Coming Down and Bringing Down: Pejorative Onomastic Allusions to the Jaredites in Helaman 6:25, 6:38, and Ether 2:11

Author(s): Matthew L. Bowen

Abstract: Mormon uses pejorative wordplay on the name Jaredites based on the meaning of the Hebrew verb *yārad*. The onomastic rhetoric involving the meaning of *yārad* first surfaces in Helaman 6 where Mormon also employs wordplay on the name Cain in terms of *qānâ* or "getting gain." The first wordplay occurs in the negative purpose clause "lest they should be a means of bringing down [cf. *lĕhôrîd*] the people unto destruction" (Helaman 6:25) and the second in the prepositional phrase "until they had come down [cf. *yārĕdû/yordû*] to believe in their works" (Helaman 6:38). Mormon uses these pejorative wordplays as a means of emphasizing the genetic link that he sees between Jareditic secret combinations and the derivative Gadianton robbers. Moroni reflects upon his father's earlier use of this type of pejorative wordplay on "Jaredites" and *yārad* when he directly informs latter-day Gentiles regarding the "decrees of God" upon the land of promise "that ye may repent and not continue in your iniquities until the fullness be come, that ye may not bring down [cf. **tôrîdû/hôradtem*] the fullness of the wrath of God upon you as the inhabitants of the land hath hitherto done" (Ether 2:11). All three of these onomastic allusions constitute an urgent and timely warning to latter-day Gentiles living upon the land of promise. They warn the Gentiles against "coming down" to believe in and partake of the works and spoils of secret combinations like the Jaredites and the Nephites did, and thus "bringing down" their own people to destruction and "bringing down" the "fullness of the wrath of God" upon themselves, as the Jaredites and the Nephites both did.

Coming Down and Bringing Down: Pejorative Onomastic Allusions to the Jaredites in Helaman 6:25, 6:38, and Ether 2:11

Matthew L. Bowen

The goal of The Interpreter Foundation is to increase understanding of scripture through careful scholarly investigation and analysis of the insights provided by a wide range of ancillary disciplines, including language, history, archaeology, literature, culture, ethnohistory, art, geography, law, politics, philosophy, etc. Interpreter will also publish articles advocating the authenticity and historicity of LDS scripture and the Restoration, along with scholarly responses to critics of the LDS faith. We hope to illuminate, by study and faith, the eternal spiritual message of the scriptures—that Jesus is the Christ.

Although the Board fully supports the goals and teachings of the Church, The Interpreter Foundation is an independent entity and is neither owned, controlled by nor affiliated with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, or with Brigham Young University. All research and opinions provided are the sole responsibility of their respective authors, and should not be interpreted as the opinions of the Board, nor as official statements of LDS doctrine, belief or practice.

This journal is a weekly publication of the Interpreter Foundation, a non-profit organization located at InterpreterFoundation.org. You can find other articles published in our journal at Journal.InterpreterFoundation.org. You may subscribe to this journal at InterpreterFoundation. org/annual-print-subscription.

Coming Down and Bringing Down: Pejorative Onomastic Allusions to the Jaredites in Helaman 6:25, 6:38, and Ether 2:11

Matthew L. Bowen

_____

Abstract: *Mormon uses pejorative wordplay on the name Jaredites based on the meaning of the Hebrew verb* yārad. *The onomastic rhetoric involving the meaning of* yārad *first surfaces in Helaman 6 where Mormon also employs wordplay on the name Cain in terms of* qānâ *or "getting gain." The first wordplay occurs in the negative purpose clause "lest they should be a means of <u>bringing down</u> [cf.* lĕhôrîd] *the people unto destruction" (Helaman 6:25) and the second in the prepositional phrase "until they had <u>come down</u> [cf.* yārĕdû/yordû] *to believe in their works" (Helaman 6:38). Mormon uses these pejorative wordplays as a means of emphasizing the genetic link that he sees between Jareditic secret combinations and the derivative Gadianton robbers. Moroni reflects upon his father's earlier use of this type of pejorative wordplay on "Jaredites" and* yārad *when he directly informs latter-day Gentiles regarding the "decrees of God" upon the land of promise "that ye may repent and not continue in your iniquities until the fullness be come, that ye may not <u>bring down</u> [cf.* *tôrîdû/hôradtem] *the fullness of the wrath of God upon you as the inhabitants of the land hath hitherto done" (Ether 2:11). All three of these onomastic allusions constitute an urgent and timely warning to latter-day Gentiles living upon the land of promise. They warn the Gentiles against "coming down" to believe in and partake of the works and spoils of secret combinations like the Jaredites and the Nephites did, and thus "bringing down" their own people to destruction and "bringing down" the "fullness of the wrath of God" upon themselves, as the Jaredites and the Nephites both did.*

