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## There Were Jaredites, Part IV: Epic Milieu in the Old Testament

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**Abstract:** This wide-ranging series discusses the “epic milieu” of the second millennium B.C. and places the Jaredites in their historical context alongside the Babylonians, Egyptians, early Greeks and others. It makes a comparison between the Book of Ether and ancient writings of Babylon, Egypt, Sumer, and others. The description of the Jaredite boats seem to resemble the boat of Ut-Napitshtim who was the Sumerian counter-part of Noah. Old Jewish and even older Indian sources record the use of shining stones that protect the owner beneath the water. These have been traced back to Babylonian tales of the deluge. Since the Jaredite record reports that their boats were patterned after Noah’s ark, ancient myths that surely have their foundation in real events help to provide greater understanding of the book of Ether. The book of Ether meets all the criteria of epic traditions of heroic societies. The remains of heroic societies are difficult to identify. The fourth part discusses the "epic milieu" of the Old Testament and the Jaredites.

HAVING CONSIDERED Egypt and Mesopotamia, the friends moved by inexorable degrees into the epic worlds of Ugarit and the Hurrians, the Hittites, the Phoenicians, the Greeks, the Persians, the Romans, the Celts, the Germans and Scandinavians, the Slavs, and the heroic cultures of the late Middle Ages, which take their cue from the Arabs and Persians, from whom also come the heroic traditions of modern nations. In some of these areas Professor F. and his friend Blank had the advantage of Schwulst himself, and insisted on prolonging the discussions to such lengths that it is impossible to follow them here. Although we must pass by many heroic epics and ages for want of space to do them justice, some of the newer finds are so significant for the study of the book of Ether that we must give them at least a passing glance on our way back to the Jaredites.

First of all, there is a surprising new development involving the patriarchs of the Old Testament. Recent studies on Abraham have emphasized that great patriarch's dual role as a chief of wandering nomads on the one hand and a highly educated representative of the great and sophisticated civilizations of Babylonia and Egypt on the other. The discovery that Abraham lived in a house as well as a tent came as a great surprise in the 1930's: "We had been accustomed to think of Abraham as a simple dweller in tents," writes Sir Leonard Woolley, "and find him a possible occupant of a sophisticated brick house in a city."<sup>1</sup> This is a reminder that the tent life and city life, far from being mutually exclusive, normally go together in heroic ages. And to follow Cyrus Gordon, Abraham's age was certainly a heroic one.

"Abraham was of Mesopotamian origin," writes Gordon, "and his son and grandson married girls from their kin in Mitanni. At the same time, Egyptian blood was in the Patriarchal household. . . . The Patriarchal Hebrews enjoyed the ideal spot and the ideal time to fall heir to the rich and varied heritage of the ancient Near East; when Egypt and Babylon were nearly spent, the pastoral and seminomadic purity of Patriarchal life saved the Hebrews from the decadence of that cosmopolitan age."<sup>2</sup> The age in question, according to Gordon, was

# There Were Jaredites

by Dr. Hugh Nibley

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the Amarna period, "the pivotal era of the ancient Near East. In it were blended the civilizations of Mesopotamia, Anatolia, Canaan, Caphtor and Egypt."<sup>3</sup> He thus places Abraham a full six hundred years later than conventional scholarship dates him. But the earlier period, *circa* 2000 B.C., was also a typical heroic age like the Amarna period, a time when the whole ancient world was overrun by great mixed hordes under the leadership of chieftains who drove horse-drawn chariots, had formidable new weapons, and bore Aryan, that is Indo-European, names. Both ages were typical migration times, times of world upheaval and collapse of great civilizations. A scholar who places Abraham in the earlier period tells us that his father Terah belonged to "a motley and mobile population," moving among the cities of Mesopotamia," and asserts that "it would not be surprising to discover at Mari (a city in northern Mesopotamia) a record of Terah's request of Zimrilim for permission to pass through his territories!"<sup>4</sup>

