

November 18-24, 2024

Ether 6–11

“THAT EVIL MAY BE DONE AWAY”

Summary: *Ether 6. The Jaredite barges are driven by the winds to the promised land—The people praise the Lord for His goodness—Oribah is appointed king over them—Jared and his brother die.*

Ether 7. Oribah reigns in righteousness—Amid usurpation and strife, the rival kingdoms of Shule and Cobor are set up—Prophets condemn the wickedness and idolatry of the people, who then repent.

Ether 8. There is strife and contention over the kingdom—Akish forms an oath-bound secret combination to slay the king—Secret combinations are of the devil and result in the destruction of nations—Modern Gentiles are warned against the secret combination that will seek to overthrow the freedom of all lands, nations, and countries.

Ether 9. The kingdom passes from one to another by descent, intrigue, and murder—Emer saw the Son of Righteousness—Many prophets cry repentance—A famine and poisonous serpents plague the people.

Ether 10. One king succeeds another—Some of the kings are righteous; others are wicked—When righteousness prevails, the people are blessed and prospered by the Lord.

Ether 11. Wars, dissensions, and wickedness dominate Jaredite life—Prophets predict the utter destruction of the Jaredites unless they repent—The people reject the words of the prophets.

Supplemental Jewish and Holy Land Insights

How is an oath used in Jewish culture?

Although these

chapters in The Book of Mormon deal mostly with wars and secret combinations and little Jewish or “Israelitish” insight can be given, one thing comes vividly to mind. That is, vows and covenants are usually made with the Lord and not used as an instrument of people-to-people. “In Jewish law, ‘oaths’ and ‘vows’ serve as distinct terms, each representing a different class of ‘sworn statement.’ The oath, which in Hebrew is called *shevuah*, is limited to sworn statements made during the course of judicial proceedings, while the vow, called in Hebrew *neder*, has a much broader application and refers to all types of sworn statements made outside the courtroom. Both are treated at great

length in the *Talmud*, in separate tractates entitled, respectively, *Shevuot* and *Nedarim*.” “Today in courts in most countries, it is common practice to ‘swear in’ all witnesses. Jewish law never adopted this custom, preferring to accept testimony without the administration of an oath, as long as there were at least two witnesses who corroborated each other’s testimony, as well as other supportive evidence. Testimony given under oath was, in fact, considered to be a particularly weak form of evidence, and it was only accepted when there was a complete lack of something better. When the judicial oath was administered, it was only used in civil cases and then not to the witnesses but to the defendant, or less often, to the plaintiff. In capital cases, a judicial oath was never administered, since it was assumed that no one charged

with a capital crime could be believed, even under oath.” ([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#))

How important is a vow in Jewish culture?

“In contrast to the judicial oath, the ‘vow’ has very wide application. It consists of a fully verbalized statement made by an adult (not a minor) that he (or she) takes upon himself a specified obligation (such as giving a definite sum of money to charity) or that he denies to himself the enjoyment of a given object, person or experience (such as eating a particular type of food). If the vow is made voluntarily, without any compulsion from anyone else, it is fully binding, and only with great difficulty can it be declared void.” “Vows were regarded by the rabbis with great seriousness. They attempted to discourage indiscriminate making of vows, for they realized that most people made them without fully realizing the consequences. It is reported in the Talmud that the sage Samuel even declared that ‘he who makes a vow, even though he fulfills it, commits a sin.’ The rabbis tolerated vows only when they were taken in order to get rid of bad habits and encourage one to do good; otherwise they emphasized that one should strive for the desired ends without the aid of vows.” “Because of the strict binding nature of vows, and the great difficulties involved in having them annulled, even today many people have the habit of saying *beli neder* (‘without it being a vow’) whenever they make statements about acts which they plan to undertake in the future.” ([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#))

What are causes and effects of unrighteousness versus goodness?

The Old Testament parallel of sin and poisonous snakes with the Book of Mormon account has lessons for us.

Underlined are some causes for the effect. “And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread. And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died. Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord, and against thee; pray unto the Lord, that he take away the serpents from us. ([Numbers 21 5-7](#)) Ether reveals the cause in his days; “But the people believed not the words of the prophets, but they cast them out; and some of them they cast into pits and left them to perish.” ([Ether 9:29](#)) First, the land was infested by “poisonous serpents,” which “did poison many people.” Next, “flocks began to flee” southward, and the serpents followed the flocks. The serpents then stopped and “hedge[d] up the way” preventing people to pass into the land southward ([Ether 9:31–33](#); and see [Ether 10:19](#)). These events are a natural circumstance. In times of drought, snakes usually migrate into populated areas searching for water or prey. “And there came forth poisonous serpents also upon the face of the land, and did poison many people.” [Ether 9:30](#) The contrast (opposite) are powerful reminders; “And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.” ([Mark 16:17-18](#))

What are some results of rebellion?

Notice that just prior to the destruction of the people, the various Kings and rulers like Shiblom, arrested and killed the prophets. In the days of Ahab, Ethem and Moron even the people rebelled against

the prophets. A parallel to that is in Israel when Jeremiah was imprisoned for speaking against the government. This is also just prior to the destruction of the City of The Lord, Jerusalem. "For then the king of Babylon's army besieged Jerusalem: and Jeremiah the prophet was shut up in the court of the prison, which was in the king of Judah's house. For Zedekiah king of Judah had shut him up, saying, Wherefore dost thou prophesy, and say, Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall take it;" (**Jeremiah 32:2-3**) The contrast in these chapters is that of trusting in the arm of flesh versus trusting faith in the Lord. Today, the modern structure of Judaism is based on keeping commandments rather than on the "spirit" or personal "faith." "The medieval Jewish philosophers gave a great deal of thought to formulating articles of faith and disagreed among themselves as to how many there should be. Some even opposed any such formulation on the grounds that every *mitzvah* [commandment] is an article of faith."

"In post-medieval times, interest in dogmas on the part of Jewish philosophers waned. Moses Mendelssohn rejected belief as a requirement of Judaism and claimed that performance of the *mitzvot* is the sole criterion."

(**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**)

Faith, Works, or both?

Throughout the years, Jews have weaned themselves away from spiritual experiences. One orthodox religious man stopped and listened to me while I was touring a group through the Old City, Jewish Quarter. Presumptuously, he yanked at my microphone and said, "You don't understand the Jews, it's the commandments that count, not the faith." He continued, "Faith is made of feelings and feelings can be changed, but the commandments are fixed." It is simply do's and don'ts." In a recent meeting of Jewish and non-Jewish scholars discussing the "Bible Code," one prominent rabbi said, "There is no Holy Spirit in Judaism anymore!"