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Since Cumorah: New Voices from the Dust, Part XIX

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Abstract: This series argues that the changing attitudes of biblical scholars toward basic questions about scripture allow room for claims made by the Book of Mormon. It discusses external evidences, the primitive church, Lehi, Zenos, the olive tree, and the Dead Sea Scrolls. The nineteenth part returns again to a discussion of Zenos.

SINCE CUMORAH

NEW VOICES FROM THE DUST

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Recent discoveries cast new light on the identity of the unknown prophet Zenos and are producing information ". . . that no man dreamed of" concerning the authenticity of the Book of Mormon.

● *Zenos Again.* In 1893 M. R. James published Greek and Latin versions of an ancient text entitled "The Vision of Zenez the Father of Gothniel."¹⁵ Since the father of Othniel in the Bible is Kenaz and not Zenez, James translates the title, "The Vision of Kenaz," though the name which appears in the texts is always Zenez, and James confesses himself at a loss to explain how C or K "could have been corrupted into Z"—but there it is. The text itself he finds to be "as

puzzling a document as one could well wish for," its "meaning, source, date and purpose" completely eluding him; "for at first sight there seems to be no corner of apocryphal literature into which we can fit this odd fragment, so completely without context or connexions does it come before us." For one thing, it is much older than other Apocrypha: "Thus, the Vision of Kenaz would help to attest the existence of the prophetic spirit in the dark times of the Judges." Kenaz himself is one of a mysterious prophetic line: his elder brother was Caleb, "on whom the Spirit of the Lord had rested, and who is known to have figured as a seer in the Assumption of Moses." Long since James wrote that, we have learned that the *Assumption of*

Moses was a favorite writing of the Qumran people, who associate themselves with this prophetic line. Also Othniel, the son of Kenaz, prophesied by the Spirit of the Lord. According to the *Jewish Encyclopedia* (S. V. Kenaz), Kenaz was not the father but rather the ancestor of Othniel; but a grandson of Caleb was also a Kenaz as was a grandson of Esau. The confusion is typical, but it is not necessarily confusing; after all, family names repeat themselves in any age.

Already in 1893 James noted that "the language and cast of thought" in Zenez "strongly resemble that of 4 Esdras," and are even closer to "the diction and thought of Ezekiel." Today this can be taken as definitely indicating that the Vi-

sion of Zenez is old and Jewish and not, as James suggests among other possibilities, "merely a medieval attempt at imitating Old Testament prophecy."

The Zenez fragment begins by telling how "once when the Elders were seated together the Holy indwelling Spirit came to Zenez and he took leave of his senses and began to prophesy. . . ." We may pause here to recall how God visited the Book of Mormon Zenos "in the midst of thy congregations." Like Zenos, Zenez talks like a real prophet: "Hear now ye inhabitants of the earth [or the land]. Even as they who have dwelt therein have prophesied before me, having seen this hour, in the time before the corruption of the earth [land]. . . ." Like Zenos, Zenez is conscious of being one of a line of prophets all of whom have testified of the same things (cf. Helaman 8:22); he speaks "that all ye inhabitants therein might know the prophecies according to that which hath been before appointed." Here is the familiar motif of the appointed plan which has been taught to the world by generations of prophets.

Turning to the specific message, Zenez recalls to his hearers' minds the state of things at the creation of the earth; he sees "flames of fire that did not consume and fountains bursting forth from their slumbers when there was as yet no foundations for men to live on." When a foundation at last appears between the upper and lower worlds, a voice tells Zenez, "These are the foundations prepared for men to inhabit for seven thousand years to come." He further sees figures like people "coming out of the light of invisible worlds," and is told that "these are they who shall inhabit" the foundations in the name of Adam. "And it shall come to pass that whenever he [the earthly Adam] shall sin against Me and the fullness of time is come, the

