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The Book of Mormon Confirmed

Editor(s): Rulon S. Wells

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Abstract: This five-part series gives various external evidences of the Book of Mormon, including the archaeological findings that “point to successive periods of occupation” in ancient America, evidence of Hebrew origin/descent for the American Indians, and the idea that there was an advanced civilization in ancient America. It also discusses metal plates and provides geological proof of the great destruction recorded in 3 Nephi 8. The third part continues the discussion of a Hebrew origin for the Native Americans.

THE LATTER-DAY SAINTS' MILLENNIAL STAR.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 27, 1848.

THE BOOK OF MORMON CONFIRMED.

[Continued from page 39.]

OF HEBREW ORIGIN.

"THE Indian manner of *curing their sick* is very similar to that of the Jews. They always invoke Yo HE WAH a considerable space of time before they apply any medicines, let the case require ever so speedy an application. The more desperately ill their patients are, the more earnestly they invoke the Deity on the sad occasion. . . . The Indians deem the curing their sick or wounded a very religious duty, and it is chiefly performed by their supposed prophets and magi, because they believe they are inspired with a great portion of the divine fire. . . . The Hebrews have at all times been very careful in the *burial* of their dead: to be deprived of it was considered as one of the greatest of evils. They made it a point of duty to perform the funeral obsequies of their friends—often embalmed the dead bodies of those who were rich, and even buried treasure in the tombs with their dead. . . . Thus it was a universal custom with the ancient Peruvians when the owner died, to bury his effects with him; which the avaricious Spaniards perceiving, they robbed these storehouses of the dead of an immense quantity of treasures. The modern Indians bury all their movable riches, according to the custom of the ancient Peruvians and Mexicans, insomuch that the grave is heir of all. . . . This custom of burying the dead person's treasures with him has entirely swallowed up their medals and other monuments of antiquity, without any probability of recovering them. In the Tucca-batches on the Tallapoose river, thirty miles above the Allabahamah garrison, are two brazen tables, and five of copper. They esteem them so sacred as to keep them constantly in their holy of holies, without touching them in the least, only in the time of their compounded first-fruit offering and annual expiation of sins, . . . at which time gentlemen of curiosity may see them. . . . The shape of the five copper plates: one is a foot and a half long, and seven inches wide; the other four are shorter and narrower. The shape of the two brass plates: about a foot and a half in diameter; the largest stamped thus [shown in engraving]. He [Old Bracket, an Indian perhaps 100 years old], said he was told by his forefathers that those plates were given to them by the man we call God; that there had been many more of other shapes, some as long as he could stretch with both his arms, and some had *writing* upon them, which were buried with particular men; and that they had instructions given with them—viz., they must only be handled by particular people, and those fasting. . . . This account was taken in the Tuccabatchey-square, 27th July, 1759, per Will. Bolsover. . . . As the Hebrews carefully buried their dead, so, on any accident, they gathered their *bones* and laid them in the tombs of their forefathers. Thus all the numerous nations of Indians perform the like friendly office to every deceased person of their respective tribe; insomuch that those who lose their people at war, if they have not corrupted their primitive customs, are so observant of this kindred duty as to appro-

