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## Parentage of Ancient American Art and Religion

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**Abstract:** This series discusses the Babylonian and Israelite people who established Book of Mormon civilizations. Brookbank suggests that the Jaredites were Semites. The ancient ruins left in America have distinct Babylonian and Assyrian influence. The Nephite-Israelite people of the Book of Mormon have also left their mark upon civilization. The first part discusses rectangular structures, raised platforms, and hallways.

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*“Think how much we have to be thankful for. Few appreciate the number of every-day blessings; we look on them as trifles, we forget them because they are always with us.”—SIR J. LUBBOCK.*

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PARENTAGE OF ANCIENT AMERICAN ART AND  
RELIGION.

THE Book of Mormon claims, in substance, that the land of America was colonized in quite early times, on more than one occasion. Once by a company of immigrants whose original home was Babylonia, and who left there when the Lord dispersed the people of that region abroad throughout the whole earth. This occurred about 2225 B.C., according to the commonly accepted chronology. The descendants of these Babylonians occupied that country until about 600 B.C. when they were all destroyed because of their wickedness. At this same time, speaking in general terms, two Jewish colonies, leaving Jerusalem, set out for the Western Continent, known to them as the “land of promise” or of refuge, and arriving safely, soon developed into flourishing communities. One of the later colonies came by the way of the Red Sea and the Pacific Ocean—the other crossed the Atlantic. These different colonizers—one company Babylonian, the other Israelitish—attained a high state of civilization, and cultivated many of the arts that appertain to such a condition of life. It is not stated in the Book of Mormon that the Babylonian immigrants were descendants of Shem, but the frequent use of Semitic names in the Jaredite records compel the inference that they were. The propositions, then, which we shall attempt to substantiate in these remarks, are:

(1.) The Jaredites were Semites, in great probability, and could have come to this country (America) already far advanced in civilization and associated arts.

(2.) The ancient ruins in America are distinctly Babylonian and Assyriatic in plan and ornamentation.

(3.) The Israelites have left there easily read memorials of their occupancy of that land in ancient times. These are the general propositions that will occupy our attention in subsequent remarks, though additional matters may be considered before closing.

The Book of Mormon makes no mention of Assyria or of its people, while the reader's attention will often hereafter be directed to Assyrian architecture when comparisons are instituted between Babylonian arts and those of the ancient Americans; and hence some further preliminary remarks are necessary; for the question naturally arises as to the grounds upon which this course can be taken consistently.

Answering, the fact is recalled that the Babylonians used bricks very largely in their building operations, while the Assyrians turned to stone as the most convenient material; and, because of the consequent difference in durability, the Babylonian structures are now generally little more than heaps of debris, while those of the Assyrians are far better preserved, and good examples of their works have been exhumed—far better as a rule than what is found among the Babylonian remains. This fact would not, however, justify some of our future comparisons did we not know that the Assyrians were largely mere imitators of the Babylonians architecturally and generally. Accordingly it transpires that when we view specimens of the arts of the former, we get a fair idea of what those of the latter were also.

Coming now to the consideration of the first of the propositions already formulated, some grounds for claiming a Semitic descent for the Jaredites, and showing at the same time the source of their civilization, will be submitted.

We are informed by some authorities that the primitive inhabitants of Babylonia belonged to the Ural-Altaic family, and that the first monarchs whose monumental records we possess had their seats at Ur on the right bank of the Euphrates. The first of these propositions is not favorable to our case, but starting with it, it is observed that the near-by neighbors of these people on the south-west were descendents of Shem; and an intermixture of population by marriage or otherwise, under primitive conditions of society, was quite natural, and hence it is that we have "clear evidence that Semitic was spoken in Ur itself at this remote epoch. Although the ruling caste was Accadian and generally wrote their inscriptions in that language, Dungi, one of their earliest monarchs, in spite of his Turanian name, has left us a short inscription in Semitic. Further, in 2280 B.C.—the date is fixed by an inscription of Assur-bani-pal's—Cudur Nankhundi, the Elamite, conquered Chaldea at a time when princes with Semitic names appear to have been reigning there.

With these people, the Chaldeans, Josephus claims a relationship

for the Israelites, saying that their first leaders and ancestors were derived from them, and they do make mention of us Jews in their records because of the kindred there is between us.

