

Ether and Ebla

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In the spring of 1964, excavations were begun at Tell Mardikh, a large tell (ruin or obvious mound of sand and silt over an ancient site, generally a city), 35 miles south of Aleppo, Syria, by a team from the University of Rome. The leader of that project was Paolo Matthiae. The linguistic specialist Giovanni Pettinato, would work on any inscriptions or tablets found. After four years of work in the summer of 1968, they discovered evidence that Tell Mardikh was the ancient city of EBLA. This was based upon the discovery of a mutilated bust of a royal statue dedicated to the goddess Eshtar with a cuniform inscription in the Akkadian Language mentioning a King of Ebla named Ibbit-lim. But it was not until 1974 that a significant discovery was made [in the dig at level] Mardikh 11, B1. A State Archive containing forty clay tablets with cuniform writing was recovered. During the next year some 14,600 tablets were recovered. The tablets themselves are administrative documents concerning various aspects of the state government covering a time period encompassing five kings. (Wilson p. 150) Since then additional archive materials have been found numbering more than 42,000 tablets of a great library belonging to a lost kingdom that was one of the most important about 2350 BC. The "Ebla script on these tablets is described as precise and 'sophisticated,' an indication of the mature and well-established culture of the ancient Syrian capital." (Pettinato 1, p. 40 and cover) "There are [more than] ...32 Sumerian-Eblaite vocabularies. One with 18 duplicates translates a thousand words." (Pettinato 1, p. 45) It was a fantastic find!

Ebla

was a kingdom in Syria around 2400 BC, or right after the Great Flood, though the site may also have had a pre-flood history as well. "Reconstruction of the entire dynasty of Ebla in the period 2400-2250 [BC] permits the precise dating of the documents by kings..." (Pettinato 1, p. 45) The 2400 BC date is not exactly precise, but it is as near the beginning of the Dynasties as they can get at present, the 2250 date is a little more precise, but they are working on the details of dating all aspects of Ebla. Most or what we now know of Ebla was post-flood and after the Tower of Babel, so as precision is obtained in dating the Dynasties of Ebla so will precision be provided for a more accurate dating of the flood and the tower of Babel, and therefore the departure time from the region by the Jaredites. Ebla, at its peak, probably had a population of 260,000. (Fredman p. 32) For Biblical scholars, Ebla offers a better understanding of the Middle East in the Third Millennium B.C. The clay tablets so far discovered are among the greatest archaeological finds in recent years, and exceeds the total of all tablets and records of that type of most other sites combined. "The findings at Ebla undoubtedly mean a turning point in the history of the ancient Near East." (Wilson 2, p. 17) "The Ebla lists are the oldest vocabularies recorded in history, being 500 years earlier than any previously known...Many of the tablets [some eighteen inches long] are actually identical with some of those from other Mesopotamian sites [such as] Fara and Abu Salibikh, [which we will make mention of in future studies] No less than 50 tablets from Ebla have been identified as being also at those two Sumerian centers [to the south and east of Ebla]...by 1976 [they had provided] a word-list ...of 2,500...compared with the finds at Ugarit [a major site to the southwest of Ebla] where there are about 2,000 [different] words....The Ebla vocabulary is ...extensive giving place names, and also the names of people...There are now [1977] 114 separate tablets recovered that are bi-lingual dictionaries...Two tablets deal with case law, and the law code of Ebla must now be recognized as

the oldest ever yet found...one tablet refers to the fact that there was a time when all people spoke one language or one tongue...the whole Universe, the people in unison [spoke] to Enlil [God] in one tongue." (Wilson 2, p. 23-24-56) By 1992 the list of names had increased to 20,000, and was in the process of being tabulated... "for the Ebla corpus as a whole...[an] Onomastic Repertory of Ebla is based on a systematic culling of the data [20,000 names] from the text editions [available]...closely correlated ...definitive text edition...and in electronic format as Cybernetica Mesopotamica: Texts (CMT)." (Buccellati p. 109) Such publications are hard to obtain, but as the sources become available the useful data will be incorporated into future studies. This study is merely an introduction to the content of these ancient sources. Someone no doubt, will in the future, go into much more detail.