The Jaredites occupy a conspicuous place within Mormon's (and Moroni's) history. Brant Gardner writes: "Mormon does not blame Nephite woes on Satan — he blames the Jaredites. They were the model from history of how a nation might be utterly destroyed. More than simply being a model for destruction, Mormon asserts that Jaredite history actively affected the Nephites. Mormon carefully links the Jaredite secret combinations to destruction, then links both Jaredites and the destruction of governments to the secret combination he calls the Gaddianton robbers."[1] Gardner sees a genetic relationship between Jaredite secret combinations and the robbers.[2] In other words, the Gaddiantons represented a Jaredite infection of Nephite society.

There are at least two textual peculiarities in Helaman 6:25, 38 (where Mormon details the menace of Gaddianton secret combinations) and one in Ether 2:11 (as part of a warning) that offer striking support for Gardner's theses. Using unique collocations Mormon and Moroni appear to create distinctive onomastic allusions to the Jaredites based on the Hebrew verb *yārad* ("go down" or "come down"; causative "bring down").[3] Whether or not the Book of Mormon name Jared, in terms of etymology, ultimately represents the same name as that of the patriarch Jared (Hebrew *yered* or *yāred*) mentioned as the father of Enoch in Genesis 5:18–20, the Nephites almost certainly understood it as such. Thus, the two aforementioned statements Mormon makes regarding Gaddianton secret combinations and the warning Moroni gives latter-day Gentiles in the context of the Jaredite covenant and Jaredite destruction require a close reexamination.

In this article, I propose that Mormon's statements in Helaman 6 — a block of text in which he also makes distinctive onomastic

---

1. Brant A. Gardner, "Mormon the Writer: Turning History into Story," in *Give Ear to My Words: Text and Context of Alma 36-42* (48th Annual Brigham Young University Sidney B. Sperry Symposium), eds. Kerry M. Hull, Nicholas J. Frederick, and Hank R. Smith (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, 2019), 480-81. I have chosen to use the alternative spelling given to the robbers (Gaddianton) as opposed to the traditional spelling (Gadianton). On the spelling of Gaddianton with the doubled *d* (*–dd–*), see John W. Welch and Kelly Ward, "Thieves and Robbers," July 1985 FARMS Update (reprinted in John W. Welch, ed., *Reexploring the Book of Mormon: A Decade of New Research* [Provo, UT: FARMS, 1992], 249).

2. Brant A. Gardner, *Second Witness: Analytical and Contextual Commentary on the Book of Mormon, Volume 5: Helaman–Third Nephi* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2007), 255.

3. Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden, NDL: Brill, 2001), 434-35. Hereafter cited as *HALOT*.

allusions to Cain in terms of *qānâ*/"get[ting] gain" (Helaman 6:17, 27)[4] — constitute onomastic allusions to the names Jared and Jaredites in terms of the Hebrew verb *yārad* ("come down"; causative "bring down"): "it is these secret oaths and covenants which Alma commanded his son should not go forth unto the world, lest they should be a means of **bringing down** [cf. *lĕhôrîd*] the people unto destruction" (Helaman 6:25; emphasis in all scriptural citations is mine);[5] "[the Gaddiantons] had seduced the more part of the righteous [Nephites] until **they had come down** [cf. *yārĕdû*] to believe in their works and partake of their spoils" (Helaman 6:38). These pejorative allusions to the Jaredites emphasize the genetic relationship between the secret combinations which "brought down" Jaredite civilization to destruction and the "Nephite" secret combinations which did much the same to Nephite civilization.