spark shall be extinguished and the fountain dried up, and thus will things alternate." This is speaking of the cycles of visitation and apostasy among the children of men, a basic theme in the early Jewish and Christian Apocrypha. "And after Zenez had spoken these things he awoke and his spirit returned to him, and he remembered not what he had said and seen." Then Zenez went forth and preached to the people saying: "If such is to be the rest [*anapausis*—rest in progress] of the righteous after they have left this life [this shows that much of the vision is missing], it behooves them to die to the things of this corruptible world [or age], that they may not behold its sins. And after he had said these things Zenez died and slept with his fathers; and the people mourned him for thirty days." He was evidently a famous prophet, but quite forgotten. Seventy years ago James could find no other writing with which to compare this one, but by now the reader should be able to recognize familiar overtones from the Scrolls, the Nag Hammadi writings, and the Book of Mormon. At the very least we can now affirm that there was a prophet called Zenez, a mysterious figure who lived before 600 B.C. and had a great vision of the creation and the plan of life as a result of which he called men to repentance.

The Mystery of Joseph. If there is one name that serves as a nodal point to tie the greatest number of early Apocrypha together it is the name of Joseph. The Book of Mormon is thoroughly involved in the Joseph tradition: ". . . I have led this people forth out of . . . Jerusalem," says the Lord through the Prophet Jacob, ". . . that I might raise up unto me a righteous branch from the fruit of the loins of Joseph." (Jacob 2:25.) Jacob's younger brother was named Joseph as a reminder that Joseph was the

ancestor of the family and that he also suffered in the desert, and also that "Joseph truly saw *our* day" (Lehi speaking; 2 Nephi 3:5. Italics added.) and that in ages yet to come there would be yet other Josephs: "For Joseph truly testified, saying: A seer shall the Lord my God raise up"

"And his name shall be called [Joseph] after me; and it shall be after the name of *his* father." (*Ibid.*, 3:6, 15. Italics added.)

Finally, Lehi concludes, "And now, behold, my son Joseph, after this manner did *my* father of old prophesy," for he calls the Patriarch Joseph his father. (*Ibid.*, 3:22. Italics added.)

Dupont-Sommer has hailed the genius of R. H. Charles who forty years ago saw that much in the New Testament, "especially the Sermon on the Mount," goes back to an old Jewish apocryphal writing known as the *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*, which Molin and others have shown to be in turn perhaps the closest of all the Apocrypha to the Dead Sea Scrolls.⁹⁶ The key figure in this writing is Joseph, "the most arresting and the most mysterious figure of the Testaments," according to Philonenko, a specialist on the subject. "He is the central character, the pivotal figure . . . Model of all the virtues . . . object of the hatred and jealousy of his brethren."⁹⁷

"How can one explain this impassioned interest?" Philonenko asks, and he notes that Hippolytus, one of the earliest Christian writers, actually cites the *Twelve Patriarchs* to show that Joseph is a prefigurement of Christ.⁹⁸ M. de Jonge, who believes that the testament is actually a Christian writing, points out that "Joseph was quite commonly regarded as a type of Christ" by the earliest Christian writers.⁹⁹ In the light of the Scrolls, it becomes clear that the *Testament of*

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Since Cumorah
(Continued from page 297)

the *Twelve Patriarchs*, except for some minor interpolations, is definitely a pre-Christian work.

The recently discovered Hebrew version of the *Testament of Naphthali* (one of the Twelve) tells of the contest between Joseph and Judah. In it Naphthali sees Israel as a ship at sea, "the Ship of Jacob." "As long as Joseph and Judah got along together the ship sailed calmly and well, but when quarreling broke out between Joseph and Judah she would not sail in the right direction but wandered and was wrecked."¹⁰⁰ The Book of Mormon student will of course think immediately of the quarreling of the brothers on Lehi's ship, which accordingly was driven off its course and nearly foundered; and he is licensed to do so, because Alma hundreds of years later discusses this as a type and an image. For these people symbolic things can also be real, as when Lehi talks of "Joseph, my last-born, whom I have brought out of the wilderness of mine afflictions" (2 Nephi 3:3)—a symbolic wilderness, but for all that a very real one.