So we ask the question: What does Ebla have to do with the Book of Mormon? To begin with let's examine a passage of scripture in the Bible. In Exodus 6:3 we are given the impression that the Lord had not been referred to by the Name JEHOVAH, "And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name Jehovah was I not known to them." Yet in the Inspired Translation of the Bible Joseph Smith changed the passage to imply that the name "Jehovah" had been used before, "And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob. I am the Lord God Almighty, the Lord Jehovah. And was not my name known unto them?" What an interesting subtle change. Did Joseph get it right? Most of the changes made in the Inspired Revision of the Bible were made during 1830 and 1831 with a few additions after that. In 1842 portions of the Book of Abraham were published in the Times and Seasons. Additional evidence that Jesus Christ had been known as Jehovah was provided in Abraham 1:16 "My name is Jehovah" This was said to Abraham while he was in Ur. And in Abraham 2:8 "My name is Jehovah." All of these at least 700 years before Moses compiled the Torah. In 2 Ne 22:2, in the Book of Mormon, earlier in 1829, is further evidence that anciently Christ used that name. "...before the pleasing bar of the great Jehovah.." (Moro 10:34) The D&C also has references to the use of that name by Jesus including "according to the decrees of the great Jehovah." (D&C 128:9) The LDS church from its beginning emphatically stated in its Standard works and revelations that Jesus Christ went by the name of Jehovah in all dispensations from Adam to the present.

Now all that was needed would be some evidence of this from some ancient discovery. Could Ebla be one of those?

In the Book of Ether, near the end of the Book of Mormon, we learn that right after the flood and at about the time of the Tower of Babel (Ether 1:33) about or just before 2400 BC among the Jaredites there were a number of individuals who had names containing the abbreviation of the divine name, the Theophoric elements -iah, -ah, -ihah, -da, -om, and -um, denoting Jehovah. For example: Maha (fourth descendant of Jared), Ahah, (the fortieth descendant of Jared), Amnigada, (thirty-fifth descendant of Jared), Orihah, (Fifth descendant of Jared), Jacom, (son of Jared) and Corientum, (eighteenth descendant of Jared). This is internally consistent with Joseph Smith's revision of Ex 6:3, but it is not an independent confirmation of Jehovah being

known anciently before Abraham or Moses, since the Book of Mormon is an alleged product of Joseph Smith. So we want evidence from some other acceptable source. Consider again, that Ebla was a small empire about 2300 BC, after the Tower of Babel. The Jaredites left just before or at the time of the Tower of Babel. The Theophoric elements found among the Jaredites names would suggest that the names of Ebla at some time or other would reflect the same hypocoristicon and abbreviations for Jehovah.

"About 500 gods are named in association with Ebla, so clearly it was basically a polytheistic society. However, "il" [later 'el'] was especially the name for "God" [Elohim], and had become the name for a specific god. Professor Pettinato equates this god with the 'El of the Ugaritic tablets'. [a future study will treat the Ugaritic tablets] In Eber's time [the third king of Ebla], 'Ya' was associated with God [Jehovah]. He [Pettinato] makes the point that until the reign of Ebrum all personal names contained the theophorous element -il, but 'from Ebrum on -il was substituted for by 'Ya.' [an abbreviation for Yahweh, or Jehovah] There were certain alterations in personal names, such as Mi-ka-il [Micha-el] which means, 'who is like El?' which was changed to Mi-ka-Ya. 'who is like Jehovah.' En-na-il became En-na-Ya; Is-ra-il, [Israel] became Is-ra-Ya. Pettinato makes states that this 'amply demonstrates that at Ebla at least Ya had the same value as -il and points to a specific deity, [Jehovah]" (Wilson 2, pp. 27, 84-85) The use of Ya began at the time Ebrum had become King, and seemed to have continued in many of the names that came thereafter. The next two kings were his son and grandson. They seemed to favor Jehovah also.