The Babylonians and the Chaldeans having practically occupied the same territory, are sometimes regarded as one and the same people, and the Babylonians who were "the Chaldeans of the ancient Hebrew prophets, were a mixed race in which the dominant element was Semitic. They were distinguished for their intellectual ability, their high civilization and martial spirit."

It is stated, further, that the Babylonian records reach back to 3000 B.C., and the earliest of them reveal the existence in Babylonia of a Semitic element, which increased until both Babylonia and Assyria were practically Semitic.

The *International Cyclopaedia* says that it is now generally admitted that the Assyrians were of the Semitic race, and Ridpath says they were "certainly" descendants of Shem.

Thus according to the most reliable history of those early nations among whom post-diluvian civilization is known to have had its first seat; and where architectural art was developed to a degree that astonishes the modern world by the magnitude and the magnificence of its palaces, temples and towers, we find everywhere present a Semitic element occupying, undoubtedly, the position either of students or of masters in the schools of art and culture from which Grecian civilization sprung; "for to Babylonia, far more than to Egypt, we owe the art and learning of the Greeks. It was from the East, not from Egypt that Greece derived her architecture, her sculpture, her science, her philosophy—in a word—her intellectual life." So says Johnson's *New Universal Cyclopaedia*.

A race which occupied such an exalted position so early in its history, could not fail to have a fitting reflex of some of its superb mental qualities, and art accomplishments manifested in its American representatives.

Treating on the early periods of Chaldean nationality, McCabe, in his *History of the World*, says that as early as the era of Nimrod, Babylon, Erech or Orchoe, Accad, Calnah, and Ur were flourishing cities. Writing was in use; the art of cutting and polishing gems was practiced; cloths and fabrics of a delicate texture were manufactured; land and sea commerce with neighboring nations flourished; the art of working in metals was known, and astronomy was cultivated, etc. In that land and among that people, a dominating influence, as we have already seen, was soon attained by the Semites, if, indeed, it was not held by them from the very beginning.

Remarks on these points have been extended in order to make evident beyond the power of successful denial, that the use of Hebraic names in the Jaredite records is perfectly consistent with known facts of history.

The Jaredite colonists were Babylonians, and there is no really tenable ground for the view that they could not have been unmixed descendants of Shem; and the names by which they are known in history completes the evidence which shows that that patriarch was their lineal ancestor.

It is desirable also to set in clear light the fact that since they emigrated from a country where the arts and sciences were far advanced, and where a civilization of a high order flourished, it is not at all necessary, as some claim, to assign a period of ten thousand years, nor the half of it, nor, indeed, more than a small fraction of it, for the Jaredites to attain a high state of civilization with which the Book of Mormon accredits them.

Passing now to the consideration of similarities that exist between the ancient American architecture and architectural ornamentation, and the same kind of Eastern work, we find many peculiar features possessed by them in common, and among these your attention is requested to the following particulars.

#### 1. RECTANGULAR STRUCTURES GENERALLY.

From all accounts at hand which refer in any manner to the general plan of the cities and buildings of the Chaldeans, Babylonians and the Assyrians, it is perceived that those people were thoroughly imbued with the notion that right angles should prevail in them almost exclusively.

The plan of the early Chaldean cities was rectangular. The walls that enclosed the city of Babylon were square, and all its streets crossed each other at right angles. The base of the temple of Belus was likewise a square, and the interior of the Babylonian and the Assyrian palaces was partitioned off into rooms, halls, and corridors, in accordance with rectangular forms, and the enclosed courts were also of the right angled pattern.

Remarks on this point, as it affects the people in question, are concluded with the following quotation from the *American Encyclopedia Britannica*. (Architecture.) "The plans of all the Assyrian buildings are rectangular, and we know that long ago, as now, the eastern architects used this outline almost invariably, and upon it reared some of the most lovely and varied forms ever devised." Their towers, too, it may be added, rose from square bases, and even circular structures when built, from rectangular foundations in some examples.

The ancient remains in America disclose the fact that the same plan was a distinguishing characteristic of the earliest known architecture in this country. The Mound Builders usually built square or rectangular edifices, as the remains of their structures make manifest. (*Ancient America*, Baldwin, page 17.)