When the ship of Jacob breaks up, according to our story, all the brothers cling to floating planks and are thus borne away by the winds and scattered in all directions, except that Judah and Levi cling to the same board, while Joseph alone is able to get away in a lifeboat. The most striking feature of the account is the rivalry between Joseph and Judah—why these particular two? To the student of the Book of Mormon this will appear as more than a coincidence, for the coming forth of that book in the last days portends the reuniting of those two brothers (the joining of the Stick—book or tribe—of Joseph to that of Judah) as the necessary prelude to the gathering of all the others. More-

over, the picture of Joseph borne far over the seas in his own boat while all the other tribes paddle aimlessly about clinging to whatever support they can find is even more arresting to the reader of the Book of Mormon.

Professor Philonenko of Strasbourg, notes that the *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs* attaches "an altogether particular importance" to the garment that Jacob gave to Joseph. The *Testament of Zebulon* (one of the twelve) says that Joseph had two garments, one good and one bad;¹⁰⁰ this takes us, of course, right to Moroni's discourse of the remnants of Joseph's garment, which gives a fuller version of things—one that I have found elsewhere only in Tha'labi, the best informed of all Moslem commentators on Jewish traditions.

Tha'labi also has some very interesting things to say about the preexistent Joseph: "Most scholars say that Joseph is a Hebrew name . . . and Abu-l-Hasan . . . said that *asaf* is 'sorrow' in the language, and *asif* is 'servant,' and the two are combined in the name Joseph."¹⁰¹

The identification of Joseph with Asaf is indeed an authentic Hebrew tradition. Adam in a vision "saw Joseph sitting in all his glory, and cried out, 'Who is that noble one sitting in such an exalted degree of glory?' And Gabriel answered, 'O Adam, that is thy son, the envied one. . . .' Then Adam clasped him to his bosom and his heart and said, O my son, do not sorrow [*asaf*], for thou art Joseph. Thus he first gave him his name." The writer is puzzled by the preexistent situation and explains that "Joseph knew it all in the beginning in the preeminence of his intelligence, and he was instructed in the matter [of his future vicissitudes] even as it would be, and he saw that he would be so and so before he was. But that is a thing that only God understands—how, for example, Adam knew all

[his children's] names beforehand."¹⁰² The expression "before he was" occurs a number of times in both the Scrolls and the Khenoboskion writings and is explained in the *Gospel of Truth* of the latter collection.¹⁰³ Its earliest occurrence in modern times, as far as I know, is in the 1851 edition of the Pearl of Great Price, where at the beginning of the "Book of Enoch," we read: "I am God: I made the world, and men before they were."^{103a}

The mystery of Joseph appears in Benjamin's admonition to his children in the *Twelve Patriarchs*: ". . . follow the example of the holy and good man Joseph. For until his death he was not willing to tell regarding himself [No man knows my story!]; but Jacob, having learned it from the Lord, told it to him [Benjamin]."¹⁰⁴ In the Dead Sea Scrolls the famous Teacher of Righteousness is also called Asaph, that being, as we have seen, one of the names of Joseph, which "thus fits in with the Joseph traditions."¹⁰⁵ Jacob blessed Joseph, according to Benjamin's testament, saying, "In thee shall be fulfilled the prophecy of heaven, which says that the blameless one shall be defiled for lawless men, and the sinless one shall die for godless men." According to the Testament of Zebulun, Joseph's three days in

the cistern were the type of descent the Lord made to the spirits in prison.¹⁰⁶ One can readily see how the Joseph type would be applied to any suffering servant, though the Messiah remains the archetype. The Teacher of Righteousness, for example, is also called the Just One, Asaph, the Son of Berechiah, Joseph the Just, Joseph ben Joezer; so that he actually "appears to us as a composite figure," according to Schoenfield, just as his wicked opponent does.¹⁰⁷ The Joseph tradition has been traced backwards as well as forwards, and Bo Reicke has found significant parallels in the Ras Shamra fragments of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries B.C.¹⁰⁸