priate some time to collect the bones of their relations, which they call *bone-gathering*, or 'gathering the bones to their kindred,' according to the Hebrew idiom. . . . The surviving brother, by the Mosaic law, was to *raise seed* to a deceased brother who left a widow childless, to perpetuate his name and family, and inherit his goods and estate, or be degraded; and if the issue he begat was a male child, it assumed the name of the deceased. The Indian custom looks the very same way; yet it is in this as in their law of blood—the eldest brother can redeem. . . . When the Israelites gave names to their children or others, they chose such appellatives as suited best with their circumstances and the times. . . . This custom is a standing rule with the Indians, and I never observed the least deviation from it. . . . The Indian tradition says that their forefathers in very remote ages came from a far distant country, where all the people were of one color; and that in process of time they moved eastward to their present settlements. . . . Emanuel de Moraes and Acosta affirm that the Brazilians marry in their own family or tribe. And Jo. de Laet says they call their uncles and aunts 'fathers and mothers,' which is a custom of the Hebrews and of all our North American Indians; and he assures us they mourn very much for their dead, and that their clothes are like those of the early Jews. . . . Acosta writes that the clothes of the South American Indians are shaped like those of the ancient Jews. . . . Laet, (in his description of America,) and Escarbotus assure us they often heard the South American Indians to repeat the sacred word *Halleluiah*, which made them admire how they first attained it. And Malvenda says that the natives of St. Michael had tombstones, which the Spaniards digged up, with several ancient Hebrew characters upon them, as 'Why is God gone away?' and 'He is dead, God knows.' Had his curiosity induced him to transcribe the epitaph, it would have given more satisfaction. . . . Peter Martyr writes that the Indian widow married the brother of her deceased husband, according to the Mosaic law. . . . Robert Williams, the first Englishman in New England, who is said to have learned the Indian language, in order to convert the natives, believed them to be Jews; and he assures us that their tradition records that their ancestors came from the south-west, and that they return there at death; that their women separate themselves from the rest of the people at certain periods; and that their language bore some affinity to the Hebrew. Baron Lahontan writes that the Indian women of Canada purify themselves after travail—thirty days for a male child, and forty for a female; that during the said time they live apart from their husband; that the unmarried brother of the deceased husband marries the widow six months after his decease. . . . Malvenda . . . affirms, as doth Acosta, that the natives observed a year of jubilee, according to the usage of the Israelites. . . . By the Spanish authorities, the Peruvians and Mexicans were polygamists: but they had one principal wife, to whom they were married with certain solemnization; and murder, adultery, theft, and incest were punished with death."

Squier's "Antiquities of the State of New York," published in Buffalo, in 1851, confirms a number of the statements made by Adair, and reproduced in the above extracts from his "History of the American Indians." Squier's work also mentions other similarities that exist between the customs of the Israelites and the Indians.

Schoolcraft's "Ethnological Researches," vol. I (published in 1851) says respecting some of the Indians' customs:

"In regard to the manners, customs, habits, &c., of the wild tribes of the Western territory, a true and more correct type than any I have ever seen may be found in the ancient history of the Jews or Israelites after their liberation from Egyptian bondage. The "Medicine Lodge" of the Indian

may be compared to the place of worship or tabernacle of the Jews; and the sacrifices, offerings, purifications, ablutions, and anointings may be all found amongst and practiced by those people. The customs of Indian women at certain periods and after child-bearing are almost those of the Jewish women. They have to undergo a probation of a certain number of days on all such occasions, besides ablutions and purifications, before they are considered fit to enter on their domestic duties. During this probation they are considered unclean, and altogether unfit to enter the lodge or join with the family; which, indeed, they never attempt, but erect a hut for themselves, where they remain the whole time, having their food brought to them. The manner of mourning for a deceased relative is very similar to that of the Israelites. . . . There could be very numerous and similar analogies made between the manners and customs of those people and those of the Jews."

The following is taken from Rivero and Von Tscudi's "*Peruvian Antiquities*," translated from the original Spanish by Dr. Hawks, and published in New York in 1854.

"Like the Jews, the Indians offer their first-fruits; they keep their new moons, and the feast of expiations at the end of September, or in the beginning of October; they divide the year into four seasons, corresponding with the Jewish festivals. According to Charlevoix and Long, the brother of a deceased husband receives his widow into his house as a guest, and after a suitable time considers her as a legitimate consort. In some parts of North America circumcision is practiced, and of this Acosta and Lopez de Gomara make mention. There is also much analogy between the Hebrews and Indians in that which concerns various rites and customs, such as the ceremonies of purifications, the use of the bath, the ointment of bear's grease, fasting and the manner of prayer. The Indians likewise abstain from the blood of animals, as also from fish without scales; they consider divers quadrupeds unclean, as also certain birds and reptiles, and they are accustomed to offer as a holocaust the firstlings of the flock. Acosta and Emanuel de Moraer relate that various nations allow matrimony with those only of their own tribe or lineage, this being, in their view, a striking characteristic, very remarkable, and of much weight. But that which most tends to fortify the opinion as to the Hebrew origin of the American tribes, is a species of ark, seemingly like that of the Old Testament: this the Indians take with them to war; it is never permitted to touch the ground, but rests upon stones or pieces of wood, it being deemed sacrilegious and unlawful to open it or look into it. The American priests scrupulously guard their sanctuary, and the high priest carries on his breast a white shell adorned with precious stones, which recalls the *Urim* of the Jewish high priest; of whom we are also reminded by a band of white plumes on his forehead."