I further propose that Moroni, reflecting upon and building on the earlier pejorative wordplays of his father in Helaman 6:25 and 6:38, issues an allusive warning to the latter-day Gentiles in the promised land, of whom the Jaredites serve as a stark antetype. Moroni, using onomastic rhetoric similar to that of his father, warns latter-day Gentiles against becoming like the Jaredites: "And this [i.e., the Book of Mormon]

---

4. See Matthew L. Bowen, "Getting Cain and Gain," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 15 (2015): 115-41, https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/getting-cain-and-gain/. Regarding the genesis of Cainitic secret combinations among the Nephites that ultimately destroyed them, Mormon writes, "Yea, they began to seek to **get gain** that they might be lifted up one above another. Therefore they began to commit secret murders and to rob and to plunder that they might **get gain**" (Helaman 6:17). Verses later, Mormon asserts that these "secret oaths and combinations" had their ultimate origin with "that same being who did plot with **Cain** that if he would murder his brother Abel, it should not be known unto the world. And he did plot with **Cain** and his followers from that time forth." Relatedly, Moroni describes the genesis of the Cainitic secret combinations among the Jaredites that destroyed that civilization: "And Akish did administer unto them the oaths which was given by them of old, who also sought power, which had been handed down even from **Cain**, who was a murderer from the beginning. And they were kept up by the power of the devil, to administer these oaths unto the people, to keep them in darkness, to help such as sought power to **gain** power" (Ether 8:15-16); "And whatsoever nation shall uphold such secret combinations to **get** power and **gain**, until they shall spread over the nation, behold, they shall be destroyed" (Ether 8:22). These descriptions directly play on the name Cain which is etiologically tied to the verb *qny*, denoting "get," "acquire," "(pro)create." (See Genesis 4:1; Moses 5:16, 31, 50).

5. Book of Mormon citations herein will generally follow Royal Skousen, ed. *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), https://bookofmormoncentral.org/content/book-mormon-earliest-text.

cometh unto you, O ye Gentiles, that ye may know the decrees of God, that ye may repent, and not continue in your iniquities until the fullness be come, that **ye may not <u>bring down</u>** [cf. **tôrîdû/hôradtem*] the fullness of the wrath of God upon you as the inhabitants of the land hath hitherto done" (Ether 2:11). The Book of Mormon would come forth in a time when the latter-day Gentiles already would be "ripen[ing] in iniquity" (Ether 2:9; cf. also Ether 9:20). When Moroni's onomastic allusion to "Jaredites" is recognized in the context of Mormon's earlier warning, his own ominous warning and accompanying invitation to repent in Ether 2:11 emerge as even more emphatic, urgent, and timely.

The Names Jared and Jaredites and "Descending"

To know with certainty the origin and meaning of the name Jared as a "Jaredite" name, one must more precisely ascertain the origins and language of the Jaredites. Given that Amaleki,[6] Mormon,[7] and Moroni[8] describe the Jaredites as has having come from "the tower" or "the great tower," an Asiatic origin if not an outright Mesopotamian origin seems certain.

If such is the case, the name Jared as attested in the Book of Mormon plausibly represents a hebraized cognate of the Semitic/Akkadian noun *wardu*(*m*) or *warad*, which denotes "slave, servant"[9] (cf. theophoric *warad*-names like Warad-Sin, "Servant of the moon[-god]"), a noun which in turn derives from the Akkadian verb, *warādu*(*m*), "go down," "descend."[10] Akkadian *wardu(m)/warādu(m)* provides a useful analogy for the name Jared in terms of *yered/yārad*, "go down" or "come down"[11] (i.e., "descend"). The Nephites may have understood the name Jared either as "slave/servant [of Deity]" or "as a hypocoristicon meaning God shall/has descended"[12] and the gentilic designation Jaredites as "those who go down" or "bring down" (cf. *yōrĕdîm, môrîd*[*îm*]; see further below).