Since the Dead Sea Scrolls are but "the opening of a tiny window on to the life and customs of a remarkable group of people lost to history,"¹⁰⁹ it is surprising when we look through other windows to find ourselves looking at much the same scene. The phenomenon is explained today by the fact that the Scrolls and other bodies of Jewish and Christian scripture all draw on a common source. Thus, Gilkes notes, Deuteronomy, Isaiah, and the Psalms are Jesus' favorite sources, "which appear to have been the favorite reading also at Qumran."¹¹⁰ The windows actually

look out upon the same scene, but from different distances and at different angles. They are "mirrors reflecting the same source," as Leaney puts it—offshoots of the same trunk.¹¹¹ The Scrolls, says Father Milik, are "essentially an authentic projection of the Old Testament," with a special brand of piety, "oriented toward intimate union with God and the angels."¹¹² Each of these statements expresses remarkably well what the Book of Mormon claimed for itself at a time when the idea was considered blasphemous of the mere existence of anything that could be called "an authentic projection" of scripture. Today the world possesses a mass of documents that not only vindicate the idea of such writings existing and surviving but make it possible to put various unclassified writings to the test as they appear. The value of both the Qumran and Nag Hammadi texts is that they are both links in a long chain, not being at either end of it but somewhere in the middle: the connections run forward and back. "There is some evidence," writes F. F. Bruce, "that certain beliefs and practices akin to those maintained at Qumran reappeared in other communities, possibly under the influence of men of Qumran who escaped destruction."¹¹³ Cullmann sees such a survival in the Mandaeans, and Schoeps in the Ebionites. In the other direction, Qumran itself is such a survival, consciously seeking to preserve the inspired leadership and customs of ancient Israel in the desert; there, as K. Kuhn points out, "we get hold of the fundamental source of John's Gospel, and this source is Palestinian-Jewish," but not the conventional type: "Not, however, Pharisaic-Rabbinic Judaism, but a Palestinian-Jewish pietistic sect of gnostic structure."¹¹⁴ Like the Coptic texts from Egypt, the designation of these writings as "gnostic" simply serves notice that their real

A PRAYER AT EASTER

BY ILA MAY FISHER MAUGHAN

*The centuries have dimmed Christ's sacrifice
And veiled his simple truths in mystery
Till men are groveling in vice—in sin,
Unwilling and unfit to hear or see
The glory of his ways. His ways would change
The patterns of humanity and bring
Sufficient succor to suffice all needs,
Sufficient mercy that all men might sing.*

*Grant us, O Lord, thy peace, the faith we need
To heal the sick and hold the wandering,
To check this reign of error's tragic gloom
And rid the earth of useless suffering.
Please grant thy children strength and fortitude
To build on truth till peace be earth's again;
To work until the hush of harmony
Can penetrate the selfish hearts of men.*

background is still unknown. But it was certainly old. "The Qumran covenanters," writes Bruce, "bound themselves by a new covenant, but it was not so new as they thought; it was . . . a reaffirmation of the old covenant of Moses's day."¹¹⁵ But no one knew that better than the covenanters themselves, the opening lines of whose *Manual of Discipline* declare the object of the society to be the carrying out of all

"that has been commanded by the hand of Moses and by the hand of all His servants the prophets." They were quite aware of the need to preserve intact the ways that went clear back to Moses. The Nag Hammadi books are just as insistent in tracing all their teachings and ordinances back to the ancients, even back to Adam himself.

"There is something unusual and coincidental," wrote the skeptical

C. F. Potter, "almost what once was called 'providential,' in the fact that the 'Dead Sea Scrolls' . . . and the Gnostic codices . . . were both discovered in the same year."¹¹⁶ Both raised the curtain on a background of the church that no living man dreamed of. It is a background of great breadth and depth, going back many centuries in time and covering vast areas of the Old World. It is the same background from which the Book of Mormon, by its own account, emerged. The Book of Mormon shows us an earlier phase of things but a phase that has left its mark in later documents.

(To be continued)



“... UPON YOU IN YOUR YOUTH...”