Thus, among the names found at Ebla there are many that contain the Jehovah element Ya confirming the use of this theophoric element contemporary with the Book of Ether and authenticating Joseph's inspired change of Exodus, and the use of the Theophoric elements in the Jaredite records, and for that matter in the entire Book of Mormon.

More examples from the Ebla tablets are as follows: "Ennaniya (Jehovah has mercy on me), Mikaya (who is like Jehovah). Re-i-na-Adad, telling the world that 'Adad (a god) is our 'Shepherd', compare with 'The Lord is my shepherd.'" (Wilson 2, p. 28). The "i" in Re-i-na-Adad and other names means "is", this is called a Lemna in Onomastic analysis, and is found abundantly in Ancient Semitic names.

But who was this Ebrum who when he became ruler of Ebla started to use the

abbreviated form, the hypocoristicon, Ya for an abbreviation for Jehovah in names? "Thus the recognition of Yahweh in a new way is very possibly linked with the people who had ethnic associations with the people later known in the bible as Hebrews." (Wilson 2, p. 93) In Biblical and Eblaitic history the name Ebrium, [Eber] with a theophoric ending itself of -um, was used only for that one individual, just once as far as can be ascertained from the present records. Eber was the great-grandson of Shem, the second son of Noah (Moses 8:12), Eber would have become King of Ebla after the Tower of Babel episode because the languages had been confounded when he came to rule, and he would not have been known to the Jaredites, unless he knew them from his very early and young life. His name does not appear in the Book of Mormon record and perhaps might have only been incidentally referred to in the Brass Plates.

This helps narrow down the time of the Flood. Eber was the great-grandson of Shem. Within the first three generations after the flood the peoples had spread to many areas, established kingdoms and city states, and some became so involved in apostasy that they built a tower in arrogance and suffered the confusion of tongues. The fourth generation, such as Eber, would have suffered the confusion of tongues. The grandson of Noah's son Ham, Nimrod, ruled in Mesopotamia, in the southern region south of what we now know as Bagdad, to the head of the Persian Gulf. Noah's priesthood garment was "stolen by Ham, who handed it down to his son Cush, who later gave it to Nimrod. Nimrod used this garment to obtain power and glory among men, and as a means to deceive man and to gain unconquerable strength....the people made him king over them...He first became king of Babylon, and ...through skillful and subtle speeches [was able] to bring the whole of mankind to the point of accepting him as the absolute ruler of the earth." (Nibley, 1994, p. 711) Nimrod would have been just one generation before Eber. The tower of Babel was during the time of Nimrod "the first on earth to be a mighty man." (Gen. 10:8) He was the first to make war, and founded the cities of Babel, Erech and Accad in Shinar, southern Babylon, and then the cities of Nineveh, Rehoboth-Ir, Calah (Nippur) and Resen in Assyria, a country later referred to in the Bible as "the land of Nimrod" (Mic 5:6). It was Nimrod who conceived the tower of Babel. Within one generation, his, the languages of man were confused. The Jaredites belonged to the generation of Nimrod, and Eber was in the next generation. The Jaredites would have been familiar with many of the participants in the great events that transpired then, and some of their names surely would reflect what was currently being used and used thereafter, because it appears that though languages were confused, the names seemed to have been preserved through the confusion for the most part, at least in the Semitic languages that followed the Tower and developed in that area and nearby civilizations. Both Noah and Shem would have lived through these episodes, then they lived on to the time of Abraham, who knew them both.