Mormon fully intended to give an account of the Jaredites, as he mentions near the end of the book of Mosiah: "And this account [i.e., from the plates of Ether] shall be written hereafter; for behold, it is

---

6. See Omni 1:22.

7. Mosiah 28:17; Helaman 6:28.

8. Title page of the Book of Mormon; Ether 1:1-5, 33.

9. Jeremy Black, Andrew George, Nicholas Postgate, eds., *Concise Dictionary of Akkadian* (SANTAG 5; Wiesbaden, DEU: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2000), 434. Hereafter cited as *CDA*.

10. Ibid., 433.

11. *HALOT*, 434-435.

12. Paul Y. Hoskisson, s.v., "Jared," *Book of Mormon Onomasticon*, https://onoma.lib.byu.edu/index.php/JARED.

expedient that all people should know the things which are written in this account" (Mosiah 28:19). Mormon never lived to give that account, but Moroni does give that account in the form of his abridged book of Ether. As David Richins has pointed out,[13] Moroni's version of the Jaredite narrative associates the name Jared in several early scenes with "going down" or "coming down":

> Go to and gather together thy flocks, both male and female, of every kind, and also of the seed of the earth, of every kind, and thy family, and also **Jared** thy brother and his family, and also thy friends and their families, and **the friends of Jared** [*yered* or *yāred*] and their families. And when thou hast done this thou shalt **go** at the head of them **down** [cf. *tered*] into the valley which is northward. (Ether 1:41–42)

> And it came to pass that **Jared** [*yered/yāred*] and his brother and their families, and also the **friends of Jared** and his brother and their families, **went down** [cf. *yārĕdû*] into the valley which was northward — and the name of the valley was Nimrod, being called after the mighty hunter — with their flocks which they had gathered together, male and female, of every kind. (Ether 2:1)

> And it came to pass that **when they** [the Jaredites] **had come down** [cf. *yārĕdû*] into the valley of Nimrod, **the Lord came down** [cf. *yārad*] and talked with the **brother of Jared** [*yered/yāred*]. **And he was in a cloud, and the brother of Jared saw him not**. (Ether 2:4)

As editor Moroni appears to have crafted the narrative to include onomastic wordplay on the name Jared (written in the Hebrew Bible as *yered* or *yāred*), a patriarchal name as noted above,[14] which sounds very similar to the Hebrew verb *yārad* ("descend," "go down"). The people of Jared "come down" into the valley of Nimrod, the appointed place where the Lord "comes down" to "meet" them. Moroni describes the Lord "coming down" or descending in a theophanic cloud and his "talk[ing] with them" in language that recalls the exodus and the wilderness "tent of meeting":

---

13. David Richins, "The Descent of the Jaredites," *The Lunch Is Free* (blog), September 22, 2016, https://thelunchisfree.com/2016/09/22/the-descent-of-the-jaredites/.

14. See Genesis 5:15-16, 18-20; 1 Chronicles 1:2; 4:18.

> And it came to pass, as Moses entered into the tabernacle, the cloudy pillar [ʿammûd heʿānān] **descended** [yērēd], and stood [wĕʿāmad] at the door of the tabernacle, and the Lord talked with Moses. (Exodus 33:9)

> And the Lord **descended** [wayyēred] in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. (Exodus 34:5)

> And the Lord spake suddenly unto Moses, and unto Aaron, and unto Miriam, Come out ye three unto the tabernacle of the congregation [ʾōhel môʿēd]. And they three came out. **And** the Lord **came down** [wayyēred] in the pillar of the cloud [bĕʿammûd ʿānān], and stood [wayyaʿămōd] in the door of the tabernacle, and called Aaron and Miriam: and they both came forth. (Numbers 12:4–5)

Thus, Moroni appears to have intentionally described the Lord's theophanic "condescensions" using language from Exodus and its etiological descriptions of the function of the tent of the meeting.[15] We witness the same phenomenon as the narrative progresses. Moroni records, "And it came to pass at the end of four years that the Lord came again unto the brother of Jared [yered/yāred] and stood in a cloud and talked with him. And for the space of three hours did the Lord talk with the brother of Jared and chastened him because he remembered not to call upon the name of the Lord" (Ether 2:14; see further Ether 4:1; 6:2, 19, 21 which echo the foregoing wordplay on [brother of] Jared/yārad).