"Motley" societies, we should note, are not the product of long evolution or stable conditions. Such are only the result of the throwing together of enforced migrants in a time of crisis. The hosts that conquered and occupied both Egypt and Mesopotamia in the early second millennium, and the People of the Sea and their relatives who struck again in the fourteenth century B.C., were such mixed hordes. Abraham has close family ties with the great contemporary "heroic" civilization of the Hurrians, but what puts the genuine heroic stamp on his doings, according to Gordon, is first of all the authentic saga character of the patriarchal biblical narrative. Certain things in those narratives, such as romantic marriage and contests between brothers, are found only in heroic literature and heroic ages. "Just as the social institutions of the narratives are

paralleled in Nuzu, the literary motifs of the narratives are paralleled often and plainly enough in the legends of Ugarit."<sup>5</sup> Now the Nuzu texts referred to have a Hurrian background, while the Ugaritic texts, though ritual and liturgical in nature, are full of genuine epic material.

Thus in the Ugaritic story of Baal we find that hero passionately declaring: "Whether king or commoner be invested with sovereignty over the land, Respects I will not send to the God Mot, nor greetings to Il's beloved, the hero!"<sup>6</sup> This is the old story of the great lord who refuses to pay respects to another great lord lest it look like submission. Meanwhile the position of his bitter rival Mot is clear. "He meditates in his inwards: 'I alone am he who will rule over the gods, Yea, command gods and men, even dominate the multitudes of the earth.'"<sup>7</sup> This statement followed a vain attempt to seize Baal's throne of dominion on the cedar mountain. In threatening terms the world is told to submit to Mot: "at the feet of Mot bow and fall, prostrate yourselves and honor him!" He has a magnificent golden throne made for him and a golden bowl, objects which from their description are like those which have been unearthed at Tepe Gawra, according to our editor, and go back to the middle of the fourth millennium B.C., which may be almost in Jaredite times.<sup>8</sup> Next there is a penalty mentioned against the hero who smote "Lotan, the writhing serpent, Didst destroy the crooked serpent the accursed one of seven heads."<sup>9</sup> Again this puts us in mind of the many archaic Mesopotamian seals depicting the hero fighting with a flaming serpent. What is the origin of the Hydra, the seven-headed serpent, whose heads only multiply as fast as they are cut off? The only thing to suggest it in actual experience is the attempt to cut down pestiferous creatures that have one hopelessly outnumbered. It seemed to the pio-



Old Testament patriarch Abraham belonged to an heroic age, and was a highly educated representative of the great civilizations of Babylonia and Egypt.

neers that every cricket killed only made way for seven more. Whenever one looks in the early epics there is the same clear and vivid memory of a great plague of serpents, of which the book of Ether gives us the fullest and best description.

Next our Baal epic reports a great assembly of the gods on *Hmry*, which Gordon identifies with Mt. Hermon.<sup>10</sup> This assembly is often mentioned in the Jewish apocryphal writings as the assembly of the Fallen Ones that took place on Mt. Hermon after the flood. There we are told they founded a world-order which was in imitation and opposition to God's order, but which succeeded in oppressing the human race by its false authority.<sup>11</sup> These apocryphal writings have always been thought to be mere fantasies, the medieval inventions of overwrought oriental imaginations,

but the Ras Shamra fragments now vindicate their antiquity. In the end, according to the latter, "all the gods finally go and submit to Mot who is the Devil, in the city of Mt. Hermon (*Hmry*), while Aliyan Baal also submits to the haughty and glorious Mot."<sup>12</sup> This submission is by messenger, as in the other heroic tales we have considered.

In the light of these newly found epic texts, our whole idea of Hebrew beginnings must be changed. "The magnificent structure of Old Testament higher criticisms is not to be brushed aside," writes Gordon, "but its individual results can no longer be accepted unless they square with the Hebrew text as we can now understand it in the light of parallel literatures from the pagan forerunners and contemporaries of the Hebrews, in Bible lands."<sup>13</sup> If men have missed

the point of Ether entirely, so have they missed the point of the patriarchal narratives of the Bible. Both sources now take us back to the same heroic world.