"It is not generally known that there is a marvellous coincidence between the traditional stories of the North-American Indians and the Bible story of the Israelites in Egypt.

"For instance, in the spring of each year, about the time of the Jewish Passover, a white dog—the animal must be without spot and blemish—is sacrificed by the Blood Indians of North-West Canada. The coincidence would be greater if a sheep were used; but there *are no sheep* in the territory, and hence a white dog is used.

"The blood of the animal is then sprinkled on the entrances to the Indian tepees or wigwams. The flesh of the animal is afterwards roasted at midnight, and the whole camp partake of it, *with loins girt*, and in full marching order, just as the Israelites did in the time of Pharaoh.

"When the food has been eaten, the entire camp silently march into the woods, a distance of several miles. There the medicine-men go apart, and

privately plant some tobacco-seed, the fruit of which, when ripe, is used for the same ceremony the following year.

"This is a marvelous coincidence, and the missionaries to that region say the custom has been handed down from times immemorial. This curious tradition is now published for the first time."—*Sunday Companion*, November 28, 1896.

"About three weeks since, a gentleman, who had recently returned from Tehuantepec, placed in our hands a volume composed of a number of layers of parchment, bound together with brazen clasps, and presenting appearances of great antiquity. It was obtained from an Indian curate—there are many such in that part of Mexico—and the history of it, as related by himself, is this:—He said that he had purchased it from a native trader, who once a year was in the habit of visiting a city among the mountains towards the south, which is inhabited exclusively by Aztecs. The name of this city is Coaxchencingo, which, in the language of the tribe to which the curate belongs, signifies 'The mystery of the mountains.' Within an inner apartment of the grand temple of Coaxchencingo are kept about fifty volumes similar in appearance to the one referred to, which, it is said by the priests, were preserved from the extensive collection of records known to have existed in Mexico at the time of the conquest, and which were destroyed by Cortez in the heat of his intemperate zeal against the paganism of the Aztecs. The volumes preserved at Coaxchencingo are regarded as holy things, and are only to be seen on days of great public rejoicing or solemnity. It was on an occasion of this kind that the Indian trader succeeded in abstracting one of them. This volume, which we have now before us, is filled with hieroglyphical characters, almost all of which are of course perfectly unintelligible to us. But one circumstance connected with it is of the highest importance, and tends to confirm the theory that the Aztecs are the descendants of a race which migrated to this continent from the eastern shores of Asia, about twenty centuries ago. It is remarkable that on one or two pages of the volume, immediately beneath the hieroglyphics, there are inscriptions in Greek characters, forming words in that language, but written backwards, in the oriental style. On the first page these Greek inscriptions run thus (we give English characters for want of Greek):—'*Notnap not sogol*,' which, reversed, reads, '*O logos ton panton*,'—literally, 'world of all,' or 'of all things.' It is to be presumed from this that the book is a history of the mysterious people among whom it was found; and, could it be thoroughly deciphered, it would no doubt thoroughly solve the problem of our aboriginal archæology. On another page there is a picture of water, and under it is the word, '*sessalaht*,' which is evidently '*thalasses*,'—Greek for 'the sea.' A representation of a vessel full of men accompanies this, and conveys the impression that it refers to a voyage or emigration from beyond the sea. The existence of these Greek words in this volume is a very singular circumstance, and proves conclusively that it must have been the work of some nation from the old continent, which held sufficient communication with Greeks to learn the language. That it is Asiatic is proved by the fact of the reversed writing, which method is used by all the Oriental nations. A coincident fact with this one is the discovery lately made of a Hebrew volume, found in the possession of a western tribe of Indians; an account of which has already been given in almost all the newspapers, and will doubtless be remembered by our readers. To what nation the authors of this Aztec volume belonged is yet a mystery, though the facts would seem to indicate a Jewish origin; for although there are no Hebrew characters in the book, the known fact of the disappearance of the Ten Tribes, the many similarities between the customs, rites, and ceremonies of the Aztecs and those of the ancient Jews, and other circumstances of the same nature, lend plausibility to the theory of a Hebrew origin. The elders and priests among the Jews were well