Thus, Moroni seems to have made an ongoing narrative effort to associate the name Jared with the Lord's theophanic "condescensions" or "coming[s] down" and the origin of the Jaredites as a people with "coming down" or "going down." One might even go further in surmising that the importance of the name Jared in the foregoing semiotic context offers a plausible explanation for why Moroni consistently opts for the circumlocution "the brother of Jared" over the name Moriancumer (attested only Ether 2:13) in telling his Jaredite narrative. Indeed, this same onomastic principle seems to hold for Mormon's and Moroni's

---

15. See Matthew L. Bowen, "'Where I Will Meet You': The Convergence of Sacred Time and Sacred Space as the Etiological Function of the Tent of Meeting" in *Sacred Time, Sacred Space, and Sacred Meaning Temple: Proceedings of the Third Interpreter Foundation Matthew B. Brown Memorial Conference, The Temple on Mount Zion, 5 November 2016,* ed. Stephen D. Ricks and Jeffrey M. Bradshaw (Orem, UT: The Interpreter Foundation; Salt Lake City: Eborn Books, 2020), 1–42.

respective uses of the term "Jaredites" in Moroni 9:23 and "people of Jared" on the title page of the Book of Mormon and in Moroni 1:1.[16] The term "Jaredites" itself suggests the notion of *yōrĕdîm* "those who go down" (and eventually "go down to destruction"). In other words, the name "Jaredites" or "people of Jared" tells their story.

"A Means of Bringing Down the People unto Destruction" (Helaman 6:25)

In Helaman 6, Mormon identifies the Jaredite secret combinations — which Alma warned his son Helaman against disclosing to the public (Alma 37:27–29, 32) — with the Gaddianton robbers: "Now behold, it is these secret oaths and covenants which Alma commanded his son should not go forth unto the world, lest they should be a means of **bringing down** [cf. *lĕhôrîd*] the people unto **destruction** [cf. *ʾăbaddôn*]" (Helaman 6:25).

Several things about Mormon's statement require commentary here. First, Mormon uses calculated, name-driven language to link the Gaddianton problem to the Jaredites, forcing the audience to see the genetic relationship between the two. He partially achieves this through an allusive wordplay on Jaredites in terms of the causative verbal form of the root *yārad*, perhaps an infinitival form like *lĕhôrîd* or a functional equivalent.

The causative form of the verb *yārad* constitutes the key term in several Hebrew idioms that describe persons being "brought down" to the spirit world, of which "destruction" serves as one description. The accession narrative of Solomon in the Deuteronomistic History contains a pair of examples useful in understanding Mormon's collocation in Helaman 6:25. 1 Kings 1 presents an aging David as something of a dotard, behind whose back Nathan and Bathsheba orchestrate the transfer of the succession of the throne from the expectant Adonijah to Bathsheba's son, Solomon. 1 Kings 2, however, presents David with

---

16. As part of a letter to his son Moroni, Mormon writes: "And if they [the Nephites] perish, it will be like unto the Jaredites, because of the willfulness of their hearts, seeking for blood and revenge" (Moroni 9:23). Moroni uses the collocation "people of Jared" on the title page of the Book of Mormon ("an abridgment taken from the book of Ether also, which is a record of the people of Jared, which were scattered at the time the Lord confounded the language of the people") and Moroni 1:1 ("Now I Moroni after having made an end of abridging the account of the people of Jared..."). Latent in this collocation is the notion of "the people" who "went down" (ultimately to destruction).

a revived lucidity ordering the elimination of political enemies as revenge and as insurance against potential threats against Solomon's throne.

First, David orders the killing of Joab, his top military commander and longtime devoted servant, with the words: "Do therefore according to thy wisdom, and let not his hoar head [i.e., his grey hair] **go down** [*wĕlōʾ-tôrēd*] to the grave [*šĕʾôl*] in peace" (1 Kings 2:6). David then orders the killing of Shimei, the son of Gera from the tribe of Benjamin (the tribe of Saul, David's predecessor) with the words: "Now therefore hold him not guiltless: for thou art a wise man, and knowest what thou oughtest to do unto him; but his hoar head **bring thou down** [*wĕhôradtā*] to the grave [*šĕʾôl*, Sheol] with blood" (1 Kings 2:9).