Of particular interest to students of the Jaredites and the epic milieu is the very recently discovered Phoenician inscription of Karatepe, dated variously between 800 and 725 B. C. The inscription was ordered by King Azitawaddu, who behaves "after the manner of the Assyrians," though his people are the Dananians. "I restored the Dananians," he boasts. "I extended the land of the Plain of Adana from the rising of the sun unto its setting. . . . I established peace with every King . . . and I builded fortresses in all the remotest borders, in the places in which there were lawless fellows, chiefs of robber bands, none of whom had been submissive to the house of Mushpi." It is the old familiar story, including the classification of all who refuse submission to Shiz or Coriantumr as outlaws:

I, Azitawaddu, placed them beneath my feet (i.e., the robber bands), and I built fortresses in those places so that the Dananians might inhabit them . . . and I humbled mighty lands in the west. . . . I brought them down; I settled them at my extreme borders in the east."

He sets up a center of control for all his conquests and gives it his own name: "I built this city, and I determined (its) name Azitawaddiya, because Ba'al and Rephesh of the he-goats they made me to build it . . . that it might be a bulwark for the Plain of Adana and for the House of Mupshu. . . . So I have built this city, named it Azitawaddiya, and enthroned the son of Ba'al and instituted sacrifices."<sup>14</sup> Note that the city does not grow up gradually, but is founded by the great chief, as Jaredite cities were, and given his name. "And this city shall possess grain and wine, and this people whose children shall dwell [here] shall possess cattle and sheep and grain and wine . . . and they shall be exceedingly mighty, and they shall serve exceedingly well unto Azitawaddu and to the House of Mupshu for the sake of Ba'al and the gods."

A clearer exposition of the system and purpose of city founding as we explained it in *The World of the Jaredites* could not be asked.<sup>15</sup> But what rings the heroic note in our inscription is the magic name of "the

(Continued on following page)

## There Were Jaredites

(Continued from preceding page)

House of Mopshu." For this Mopshu is none other than the Mopsus who figures so largely in the Greek heroic legends that "scientific" scholarship has always believed to be nature myths.

"In our text," writes the editor, "we thus have a tangible approach to this hero of Greek saga, who, born of Manto, the daughter of Teiresias, came to Cilicia before the fall of Troy."<sup>16</sup> In southeast Asia Minor the legendary Mopsus built three famous cities, and here in a tangible inscription we find a descendant of his building and dedicating another city, and a very real one. The German critical method long since decided that the idea of heroes building cities (a very conspicuous theme in the book of Ether) was purely mythological fancy, since cities, like everything else, were required by the prevailing scientific theory to be the product of a slow and gradual evolution.<sup>17</sup>

But to return to our Ugaritic texts of five hundred years earlier. In them "the currents of the Semitic and Indo-European worlds crossed. The Semitic cultural elements . . . included a strong admixture from Mesopotamia. The Indo-European elements embraced the Hittite and especially the Minoan."<sup>18</sup> Since those words were written, we have learned that the Minoans were our cousins the Greeks. All the great races and cultures of antiquity seem here to be mixed up together in an heroic "swarming-time." And the figures of the Old Testament are in it with the rest:

The importance of the epic tradition underlying prose biblical history down to David's reign, though long surmised, is first beginning to take concrete shape. . . . We are now able to see that an *epic* approach (if not an actual epic stage) underlying our prose accounts has affected the *content* of pre-solomonic Hebrew history.