RICHARD L. EVANS

"The destiny of any nation, at any given time," said Goethe, "depends on the opinions of its young men under five-and-twenty." Add to this a somewhat startling statistic—that some half of all the population is under twenty-six years of age. This focuses on the fact that the whole future is so soon in the hands of those who now are young. "It is in youth," said Benjamin Franklin, "that we plant our chief habits and prejudices; . . . in youth the private and public character is determined; . . . life ought to begin well from youth."¹ Despite all adverse publicity and the overplaying of the negative side of the news, despite the acts and attitudes of a dissident part of the population, we come with a conviction that youth, both in character and commitment, are better prepared to meet the future than has sometimes been so. The Lord God has trusted young people in the past as scripture will well witness, and despite much reporting of the negative, we come with a conviction that youth will keep faith with the future. And yet the beginnings, the direction matter very much. George Washington, whose character from boyhood was a striking example of the maxim that "the child is father of the man," showed scarcely a shadow of turning in his nature from youth to maturity. The qualities that enabled him to resist attacks on his character were honor and outspoken honesty.² When a person moves into a place of public or private prominence, his life begins to be searchingly examined. And to those yet young, most urgently it should be said: Each day and hour and instant the record is being built. Life happens quickly. From easygoing youth to the heavy weight of responsibility is short and swift. And the young would wisely live with an awareness that the record matters very much, and so live that they can say with Emerson: "My life is not an apology. . . ." ³ "Consider," said Ruskin, "what heavy responsibility lies upon you in your youth. . . ." "Our deeds still travel with us from afar, and what we *have* been makes us what we are."⁴ God help us to trust the young as they deserve, and set before them an example that will not betray them as they follow us into the future.

¹Benjamin Franklin, *Autobiography*.

²Willard Dorn, "Young Characters in History," *The Improvement Era*, December 1897, pp. 77, 79.

³Emerson, *Self-Reliance*.

⁴George Eliot, *Middlemarch*: ch. 70, *Heading*.

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FOOTNOTES

⁹⁵M. R. James, *Apocrypha Anecdota* (Cambridge University, 1893), pp. 174-7, being Vol. 2, No. 3 of *Texts and Studies*, J. A. Robinson, ed.

⁹⁶Dupont-Sommer, *Manuscripts de la Mer Morte*, p. 211; R. H. Charles, *Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha* II, 282, 291f. See the table of comparisons at the back of G. Molin, *Die Söhne des Lichtes*.

⁹⁷M. Philonenko, in *Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses*, 39 (1959), p. 28.

⁹⁸Philonenko, *Les Interpretations Chretiennes des Testaments des Douze Patriarches et les Manuscrits de Qumran* (Paris: Presses Universitaires, 1960), p. 50.

⁹⁹M. de Jonge, *The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1953), p. 123.

¹⁰⁰Philonenko, *op. cit.*, in footnote 97 above, p. 33.

¹⁰¹*Ibid.*, pp. 50, 52.

¹⁰²Tha'labi, *Qissas al-Anbiyah*, pp. 75f.

¹⁰³*The Gospel of Truth*, folio XIVr (p. 27).

^{103a}Pearl of Great Price, Liverpool edition, 1851, p. 1; cf. Moses 6:51.

¹⁰⁴*Testament of Benjamin*, c. 3.

¹⁰⁵H. J. Schonfield, *Secrets of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (London: Vallentine, Mitchell, 1956), pp. 89, 131.

¹⁰⁶*Testament of Zebulon*, 4:1-4. Christian fathers worked out elaborate parallels between Joseph and Jesus, e.g., Rupert, in Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, 167: 448f, 518-530.

¹⁰⁷Schonfield, *op. cit.*, p. 150. On the Messiah Son of Joseph, see E. Wiesener, in *Vetus Testamentum*, 5 (May, 1955) p. 306.

¹⁰⁸Bo Reicke, in *Svensk Exeget Arsbok*, 1945, pp. 5-30. See especially V. Sadek, "Der Mythus vom Messias dem Johne Josephs," in *Archiv Orientalni*, 1965, pp. 27-43.

¹⁰⁹Y. Yadin, *The Message of the Scrolls*, p. 189.

¹¹⁰A. N. Gilkes, *The Impact of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (London: Macmillan, 1962), p. 146.