Regarding the chilling scene of killings that follow, Walter Brueggemann writes: "Solomon's ascent to power is orchestrated by a series of killings that parallel the violent choreography of *The Godfather*."[17] This episode, with its Mafia-style executions, thus constitutes a fitting illustration of Mormon's use of the collocation "bringing down the people to destruction" with the verb *yārad* (*lĕhôrîd*) as a description of the deeds of the Gaddiantons and their Jaredite origin.

The term rendered "destruction" in translation, as Mormon uses it, also represents more than the reader initially may realize. As a semantic "matching"[18] (or so-called "parallelistic") term to Hebrew Sheol (*šĕʾôl*) is Abbadon (the "place of destruction, underworld"),[19] usually translated "destruction." A few examples will suffice: "Hell [Sheol, *šĕʾôl*] and destruction [Abbadon, *ʾăbaddôn*] are before the Lord: how much more then the hearts of the children of men?" (Proverbs 15:11); "Hell [Sheol, *šĕʾôl*] and destruction [Abbadon; Ketiv: *ʾăbaddô*, Qere: *ʾăbaddôn*] are never full; so the eyes of man are never satisfied" (Proverbs 27:20); "Hell [*šĕʾôl*, Sheol] *is* naked before him, and destruction [Abbadon, *ʾăbaddôn*] hath no covering" (Job 26:60). Psalm 30:3, 9 [MT 4, 10] attests similar *yārad*-based idioms involving the Hebrew nouns *bôr* ("cistern," "pitfall," "world of the dead") and *šaḥat* ("pit, grave")[20] which constitute additional euphemisms or synonyms[21] for the "underworld" (i.e., the spirit world): "O Lord, thou hast brought up my soul from the grave [Sheol, *šĕʾôl*]: thou

---

17. Walter Brueggemann, *Great Prayers of the Old Testament* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2008), 48.

18. Michael P. O'Connor, *Hebrew Verse Structure* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1997), 87-109.

19. *HALOT*, 3.

20. *HALOT*, 1473.

21. See, e.g., Paul R. Williamson, *Death and Afterlife: Biblical Perspectives on the Ultimate Questions* (Downers Grove, IL: Apollos, 2018), 41.

hast kept me alive, that I should not go down [Ketiv: *miyyôrdî*; Qere: *miyyordî*, literally, from my going down] to the pit [the world of the dead, *bôr*]"; "What profit *is there* in my blood, when I go down [*bĕridtî*] to the pit [*šāḥat*]?" Additional examples could be multiplied here.

In the verses that follow his *yārad (lĕhôrîd)*-wordplay in verse 25, Mormon carefully alibis Alma the Younger, whose instructions to Helaman regarding the Gaddianton oaths Mormon had earlier been included in Alma 37:27–32, from any culpability in the Gaddianton problem (see Helaman 6:26). This he does while maintaining the genetic link to Cainitic and Jareditic secret combinations (see Helaman 6:27–28). When Mormon subsequently asserts that Satan "put[s] it in the heart of Gaddianton to still carry on the work of darkness, and of secret murder" he uses the language of continuity: Gaddianton "still carr[ied] on" what he had acquired from Jaredite sources — the same Jaredites who had earlier in their turn, carried the works of darkness from records that harked back to Cain and his followers. In other words, Mormon sees Cainitic, Jareditic, and Nephite secret combinations on a kind of continuum.