In the composition of this history Gordon finds "a distinctive epic attitude," which gives priority in the histories to those things which would "be included in the epic repertoire . . . events of epic allure," which enjoys a conspicuous place in the pre-Solomonic histories.<sup>19</sup>

### THE HITTITES AND OTHERS

Until the 1920's all that was known about the Hittites was that Abraham

had dealings with them. Now we know them as the oldest representatives of our Indo-European languages and customs and a people quite as ancient as the Egyptians or Babylonians. Their society was remarkably heroic. The king lived in a state of constant migration, in the summer going forth on his sacred mission of conquering and subduing the world, in the winter moving from city to city in a sacred progress which was regarded as a single protracted festival called the *nuntariashhash*.<sup>20</sup> The king was the ruler of the world, the ever-victorious conqueror who moved forward in the thunder,<sup>21</sup> yet his office was elective "as among the Anglo-Saxons and other Germanic peoples."<sup>22</sup> As a result, Hittite history begins with the grim rivalry between two kings who have been nominated by competing groups of great lords, "and the subsequent history of the kingdom is fraught with revolts and rebellions on the part of the king's kinsmen."<sup>23</sup> It is the old Jaredite story all over again!

The Hittite kings, like the Jaredites, exchanged messengers and letters with rivals whom they challenged to personal combat and whose followers they tried to "draw off." Thus the greatest Hittite ruler writes to his equally great Hurrian rival: "The people of Kizzuwatna are Hittite cattle and have chosen their stable; they have deserted the Hurrian and gone over to My Majesty."<sup>24</sup> Among the Hittites "the king's kinsmen, called the 'Great Family,' enjoyed special privileges, which they constantly abused."<sup>25</sup> The usual things happened: when a Hittite king was actually taking Babylon about 1600 B.C., his son the crown prince was leading a conspiracy of princes against him at home; the unfilial son was banished but his youthful successor was murdered upon returning home from a campaign by *his* brother-in-law. This set off "a sorry period of palace murders and intrigues . . . which lasted for several generations and reduced the kingdom to a condition little short of anarchy."<sup>26</sup> In one letter we read of a noble who came as a fugitive to the Hittite king from the oppression of the great lord Attarissiyas (identified by Forrer with the Greek hero Atreus). The Hittite king bestowed a dukedom on his noble suppliant

and saved him when the Lord Attarissiyas tracked him down and attacked him in his mountain domain. And what did our noble do to show his gratitude? He joined forces with the terrible Attarissiyas and raided the lands of his Hittite benefactor!<sup>27</sup>

What could ever bind such men to allegiance? Ties of marriage (all the great Hittite houses were intermarried), and especially oaths! The oath is almost an obsession with the Hittites. Every vassal swore to be eternally faithful to his lord and to support him against all his enemies, and every year the eternal oath of fealty was renewed (just to play safe) along with a formal payment of tribute. Anyone who failed in his oath and tribute was brought to the palace and kept in dignified imprisonment there, for in theory no noble could be put to death, being himself a free agent.<sup>28</sup> Nobody else in the state was free, all others existing simply to serve and support the nobles. Workers were bound to the land and could not marry outside the estate on which they lived.<sup>29</sup> "The Hittite state was the creation of an exclusive caste superimposed on the indigenous population of the country."<sup>30</sup> We read of a king who punished a perjurer by taking his sword from his side and making him a farmer.<sup>31</sup> With intriguing princes all about, revolution was always just around the corner, and the king was actually the leader of an army of occupation. We are told that the first Hittite king, after subduing the whole land, sent his sons "each to every part of the land . . . and governed the land, and the great cities of the land were assigned to them."<sup>32</sup> The empire was a mesh of fortified cities, these cities actually being but permanent fortified camps to which the king would summon all his vassals to take the oath to him before setting out on the spring campaign.<sup>33</sup> Each city controlled the very active business and commercial life of the empire (for the Hittites were great businessmen) through its "city messengers," and special commissioners. The more important centers had in each a prince and a palace, the palace, being both temple, fortress, and "a transmission and control center for the passage of wares."<sup>34</sup> So let us not imagine that there was anything

(Continued on page 745)