acquainted with Greek. In fact, it was the polite language of that era; and it is not surprising that, with a certain affectation of erudition, they should have made use of it in their writings. However, this is a point which we leave to those more learned than we are to decide. We may remark, nevertheless, *en passant*, that the physiognomy of the Aztec children, as described by the northern papers, is essentially Jewish. We understand that it is the intention of the proprietor of the strange volume referred to to submit it to the inspection of Professor Gliddon, whose hieroglyphic attainments may enable him to make some interesting discoveries in this new field of investigation."—New Orleans *Picayune*.

A work on the origin of the American Indians, by C. Colton, (London, 1833), says respecting their traditional belief:

"They assert that a book was once in possession of their ancestors, and along with this recognition they have traditions that the Great Spirit used to foretell to their fathers future events; that He controlled nature in their favor; that angels once talked with them; that all the Indian tribes descended from one man, who had twelve sons; that this man was a notable and renowned prince, having great dominions; and that the Indians, his posterity, will yet recover the same dominion and influence. They believe, by tradition, that the spirit of prophecy and miraculous interposition, once enjoyed by their ancestors, will yet be restored to them, and that they will recover the book, all of which has been so long lost."

The abundant testimony on record to prove that the American Indians are of Israelitish origin is too voluminous to reproduce in this paper. The above is sufficient and conclusive. Lord Kingsborough's great work on the "Antiquities of Mexico," published in 1830-37, was written especially to prove that the Indians were Israelites.

ACQUAINTED WITH THE OLD TESTAMENT RECORD.

That the ancient inhabitants of America were acquainted with the record of many events recorded in the Old Testament is amply shown by their traditions, their paintings, books and inscriptions.

Lord Kingsborough says concerning the Mexican Indians:

"I cannot fail to remark that one of the arguments which persuades me to believe that this nation descends from the Hebrews is to see the knowledge they have of the book of Genesis.

"It is impossible on reading what Mexican Mythology records of the war in heaven, and the fall of Zontemoque and other rebellious spirits; of the creation of light by the word of Toncatlecutli, and of the division of the waters; of the sin of Yzclacolinqui, and his blindness and his nakedness; and of the temptation of Suchequecal and her disobedience in gathering roses from a tree, and the consequent misery and disgrace of herself and all her posterity, not to recognize scriptural analogies. But the Mexican tradition of the deluge is that which bears the most unequivocal marks of having been derived from a Hebrew source. This tradition records that a few persons escaped in the Ahuchueti, or ark of fir, when the earth was swallowed up by the deluge, the chief of whom was named Palecath of Cipaquetona: and he invented the art of making wine; that Xelua, one of his descendants, or at least one of those who escaped in the ark, was present at the building of a high tower, which the succeeding generation constructed with a view of escaping from the deluge, should it again occur: the Toncatlecutli, incensed at their presumption, destroyed the tower by lightning, confounded their language and dispersed them; and that Xelua led a colony to the New World."—Mexican *Antiquities*, Vol. VI, p. 401.

The same writer also makes the following statement respecting the ancient Americans' knowledge of the story of Moses:

"A very remarkable representation of the ten plagues which God sent on Egypt, occurs in the eleventh and twelfth pages of the Borgia Ms. Moses is there painted, holding up in his left hand his rod, which became a serpent; and, with a furious gesture, calling down the plagues upon the Egyptians. These plagues were frogs, locusts, lice, flies, etc., all of which are represented in the pages referred to; but the last and most dreadful were the thick darkness which overspread Egypt for three days, and the death of the first-born of the Egyptians.

"The curious symbol of one serpent swallowing up others, likewise occurs in the nineteenth page of the same Ms. It is not extraordinary that the Mexicans, who were acquainted with one portion of the exodus—that relating to the children of Israel journeying from Egypt—should also not have been ignorant of another."