"They Had Come Down to Believe in Their Works"

Mormon's second wordplay on "Jaredites" is even more transparent than the first. In an effort to describe the severe worsening of the Gaddianton problem, Mormon contrasts the approach of the Lamanites to that of the Nephites (see especially Helaman 6:20, 37–40). The Lamanites of that period knew the truth articulated by Mormon in Alma 31:5 ("the preaching of the word … had had more powerful effect upon the minds of the people than the sword, or anything else, which had happened unto them"); the Nephites did not:

> And it came to pass that the Lamanites did hunt the band of robbers of Gaddianton. And they did preach the word of God among the more wicked part of them, insomuch that this band of robbers was utterly destroyed from among the Lamanites. And it came to pass, on the other hand, that the Nephites did build them up and support them, beginning at the more wicked part of them, until they had overspread all the land of the Nephites and had seduced the more part of the righteous until **they had come down** [*yārĕdû* or *yordû*] **to believe in their works and partake of their spoils** and to join with them in their secret murders and combinations. (Helaman 6:37–38)

The diction and wordplay in terms of *yārad* here are deliberate: in "coming down" to believe in Gaddianton the Nephites "had come down" to become just like the Jaredites — those who "go down" — the source of the Gaddianton problem. For a second time in the same text in which he uses wordplay on Cain to emphasize the antiquity of the origin of secret combinations generally,[22] he employs an onomastic wordplay that points to the Jaredites in order to emphasize the genetic relationship between Jaredite secret combinations and Nephite secret combinations. Mormon emphasizes the horror of the Nephite moral condition: the Nephites were becoming Jaredites and all that such portended for the future.

"That Ye May Not Bring Down the Fullness of the Wrath of God Upon You"

All of the foregoing prepares us to return to Moroni's account of the Jaredites and the scenes in Ether 1–2 in which he associates Jaredite origins with "going down" (*yārad*). In Ether 2:8–12, Moroni suddenly breaks off his narrative of the Jaredite migration to describe the Lord's oath to the brother of Jared and the penalty for the violation of that oath. Moroni summarizes the oath thus: "that whoso should possess this land of promise, from that time henceforth and forever, should serve him, the true and only God, or they should be swept off when the fullness of his wrath should come upon them" (Ether 2:8). Moroni draws the conclusion "we can behold the decrees of God concerning this land" (Ether 2:9) fully evident in the destruction of two nations: the Jaredites, whose story he is telling, and the Nephites, whose demise he has personally witnessed. Cainitic secret combinations of the Jaredite strain destroyed both the Jaredites and the Nephites. This suggests that Moroni's diction is anything but happenstantial:

> And this cometh unto you, O ye Gentiles, that ye may know the decrees of God, that ye may repent and not continue in your iniquities until the fullness be come, **that ye may not bring down** [cf. **tôrîdû/hôradtem*] **the fullness of the wrath of God upon you as the inhabitants of the land hath hitherto done**. (Ether 2:11)

Moroni reflects on his father's statements in Helaman 6:25 ("it is these secret oaths and covenants which Alma commanded his son should not go forth unto the world lest they should be a means of bringing down the people unto destruction") and 6:38 ("[the Gaddiantons] had seduced

---

22. Bowen, "Getting Cain and Gain," 127-28.

the more part of the righteous [Nephites] until they had come down to believe in their works and partake of their spoils") in his use of the collocation "that ye may not bring down the fullness of the wrath of God upon you." The Nephites had, in essence, become "Jaredites" (i.e., pejoratively "those who go down" to destruction) by "com[ing] down to believe in" what amounted to "Jaredite" works and "bring[ing] down" their own "people unto destruction."[23]

Mormon and Moroni saw the latter-day Gentiles in the land of promise as the potential third in a sequence of annihilations: Jaredites (ancient Gentiles), Nephites (Israelites), and latter-day Gentiles. All of this helps us better appreciate Moroni's plaintive warning and plea at the end of Ether 8 following his description of the formation of secret combinations among the Jaredites:

> And now I Moroni do not write the manner of their oaths and combinations, for it hath been made known unto me that they are had among all people; and they are had among the Lamanites. And they have caused the destruction of this people of which I am now speaking, and also the destruction of the people of Nephi. **And whatsoever nation shall uphold such secret combinations, to <u>get</u> power and <u>gain</u>** [cf. Cain/*qayin* and *qānâ*, Ether 8:15–16], **until they shall spread over the nation, behold, they shall be destroyed**; for the Lord will not suffer that the blood of his saints which shall be shed by them shall always cry unto him from the ground for vengeance upon them and yet he avenge them not. **Wherefore, O ye Gentiles, it is wisdom in God that these things should be shewn unto you, that thereby ye may repent of your sins and suffer not that these murderous combinations shall get above you, which are built up to <u>get</u> power and <u>gain</u>**, and the work — yea, even the work of destruction — come upon you; yea, even the sword of the justice of the Eternal God shall fall upon you, to your overthrow and destruction, if ye shall suffer these things to be. Wherefore the Lord commandeth you, when ye shall see these things come among you, that **ye shall awake to a sense of your awful situation because of this secret combination which shall be among you**; for woe be unto it because of the