THE IMPROVEMENT ERA

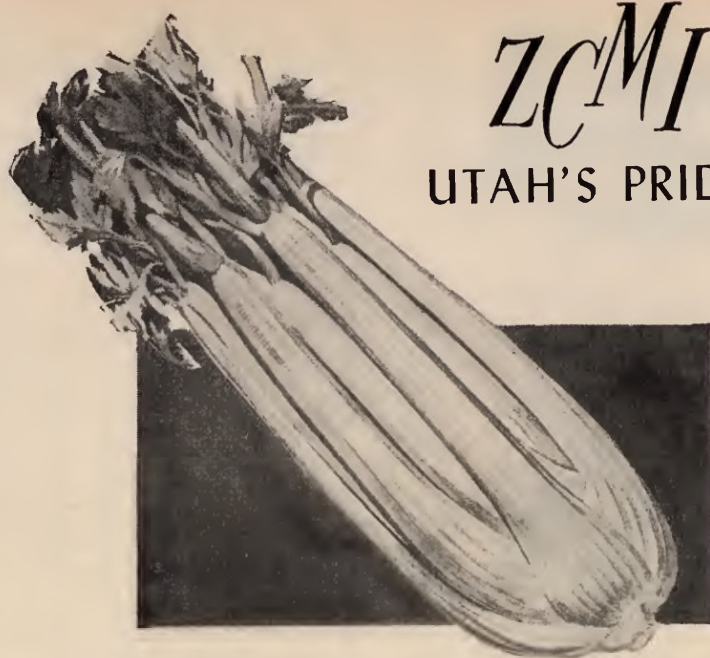
## There Were Jaredites

(Continued from page 712)

"primitive" about the civilization of the Hittites: it was rich, sophisticated, mobile, restless, brutal, acquisitive, energetic, and military, in all of which the reader will scarcely need to be reminded of the Jaredites.

From various letters of the Hittites we learn that their great houses had extensive political, economic, and family ties with the lords of the Ah-hiyawa to the west. It is pretty certain by now that these were none other than Homer's Achaeans. And so we are back to Chadwick: Since Homer furnishes the yardstick by which other heroic ages are measured, there is not much point in demonstrating that Homer's world is heroic. Yet since we are dealing with the beginning of things, it is not amiss to point out that in those passages of Homer which are admittedly most archaic we have to do with a world identical with the epic milieu of the earliest Egyptians and Sumerians. The Apollo of the opening scenes of the *Iliad* is not the shining youth of the classical tradition but a grim war lord of the steppes, who comes from the far northeast, the land of the Hyperboreans, sweeping like a storm wind across the plain in a shower of arrows—"and his coming was like the coming of night!" "Hear me, Silver-bow," cries his priest in supplication, "thou who travelest the rounds to Chryses (one of his many castles or shrines), and who rulest mightily in Killa and Tenedos, O Sminteus (another title): if ever I drove peace offerings to thy shrine or burned fat roasts of mutton and beef at thy feasts, grant me now what I ask: make those Danaeans pay for my tears with your arrows!" For all the world this is the typical appeal of the Hittite or Hurrian vassal to his lord. And when Apollo responds, he crouches at a distance from the Greek camp like an Indian fighter and from his invisible position pours poisoned arrows into the camp, apparently from nowhere: he is a typical scourge of the plains. And so is father Zeus, *Nephelegerites*, "the god of the *cumulo-nimbus*," who always moves with the thunder. The thunder is the sound of his chariot, and "all the higher divinities of the Greeks have a chariot and pair ascribed to them."<sup>35</sup> He comes as a conqueror and settles down as a

(Continued on following page)



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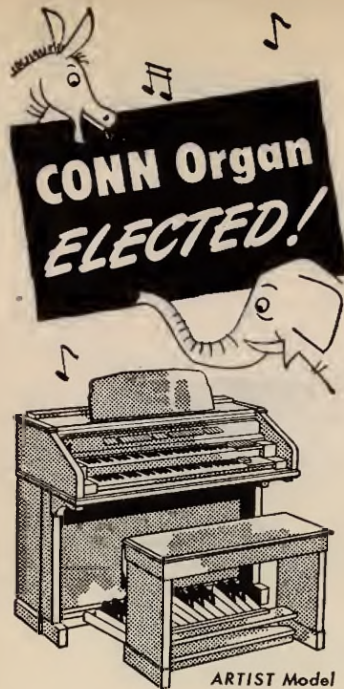
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## There Were Jaredites