The plans, also, of the royal palaces at Palenque and elsewhere, according to Stephens, are rectangular from terraces, courts and outside walls, to the rooms, halls and corridors within. The tem-

ple foundations, and the temples themselves are right angled, and the obelisks, the altars, and the inscribed slabs are cut almost without exception to the same pattern. The few variations that do occur only prove the rule. In Peru the remains show that the right angled principle in architecture prevailed also in that country, and thus it appears to have been about universally observed in America anciently. Occasional deviations are known to occur, but as the Assyrians at times erected structures that took the form of an octagon or a circle, the octagonal and circular works or edifices sometimes built by the ancient people of this land, are strictly in accord with the evidence required to sustain the proposition now before us.

## 2. RAISED PLATFORMS FOR THE FOUNDATIONS OF ROYAL RESIDENCES.

The palaces of Babylonia, like those of Assyria, so Ridpath and other historians say, were built on artificially raised mounds. These were often square in form, constructed of substantial masonry wholly, or in part, at least, and were carried to a height of fifty or sixty feet above the general surface.

The Assyrian palaces were "uniformly" erected on foundations of this character, but the square plan was not always preferred, Sargon's royal residence, for example, rising from a mound that took the form of an enormous capital T, which is a combination of rectangular forms. The mounds, or foundations, were terraced and generally two or three terraces composed a foundation. The ascent from the surface to the top of the first terrace, and thence from terrace to terrace was made by "broad flights of steps."

The charm of terraced architecture so captivated royalty in Babylonia, that generations after it had been first introduced in that country, Nebuchadnezzar built the famous "hanging gardens" on the terraced plan—a point that manifests the tenacity with which the ruling classes clung to the early notion of what was the proper design for royalty to execute in Babylonia architecturally, and doubtless, too, to distinguish it from that which was foreign.

It is not necessary to cite examples to make evident the fact that the building of artificial, terraced foundations for palaces was known and almost universally followed by the ancient Americans. There are a few exceptions—one where a palace was built on the natural surface without a mound foundation, but so deeply were the minds of the builders impressed with the notion that such a structure should have a mound foundation, that the earth was excavated from around it, in order to give the building the appearance of being built on a mound.

The examples just cited show what an equally irradicable hold the terraced foundation plan for palace sites had on the Babylonian and the ancient American mind. In Peru, however, the great buildings were not erected on such platforms, but the plan of an

immense tower at Cuelap in that country, is evidence that such designs were not unknown even there, and the remains of a terrace and a mound have also been found.

The ruins in various places show that the palace mounds in this country were, like those in Babylonia, built substantially, and carried to a corresponding height. The terraces are right angled, and are also ascended by "broad flights of steps." Indeed, from the descriptions, it seems that the American terraces are such accurate duplications of the Babylonian, that the builders of the former might have constructed the latter without causing any native Babylonian to suspect that the work had been done by foreigners.

### (3) LONG, NARROW HALLS AND CORRIDORS.

In view of certain facts which are now to be submitted, it is not necessary to suggest that the American architecture and the Assyrian were doubtless derived in plan from one and the same source. The feature in view is so unique, that the *American Encyclopedia Britannica* was constrained to say of the Assyrian halls, in whose dimensions examples are displayed, that "in their proportions they are utterly unlike Egyptian structures, and they display the striking peculiarity of being elongated beyond anything known in other styles of architecture." For example, a hall at Kouyunjik is one hundred and twenty-two feet long, but only twenty-seven feet wide. Another is two hundred and eighteen feet by twenty-five feet, and two parallel halls at Nimroud are each one hundred and sixty-two feet by twenty-five feet. From the same work we learn that the "chambers of the Assyrian palaces have generally a length disproportioned to their width." How far back in the history of the people of the Babylonian regions one would have to go in order to find the beginning of this peculiar style in architecture, is not known; but Ridpath tells us that the compartments of the Chaldean houses were generally long and narrow, and it is in that day that authentic, secular history begins.

This same unique, architectural characteristic was observed largely by the palace builders in ancient America. In the best preserved building at Chichen-Itza, Yucatan, the front apartments are forty-seven feet long, but only nine feet wide. The "Casa del Gobernador" at Uxmal contains two principal rooms which are sixty feet long, and from eleven to thirteen feet wide. The plan that Stephens gives of the palace at Palenque shows the same feature of disproportion in most of its halls and rooms.

(To be continued.)

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IN every part and corner of our life, to lose oneself is to be gainer; to forget oneself is to be happy.—R. L. STEVENSON.