---

23. The wordplay on Jared/Jaredites raises questions for future study about the figure of Korihor, the antichrist with a Jaredite name (see "Corihor" as attested in Ether 7:3-4, 7, 9, 13-15, 13:17, 14:27-28), whom Alma characterizes as "the means of bringing many souls down to destruction" (Alma 30:47).

blood of them who have been slain, for they cry from the dust for vengeance upon it, and also upon those who built it up. 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**, for it is built up by the devil, which is the father of all lies, even that same liar which beguiled our first parents, yea, even that same liar which hath caused man to commit murder from the beginning, which hath hardened the hearts of men that they have murdered the prophets and stoned them and cast them out from the beginning. Wherefore I Moroni am commanded to write these things, that evil may be done away, and that the time may come that Satan may have no power upon the hearts of the children of men, but that they may be persuaded to do good continually, that they may come unto the fountain of all righteousness and be saved. (Ether 8:20–26)

Conclusion: A Warning to the Latter-day Gentiles on the Land of Promise

Mormon uses wordplay on "Jaredites" based on Hebrew *yārad* in the negative purpose clause "lest they [the secret combinations' oaths and covenants] should be a means of **bringing down** [cf. *lĕhôrîd*] the people unto destruction" (Helaman 6:25) and in prepositional phrase "until **they had come down** [cf. *yārĕdû/yordû*] to believe in their works" (Helaman 6:38). He does so as a means of accentuating the genetic relationship between Jareditic secret combinations and the Gaddianton robbers. Moroni reflects upon his father's use of this type of pejorative wordplay on "Jaredites" in terms of *yārad* when he directly addresses latter-day Gentiles against adopting Jareditic secret combinations as the Nephites had done, so "that ye may repent, and not continue in your iniquities until the fullness be come, **that ye may not bring down** [cf. **tôrîdû/hôradtem*] **the fullness of the wrath of God upon you as the inhabitants of the land hath hitherto done**" (Ether 2:11).

The use of all three pejorative, *yārad*-based wordplays on Jared/Jaredites serve as a pointed warning to latter-day Gentiles who would occupy new world lands of promise in the latter-day. Cainitic and Jareditic secret combinations destroyed both an Israelite nation (the Nephites) and a gentile nation (the Jaredites). The Jaredites not only served as Mormon's (and Moroni's) model for how an entire nation might destroy itself but also as a prototype for all Gentiles in the land of promise, especially those

who would occupy it in the latter-days (see, e.g., the Lord's promise to the brother of Jared: "there shall be none greater than the nation which I will raise up unto me of thy seed upon all the face of the earth," Ether 1:43). At the present moment, latter-day Gentiles on the land of promise continue to "ripen in iniquity" (cf. Ether 2:9; 9:20) and thus stand in real danger of becoming "Jaredites" — i.e., *yōrĕdîm* — or "those who go down" to destruction and "bring down" destruction upon themselves through secret combinations like the Jaredites did and the Nephites who embraced the secret combinations of their Jaredite predecessors.

Matthew L. Bowen *was raised in Orem, Utah, and graduated from Brigham Young University. He holds a PhD in Biblical Studies from the Catholic University of America in Washington, DC, and is currently an associate professor in religious education at Brigham Young University-Hawaii. He is also the author of* Name as Key-Word: Collected Essays on Onomastic Wordplay and The Temple in Mormon Scripture *(Salt Lake City: Interpreter Foundation and Eborn Books, 2018). He and his wife (the former Suzanne Blattberg) are the parents of three children: Zachariah, Nathan, and Adele.*