(Continued from preceding page)  
tyrant: "You rule now," Prometheus reminds him through his haughty messenger, "and as new conquerors

think to live at ease in your new castle. But have I not seen two such tyrants fall already? You can take it from me that number three who

## On—or over the edge

Richard L. Evans

SOME TWENTY CENTURIES or so ago Epictetus gave us these very modern-sounding sentences: "It needs but a little to overthrow and destroy everything—just a slight aberration from reason. For the helmsman to wreck his vessel, he does not need the same resources as he needs to save it: If he turn it but a little too far to the wind, he is lost; yes, and if he do it not deliberately but from mere want of attention, he is lost all the same. It is very much the same in life, if you doze but a little, all that you have amassed up till now leaves you. Keep awake then, and watch your impressions: It is no trifle you have in keeping, but self-respect, honour, constancy, a quiet mind, untouched by distress. . . ."<sup>1</sup> These sentences suggest several facets of a subject which could be successively considered. But at least one phase of it we should like to turn to for a moment or two today: Often seemingly, there are only slight differences between success and failure, between solvency and insolvency, between safety and sorrow. We say "seemingly slight" but the differences in results are in fact by no means "slight," but gravely serious. Consider for a moment just the matter of physical motion: In driving down the highway, or in any physical movement, sometimes two feet, or one foot, or even the fraction of an inch is the margin between safety and sorrow. Either we hit—or we don't hit. Either we keep the wheels on or over the edge. Either we keep on the safe side of the shoulder or center line—or we don't keep on the safe side. And if two feet, or one foot, or even an inch is the margin of safety, may we unforgettably never forget this shocking but elementary reminder: that a speed of 60 miles an hour means moving 88 feet in a single second! And even at half the 60 mile mark—even 30 miles an hour—means moving 44 feet in a single second! And with movements of many feet in a single second, life comes pretty close, all the time, to being on the brink. And only a little inattention, only a little dozing at the wheel, only a little dulling of the senses, only a little "aberration from reason," as Epictetus observed—only a little—may be the difference between wholeness and permanent impairment—or between life and death! There is no time for inattention, no time for carelessness or thoughtlessness, or for senses that are less than fully alert, even for a fractional instant. So much for the physical side of the subject. Admittedly it is shocking and sobering. In matters of physical motion, as well as in many other matters, men cannot become careless in conduct without the ever imminent possibility of paying a very high price.

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<sup>1</sup>Discourses of Epictetus, Book IV, Chapter 3.

lords it now is not only the worst of the lot, but his rule is going to be the shortest."<sup>36</sup>

Aristotle says the tragic poets concentrated on the doings of a few great houses from the heroic age because their affairs were "naturally tragic," were real history, "handed down by tradition," no matter how freely the poets may have dealt with details.<sup>37</sup> The plays of Aeschylus show us the sordid and murderous clash of wills and ambitions in the great princely families after the conquest. The dreadful things that go on in the castle on the hill have always held excitement for the rest of us—they are the great stuff of literature. History is no less the child of the heroic age, and the writing of it down to our own times has been in the strictly heroic tradition, with "princes to act, and monarchs to behold the swelling scene!"