"Eber [Ebrium] is considered to be the person for whom the Hebrews were named, as in the phrase 'all the children of Eber' (Gen 10:21). The names Eber and

Hebrew share the same root, a verb meaning 'to cross over.' Since Abraham came from Harran beyond the Euphrates River, scholars suggest that the name signifies the origin of the Hebrews, who would have crossed over the river to reach the Promised Land. In Luke's genealogy of Jesus (Luke 3:23-38), Eber is Shem's great-grandson." (Readers Digest Ass. p. 87)

Hallo states: "...it is possible that Ebla's Ebrum is the link in genealogy between Noah and Abraham. These tables reopen the whole question of the historical authority of the Book of Genesis." (Hallo p. 139) This, however, would be in favor of an earlier existence of the Biblical narrative. Some biblical critics do not want to accept that. The LDS stand is that the Biblical narratives are correct in essential substance, though not perhaps in historical detail. But LDS revelations have filled in that historical detail back to Adam.

Eber or "Ebrum-or should we say Ebrum or even Ibrum since, to quote Edmond Sollberger, 'the etymology of the name is uncertain', but a connection with Akkadian Ibrum 'friend' is by no means ruled out'...On one view, he was a great king, not only of the city of Ebla but of an entire empire...whose memory may still reverberate in the Hebrew Bible" (Hallo p.139-140) Hallo then applies the rules of Prosopography, "or the study of individuals identified by their personal names....to be distinguished from Onomastics, the study of names from the linguistic point of view." (Hallo p. 140) As further research is published, in time it will be known with more surety "Whether he [Ebrum] was king or vizier or something else." (Hallo p. 150). Whatever, it is certain that he and his son and grandson held sway over Ebla for more than 30 years, and affected domestic affairs as well as far reaching influence in the Empire, and changed the suffix endings of names to incorporate the use of 'Yah'. "That 'one time' in Ebla's history was just the time when Eber was king, thus the recognition of Yahweh in a new way is very possibly linked with the people who had ethnic associations with the people later known in the Bible as Hebrews." (Wilson 2, p. 93) "This development that permitted the rise of 'Yah' might well have been a time when some strong character (perhaps Ebrum himself) challenged the people to return to the concept of one true God. It does seem that they knew of such a God." (Wilson 2:85). Later publications improve on the certainty of the matter.

"The Tablets [found at Ebla] permit the reconstruction of the dynasty of Ebla at this period [c. 2400 to 2250 BC] and even the structure itself of the state. The names of the following kings, in order of their reign, have been preserved: (1) Igris-Halam, (2) Ar-Ennum, (3) Ebrum (4)

Ibbi-Sipis [son of Ebrum], (5) Dubuhu-Ada [grandson of Ebrum] and (6) Irbab-Damu. ...the most interesting, also for biblical reminiscences, is surely Ebrum, whose name is written Eb-uru-um, with two possible readings: Eb-ru-um, whose resemblance to Eber, the father of the Semites according to Gen 10:21, is truly surprising, or Eb-ri-um, which inevitably elicits ibri, 'Hebrew.' Of the two possibilities, I would choose the second." (Pettinato, 1, p. 47)

"Ya is still considered a crux interpretum so far as it could be rather understood as a hypocoristicon, i.e. a shortened form...the alteration in the personal names [by the substitution of Yah in the suffixes instead of Il -il] ..amply demonstrates that at Ebla at least Ya had the same value as Il [or El] and points to a specific deity. Now the new fact revealed by the Ebla tablets is this: while till the reign of Ebrum all personal names contained the theophorous element -Il, (il)], from Ebrum on, il was substituted for by Ya....it appears evident that under Ebrum a new development in West Semitic religious concepts took place that permitted the rise of Ya. The form Ya, may be considered a shortened form of Yaw, [Jehovah]." Pettinato, 1, p. 48). Pettinato was one of the excavators at Ebla. Thus, the records now available show that Jehovah was known by Semitic people more than a thousand years before Moses compiled Exodus, and of course Jehovah was known by all the prophets back to Adam.

