

Ether 10 — Never Could Be a People More Blessed — The Tyrant, the Long Captivities, and a Land at Its Height

Ether 10: the middle generations of the Jaredite kings, a swift march through reigns righteous and wicked. The chapter runs the cycle many times — Shez rebuilds a broken people in righteousness; the tyrant Riplakish taxes and imprisons and builds spacious buildings on forced labor until the people rise and kill him; Morianton eases burdens and prospers; kings rise and fall, some in righteousness and some in captivity for whole lifetimes. At the center, in the days of Lib, the land reaches its material height — industry, metalwork, fine cloth, cities by the narrow neck — and Moroni declares that never could be a people more blessed than were they, and more prospered by the hand of the Lord. Yet the chapter ends with the robbers and the old murderous oaths rising again under Com. It is the chapter of a civilization at the summit of its prosperity, with the seeds of its destruction already stirring beneath.

Ether 10 is the chapter of the middle Jaredite generations, and it moves fast — compressing many reigns into a single sweep, the cycle of righteousness and wickedness and captivity turning over and over. Moroni is abridging hard here, giving each king a verse or two, because the pattern matters more than the particulars. And the pattern is the now-familiar rhythm: a righteous king rebuilds, prosperity comes, a wicked king or a tyrant arises, the people suffer, sometimes a whole generation lives and dies in captivity, then another righteous king restores. But the chapter has a center, and the center is the material summit of the entire Jaredite civilization. In the days of king Lib, the people reach a height of industry and prosperity Moroni describes in loving detail — metalwork, fine cloth, tools, cities by the narrow neck of land — and he pronounces over them one of the great superlatives of the book: *never could be a people more blessed than were they, and more prospered by the hand of the Lord* (v. 28). Yet the chapter ends with the robbers and the old murderous oaths stirring again under Com. The chapter is a portrait of a civilization at its peak, with the worm already in the fruit.

Hebrew Word Studies

massa / 'osher / shevuah-qadmonim (מַשָּׂא / עֹשֶׁר / קִדְמוֹנִים) — **burden, load, that which is laid upon / riches, wealth, prosperity / the oaths of the ancients** (cf. **shevuah, oath**) v. 5, vv. 22, 28, v. 33. Three Hebrew ideas frame the chapter. *Massa* — burden, load — stands behind Riplakish laying *that upon men's shoulders which was grievous to be borne* (v. 5). *Massa* is the word for a heavy load, and it carries deep covenant resonance: the Lord *made light the burdens (massa)* of Alma's people in bondage (Mosiah 24:14–15), and Isaiah promises that the yoke and the *burden* shall be broken (Isa. 9:4; 10:27). Riplakish is the anti-deliverer: where the Lord lifts burdens, the tyrant lays them on, the *massa* of taxes and forced labor crushing the shoulders the Lord would relieve. *Osher* — riches — is the chapter's summit-word, behind *exceedingly rich* and *never could be a people more blessed* (vv. 22, 28). *Osher* is morally neutral in Hebrew — a blessing from God (the *osher* of Abraham, of Solomon) that becomes a snare when the heart fastens on it. The chapter's *osher* is explicitly *from the hand of the Lord* (v. 28), genuine blessing — but it stands at the dangerous height from which pride and the love of gain descend, and the very next verses show the robbers rising. *Osher* given by God becomes the soil in which the lust for gain grows, unless the heart remembers the Giver. The combinations return as *oaths after the manner of the ancients* (v. 33) — the *shevuah* (oath) of chapter 8, descended from Cain, the perverted covenant that binds men to murder for *power and gain*. The chapter's three words trace the civilization's whole shape: the tyrant lays on the *massa* (burden) and is overthrown; the people rise to *osher* (riches) at the hand of the Lord; and beneath the riches the ancient *shevuah* (murderous oath) stirs again — burden, blessing, and the seed of ruin, all in one sweep of generations.

From the Chapter's Architecture

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