Next the friends spent an evening with Professor Sindh and heard about the prehistoric society of those Indo-Iranian invaders who followed their cousins into central Asia and spread abroad with great rapidity about 2000 B.C. The Yashts are the ancient books which describe their way of life as it was in the beginning: "The Yashts are saturated with the spirit of chivalry;" in them "we find ourselves in the Epic Age of the ancient Iranians."<sup>38</sup> There is the king at the head of his victorious migrating host, slaying the great snake and finding water.<sup>39</sup> His royal successor is the "perfect Chief: whose face looks over all the seven Karshvares of the earth; who is swift amongst the swift, liberal amongst the liberal, strong amongst the strong, a chief of assembly amongst the chiefs of assemblies; increase-giving, fatness-giving, cattle-giving, sovranity-giving. . . ."<sup>39</sup> Like Mithra, he is "the King, Ruler, and Chief-inspector of the entire world."<sup>40</sup> He is "he of the ten thousand spies, the powerful, all-knowing, undecivable god . . . who drives along in his high-wheeled chariot."<sup>41</sup> He was the chief herdsman and the chief hunter of the realm, and all who would not fight him must submit to him.<sup>42</sup> Yet his relatives, the great nobles, were always plotting to get the throne from him, even as Cyrus drew off the retainers of King Cyaxares who cried: "You are now great and glorious, thanks to my retainers! I would rather go down under the earth than

(Continued on following page)

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## There Were Jaredites

(Continued from preceding page)

be seen weak. . . . But you are on top now, and my own followers are in a position to control me."<sup>43</sup> Even so "Mazda, the divine hero, took from the Daevas both riches and welfare, both fatness and flocks, both weal and glory. Then Mithra seized that Glory . . . the second time the Glory departed from Yim. . . . Then Threatona seized that Glory . . . who killed the snake Srvara."<sup>44</sup> "From whom shall I take away, without his thinking of it, the awful sovereignty," cries Mithra, ". . . who fells down heads . . . who orders chastisement and his order is done at once."<sup>45</sup> He is "the lord of the wide pastures . . . strong, sleepless, and ever awake. To whom the chiefs of the nations offer up sacrifices, as they go to the field against the havocking host . . . with the fiend-smiting wind."<sup>46</sup> All his liege men are bound to him by awful oaths, and whoever breaks his oath loses his eyes and ears, and "Mithra sends the heads rolling of those who break fealty to him, and destroys their houses."<sup>47</sup> The Jaredite oath of fealty, it will be recalled, was by one's head. Yet if a king overlooked a threat to his honor or challenge to his power, such defaulting would be interpreted as a confession of weakness and would absolve his followers from their oaths to him while binding them to his adversary.<sup>48</sup> Therefore the king's business was to wage single combat with his enemies. But before attacking any enemy the king would send him a formal message inviting him to submit to Mazda and become his subject.<sup>49</sup> The Persian court, with the great throne in its center, was skilfully stage-managed and furnished the model of European courts and cathedrals.<sup>50</sup>

According to the Iranians, the very first man was also the first king, the killer of serpents, followed immediately by eight rulers bearing the title of *kavi*, and these, says Christensen, "were purely human figures whose deeds . . . have absolutely no mythical character."<sup>51</sup> "Those men are kings of kingdoms," says the Yasht, "that are rich in horses, with large tributes, with snorting horses, and sounding chariots, flashing swords, rich in aliments and in stores of food; . . . they have houses that stand well laid up, rich in cattle . . .

THE IMPROVEMENT ERA

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they have ladies that wait for them . . . and slim-waisted, tall daughters with long fingers . . . hoards of silver and gold brought together from distant regions; and garments of splendid make."<sup>52</sup> In the castle "where whole herds of cattle and hosts of men are at home, there is high feasting and stout portions for everyone."<sup>53</sup> This chivalrous stock, the cultural and spiritual ancestors of the knighthood of Europe, went the usual way of "despotism tempered by dethronement and assassination."<sup>54</sup> These are just a few high points of the earliest Indo-European civilization, but they are enough to indicate that we have here no exception to the general rule of a genuine epic background.