Bernardino de Sahagun, a Franciscan missionary and historian of the sixteenth century, author of "Historia Universal de Nueva España," says concerning the Aztec tradition of Eve:

"This woman was the first who existed in the world, and the mother of the whole human race; who was tempted by the serpent who appeared to her in the terrestrial paradise, and discoursed with her, to persuade her to transgress the command of God, and that is likewise true, that after having committed sin, etc., she bore a son and a daughter at the same birth, and that the son was named Cain and the daughter Calmana; and that afterwards she brought forth at a second birth, Abel, and his sister Delborah, so that she bore them by twin births."

Prof. Short, in his "North Americans of Antiquity," page 238, quotes from the native writer, Intellxochitl, as follows:

"It is found in the histories of the Toltecs, that this age and first world, as they call it lasted seventeen hundred and sixteen years; then men were destroyed by tremendous rains and lightnings from the sky, and even all the land, without exception of anything, and the highest mountains were covered up and submerged in water 'caxolmoletli' or fifteen cubits, and here they add other fables of how men came to multiply from the few who escaped from this destruction in a toptlipetlacali, this word signifies a close chest."

"No tradition has been more widely spread among nations than that of a Deluge. . . . It was the received notion under some form or other, of the most civilized people in the Old World, and of the barbarians of the New. The Aztecs combined with this some particular circumstances of a more arbitrary character, resembling the accounts of the east. They believed that two persons survived the Deluge, man named Coxcox and his wife. Their heads are represented in ancient painting, together with a boat floating on the waters at the foot of a mountain. A dove is also depicted, with a hieroglyphical emblem of language in his mouth, which he is distributing to the children of Coxcox, who were born dumb. The neighboring people of Michoacan, inhabiting the same high plains of the Andes, had a still further tradition, that the boat in which Tegpi, their Noah, escaped, was filled with various kinds of animals and birds. After some time, a vulture was sent out from it, but remained feeding on the dead bodies of the giants which had been left on the earth, as the waters subsided. The little humming bird, *huitzitzilin*, was then sent forth, and returned with a twig in his mouth. The coincidence of both these accounts with the Hebrew and Chaldean narratives is obvious."—"Conquest of Mexico," by W. H. Prescott, (pages 463-4).

LED BY YOUNGEST BROTHERS.

Fernando Montesinos, the Spanish historian of Peru says of the Peruvians:

"That nation was originated by a people led by four brothers, the youngest of these brothers assumed supreme authority, and became the first of a long line of sovereigns." (See Book of Mormon, Book of Jacob 1: 9-11).

ENGRAVED ON PLATES OF METAL—EGYPTIAN CHARACTERS AND LANGUAGE.

A writer by the name of C. W. Wandell says:

"There can be no well-founded objection to the Nephite record, from the material on which it is engraved; for the gold plate worn on Aaron's head, on which was written 'Holiness to the Lord,' proves that the idea was known to them. Bishop Watson says: 'The Hebrews went so far as to write their sacred books in gold, as we may learn from Josephus compared with Pliny.' Watson's Bib. and Theo. Dic. Art. Writing.

"Nor is the modern, book-like form of the volume any argument against its antiquity; for Bishop Watson in the same place says: 'Those books which were inscribed on tablets of wood, lead, brass or ivory were connected together by rings at the back, through which a rod was passed to carry them.'"

A New York paper of January 10, 1857, published the following letter:

NEW YORK, January 1, 1857.

"Mr. Editor. Sir,—In passing through Cincinnati, Ohio, a short time since, the following facts were communicated to me by Mr. Benjamin E. Styles of that place, who also exhibited to me a gold plate, found by him at the aforesaid place, in the year 1847, while excavating the earth for a cistern, a few feet above high water mark on the Ohio River. It was thrown out with the loose earth while excavating, about nine feet beneath the surface. Said plate is of fine gold, three or four inches in length, averaging about three-fourths of an inch in width, and about one-eighth of an inch in thickness, with the edges scalloped; in the face of which was beautifully set another plate of the same material, and fastened together by two pins, running through both. This latter plate is full of ancient raised letters, beautifully engraved upon its surface, the whole exhibiting fine workmanship. The plate was examined by a Dr. Wise, a very learned Rabbi of the Jewish Synagogue in Cincinnati, and editor of a Hebrew paper there, who pronounced the characters to be mostly ancient Egyptian. —Yours truly,

