confront the much more difficult problems and to confront them at the full level of nuance, I would be interested in seeing those problems addressed...*

*So what is it that this movement is actually trying to achieve? Now remember I'm arguing that there are actually two groups embedded in one movement. One of those groups is really hoping to achieve some kind of equality... But then there's the other faction. The faction that I'm arguing is actually driving the agenda of the movement.*



*(Bret Weinstein, How the Magic Trick is Done, starting at 29:09 min,  
<https://youtu.be/bz0oxlZ3xlg>)*

*“Am I alleging a conspiracy? No. What I have seen functions much more like a cult in which the purpose is only understood by the leaders, and the rest have been seduced into a carefully architected fiction. Most of the people involved in this movement earnestly believe that they are acting nobly to end oppression. Only the leaders understand that the true goal is to turn the tables of oppression. Something is seriously and dangerously amiss. At this moment in history the center does not hold. Partisan polarization and political corruption have rendered government ineffective, predatory, and often cruelly indifferent to the suffering of American citizens. Tribalism is the natural result.” (Bret Weinstein Testifies to Congress on The Evergreen State College riots, Free Speech & Safe Spaces,  
<https://youtu.be/uRIKJCKWla4>)*

#### *Ether 10:5-6*

*Riplakish... did tax them with heavy taxes; and with the taxes he did build many spacious buildings. And he did erect him an exceedingly beautiful throne;*

How much like King Noah? Noah "*built many elegant and spacious buildings... And he also built him a spacious palace and a throne in the midst thereof*" (Mosiah 11:8-9).

Earlier the brother of Jared said surely kings lead to captivity (6:23). The word I have in mind in relation to taxes is bondage. Is bondage in the form of being over taxed a form of captivity?

#### *Ether 10:9-11*

Morianton... did do justice unto the people, but not unto himself

This goes to show that even unrighteous kings can still treat their subjects justly. It can be done. (Imagine that.)

#### *Ether 11:1-2*

Many prophets. Why are there many prophets, and in our day why do we insist there can only be one?