It has recently been claimed that the very first waves of migrants into Egypt spoke Semitic languages, which have been spoken there without interruption to the present day.<sup>55</sup> The Ammorites, Canaanites, Phoenicians, Hebrews, Babylonians, and Assyrians were all Semitic speaking, and this has been taken to indicate a common homeland for all of them in the "Arab cradle." Scholars have long held the opinion that there are two main sources and centers of migration in the Old World, two areas from which, from time to time, waves of invaders move out in all directions to inundate the peripheral areas and revitalize the ancient sedentary civilizations of those areas with fresh blood. The two centers are Central Asia and the Arabian Desert. Significantly enough, Hrozy finds the key to the earliest of all world migrations to be the good Jaredite word *Kish*, the distribution of which indicates to this great philologist the spreading of all civilization at one time from a single center, perhaps in west-central Asia, north or east of the Caspian, or what we have always called "Jaredite country."<sup>56</sup> Both regions are potential dust bowls supporting large seminomadic populations of herdsmen, hunters, and farmers. It does not take a violent cataclysm of nature to send these people forth in all directions in a desperate search for grass: Just a few abnormally dry years and the dispersion is on, snowballing as it goes and overrunning the richer and safer civilizations of the periphery. Abraham went to Egypt because he had to: "There was corn in Egypt," and

(Continued on following page)

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## There Were Jaredites

(Continued from preceding page)

the marginal subsistence for his flocks and herds had been wiped out.

Let us remember that Robert Wood first became aware of the genuine heroic milieu behind the writings of Homer when he visited the Beduins of the desert, who reminded him also of the patriarchs of Israel. Here we are in the cradle and source of heroic culture; this is the permanent epic milieu; these people are always on the march and always fighting; they are full-time heroes, experts and specialists in conquest, as their phenomenal record of victory shows.<sup>57</sup> It would be hard to say whether the Central Asiatics or the Arabs are best at the game; for our purpose the most interesting thing is that they represent the most essential element in the culture of the Jaredites and the Nephites, respectively.

The story of Rome begins, according to Livy, with the entrance on the scene of a band of migrants, led by the hero Aeneas, "looking for a place to settle down" (*qaurentem sedes*). At his first stop he expelled the na-

tives and built a city, named after his wife. His grandsons Romulus and Remus lived by hunting, robbing, and cattle-raiding, and their suckling by a wolf was the result of their having been hidden in the woods to escape the plans of a great lord and relative who was determined to keep the rule in his branch of the family. They gathered about them a robber band, not a community of pious farmers, and after killing his brother, Romulus founded a city named after himself to become a shrine and center of dominion. All this, says Liyy, was simply following the custom of other great cattle-driving heroes and rustlers—all of them bad men and adventurers.<sup>58</sup> Ancus Martius, the third king of Rome, captured the city of the Latins and transplanted "the entire Roman multitude to it," in the best Asiatic manner, turning their old lands back to grazing and agriculture. Exactly in the middle of his new city overlooking the forum, he built a grim castle, "a dungeon to discourage any rising insolence."<sup>59</sup> Forever after, Rome remains a world

of jails, and the history of the kings is typically heroic and utterly full of abominations. Fighting was formally and chivalrously conducted, the winners driving off the cattle of the losers. Sometimes a great lord, accompanied by a huge army of retainers, would go over from one camp to another and be received with recognition of rank and a suitable grant of land.<sup>60</sup> When a people went back on their oath to Rome, their princes were beheaded, their walls torn down, and their fields sold.<sup>61</sup> The kings would distribute all the loot among their followers as a reward for their allegiance.<sup>62</sup> From the time of Sulla, according to Sallust, the great houses "all took to plundering each other, betrayals, coveting each other's houses and lands . . . it is all a story of parricides, sacrilege, and what not"<sup>63</sup> as when, for example, a great lord could make his retainers drink blood in swearing to him awful oaths to participate in his crimes.<sup>64</sup> Coming down to the time of the empire we read how the emperor "shall hurl his spear beyond the stars, and his course shall lie

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beyond that of the rounds of the sun . . . he shall impose peaceful ways, spare those who submit and make war on those who remain proud—that is the man!"<sup>65</sup> It might be the first pharaoh speaking!

(To be continued)

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