P. P. PRATT.

The following is a certificate of Messrs. Drake and Co., of St. Louis, who printed a *fac-simile* of the above mentioned gold plate:—

"We do hereby certify that we did print from a gold plate the above *fac-simile*, handed to us by Mr. Benjamin Styles, which he says he found while digging for a cistern in Cincinnati, Ohio. No. 1 is a frame of gold containing a thin plate, No. 2, and appears to have been executed by a very superior workman.

DRAKE and Co., Printers,
Saint Louis, Missouri."

The *Times and Seasons*, a periodical published in Nauvoo, Illinois, in its issue of May 1, 1843, contains a letter which reads:

"To the Editor of the *Times and Seasons*.

"On the 16th of April last a respectable merchant by the name of Robert Wiley, commenced digging in a large mound near this place: he excavated to the depth of 10 feet and came to rock; about that time the rain began to fall, and he abandoned the work. On the 23rd he and quite

a number of the citizens with myself, repaired to the mound, and after making ample opening, we found plenty of rock, the most of which appeared as though it had been strongly burned; and after removing full two feet of said rock, we found plenty of charcoal and ashes; also human bones that appeared as though they had been burned; and near the eciphalon a bundle was found that consisted of six plates of brass, of a bell shape, each having a hole near the small end, and a ring through them all, and clasped with two clasps, the ring and clasps appeared to be of iron very much oxidated, the plates appeared first to be copper, and had the appearance of being covered with characters. It was agreed by the company that I should cleanse the plates: accordingly I took them to my house, washed them with soap and water, and a woolen cloth; but finding them not yet cleansed I treated them with dilute sulphuric acid which made them perfectly clean, on which it appeared that they were completely covered with hieroglyphics that none as yet have been able to read. Wishing that the world might know the hidden things as fast as they come to light, I was induced to state the facts, hoping that you would give it an insertion in your excellent paper, for we all feel anxious to know the true meaning of the plates, and publishing the facts might lead to the true translation. They were found, I judged, more than twelve feet below the surface of the top of the mound.

"I am most respectfully a citizen of Kinderhook,

"W. P. HARRIS, M. D."

Accompanying the letter was a certificate verifying the above statements, and signed by nine citizens of Kinderhook.

The *Quincy Whig* a paper published in the same State, at the time also contained an account of the finding of the brass plates mentioned.

A writer in the *Foreign Quarterly Review* for October, 1836, says:

"Lastly, the eye of the antiquarian cannot fail to be both attracted and fixed by evidences of the existence of two great branches of the hieroglyphical language—both having striking affinities with the Egyptian, and yet distinguished from it by characteristics perfectly American. One is the picture-writing peculiar to the Mexicans, and which displays several striking traits of assimilation to the anaglyphs, and the historical tablets of the Egyptian temples. The second is a pure hieroglyphical language, to which little attention has hitherto been called, which appears to have been peculiar to the Tultecan or some still more ancient nation that preceded the Mexicans; which was as complete as the Egyptian in its double constituency of a symbolic and a phonetic alphabet, and which, as far as we can judge, appears to have rivalled the Egyptian in its completeness, while in some respects it excelled it in its regularity and beauty."

Dr. August Le Plongeon the eminent archæologist of New York in the *Review of Reviews* for July, 1895, announces the discovery that the *sacred alphabet* of the Mayas (the Indian tribe of Central America) is practically identical with that of the Egyptians, and that the grammatical structure of the two tongues is strikingly similar, many words and characters having the same meaning in both. His conclusion is that both these people acquired the art of writing from a common source.

This is in strict harmony with the statements made in the Book of Mormon. Nephi states in the first chapter of his book (Book of Mormon page 1) that he made his record, which was sacred, in "the language of the Egyptians." Mosiah confirms this statement (Mosiah 1: 4); and Mormon says that it was written in characters which his people called "reformed Egyptian," (Mormon 9: 32).

[TO BE CONTINUED.]