Scholars are on record that the Babylonian and Sumerian creation and flood stories are the sources for the Biblical account, rather than the other way around. The bias of Scholars is great and is expressed quite clearly by Krebernik where his personal bias, reflecting that of others, is plain. He refers to a name he has selected to ..."represent the prefixed verbal forms in personal names [then ending with the hypocoristicon for god] of ha-ra-il, 'god has chosen'...composed of a predicative noun and its subject...the interpretation 'il has chosen' appears questionable not only for morphological, but also for semantic reasons, since it seems to presuppose Hebrew theology in the IIIrd millennium [late third of the third millenium, about 2300 BC]. (Krebernik p. 46) The references to Elohim by an abbreviated form -il, utilized in names as a prefix or suffix, and Jehovah by abbreviated forms such as Ya, um, on, etc., are certainly Hebrew and certainly theological, cannot be accepted that early, historically! It is plain to see that a revelation and a restoration of divine knowledge were required. The LDS doctrines with consistent and abundant verification and confirmation by these ancient documents, therefore put all scholars on notice that their bias and views are not acceptable and that there is considerable substance to these ancient records that to neglect them is to do so at their intellectual and scholarly peril.

So the Book of Mormon is found to be consistent with contemporary groups and their ancient records, which substantiate Joseph's revision of Exodus and that the ancients had a knowledge

of Jehovah.

One can also look within the Bible to find names of people prior to Exodus that contain the theophoric construct or element of -iah or -ah: i.e. Mt. Moriah, Methuselah. Even Sarai, Abraham's wife; her name was changed to Sarah, a name containing the -ah, Jehovah element, a change sanctioned by the lord Himself. It is unlikely that Joseph Smith was aware of these constructs. Under inspiration he merely re-translated the Exodus passage to reflect what was actually intended in that verse, and records of Ebla are a confirmation that has emerged in our day to justify that change.

Turning now from Ebla, there are some other interesting concepts to examine as we consider the Book of Ether. Dr. Hugh Nibley has commented:

"Jaredites proper names have a peculiar ring of their own. Their most characteristic feature is the ending in -m, this is called mimation and is actually found among the most ancient languages of the Near and Middle East, where it was followed by later nunation, the use of -n, or ending in -n, is the most characteristic feature of classical Arabic and also of Nephite proper names...The correct use and sequence of mimation and nunation in the Book of Mormon speaks strongly for authenticity of the record, for the principle is a relatively recent discover in philology." (Nibley I, 243

Fourteen of the sixty-three names found in the Book of Ether end in -um or -m, twenty two percent of the totals. It is unlikely that Joseph could have chanced upon the significance of mimation. Rather, these names are of ancient origin even as claimed by the Book of Mormon.

John Tvedtnes wrote an interesting paper in 1977 published by BYU. His paper is well worth reading. Basically he demonstrated that "the phonemes, the smallest units of sound, used in the different names show an obvious difference in language style between the Nephite and the Jaredites, and that the Nephite phonemes are essentially Hebrew, whereas the Jaredites were of Mesopotamian origin, an Early Semitic Language." (Tvedtnes) Or even the Adamic language.

In a strange way, the texts from Ebla also confirm that the Bible itself is of much earlier origin than the Academics want to admit. Among the divine names found at Ebla is the name Kemis, "one may again marvel at the reliability of the Biblical text which on one occasion preserves the unusual form Kemis; this suggests that the Masorettes [Jews who preserved the Masoretic texts from which the King James Version was translated] had very ancient documents at their disposal." (Pettinato 2, p. 48)

Future studies will extract from Ebla substantial additional parallels to the Book of Mormon and additional information will come from other ancient City States of Mesopotamia, including Urartu to the far northeast of Ebla, Ugarit to the southwest of Ebla on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, Mari to the southeast of Ebla in the central Assyrian area, Kish of Akkad near the ancient site of Babylon and perhaps near to where the Jaredites originated from, and other areas such as Carchemish, a Hittite Capital, on the Euphrates River where Abraham may have passed through to cross the River after he left Harran on his way to the Promised land and Elam, (2 Ne 21:11, Isaiah 11) of the Persian region from ancient Susa and eastward, which is only now yielding to translation, just beyond Lagash with its important texts, all flourishing during the early and middle part of the third Millennium BC. (see Saggs and Gurney) All of these will provide material for studies to be included in this series, much of which was not available until the last fifteen years.

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