
Ether 15 — Save It Were Coriantumr and Shiz — The End of a Nation, and the Last Words of Ether

Ether 15: the final extinction of the Jaredites. Coriantumr, recovering from his wounds, remembers Ether's words and counts the cost — nearly two millions of his people slain — and at last repents and offers to give up the kingdom to spare the people. But the people are past stopping; twice an epistle of peace is sent and twice the war resumes, until the Spirit of the Lord ceases striving and Satan has full power over their hearts. The two armies gather everyone left alive and fight day after day, weeping each night over their dead, sleeping upon their swords, until the numbers dwindle to a handful, then to two men: Coriantumr and Shiz. Coriantumr smites off the head of Shiz, who raises up, struggles for breath, and dies — and Coriantumr falls as if lifeless. Ether finishes his record and goes his way, his last written words a perfect submission: whether translated or slain, it mattereth not, if I am saved in the kingdom of God. It is the end of the book of Ether and the end of a civilization.

Ether 15 is the end — of the Jaredite nation, of the book of Ether, and of one of the two great civilizations the Book of Mormon records. It is among the most sobering chapters in all of scripture, the slow, methodical extinction of an entire people, counted down soul by soul until two men stand on a field of millions of corpses. The chapter opens with a flicker of hope: Coriantumr, recovering from his wounds, *remembers the words which Ether had spoken*, counts *nearly two millions of his people* slain, and at last *begins to repent* and offers to give up the kingdom to spare the people (vv. 1–4). But the repentance comes too late to save the nation — the people are past stopping, and twice the war resumes after peace is offered, until *the Spirit of the Lord had ceased striving with them, and Satan had full power over the hearts of the people* (v. 19). From there the chapter becomes a relentless countdown, the armies fighting day after day, weeping each night over their dead, *sleeping upon their swords*, the numbers falling — to fifty-two and sixty-nine, to thirty-two and twenty-seven, to two — until only Coriantumr and Shiz remain, and Coriantumr smites off the head of Shiz. The chapter is the death of a people, and it ends with Ether's last written words, a perfect submission to the will of God.

Hebrew Word Studies

***shakal* / *natash* / *yeshu'ah* (שָׁכַל / נָטַשׁ / יְשׁוּעָה) — to be bereaved, to lose children, to be made childless / to abandon, to give up, to forsake / salvation, deliverance (the root of the name Jesus) vv. 2, 16; v. 19; v. 34.** Three Hebrew words frame the end. *Shakal* — to be bereaved of children — lies beneath the relentless mention of *their wives and their children* among the slain (vv. 2, 15) and the nightly *howling and... lamentation for the loss of the slain* (v. 16). *Shakal* is the deepest Hebrew word for bereavement, the loss that makes a parent childless; Rachel weeping for her children, refusing comfort (Jer. 31:15), is *shakal*. The Jaredites' nightly weeping is the howl of a whole nation made *shakal*, bereaved of its children, grieving by night and adding to the grief by day. *Natash* — to abandon, to forsake, to give up — stands behind *they were given up* (v. 19): the Spirit ceased striving and the people were *given up* to hardness and destruction. *Natash* is the word for God forsaking or giving over (as in *I have forsaken mine house*, Jer. 12:7); and the horror of v. 19 is the divine *natash* — God giving the people up, no longer striving, surrendering them to the Satan whose full power they had chosen. This is the gravest judgment in scripture: not God's active destruction but his withdrawal, his *natash*, leaving a people to the ruin they insisted on. *Yeshu'ah* — salvation — is the chapter's final and redeeming word, in Ether's *if it so be that I am saved in the kingdom of God* (v. 34). *Yeshu'ah* is deliverance, rescue, and it is the root of the name *Yeshua* — Jesus. At the very end of a book full of *shakal* (bereavement) and *natash* (a people given up), the last word is *yeshu'ah* — one man's quiet hope of salvation in the kingdom of God. The civilization is lost, given up, bereaved of all its children; and the prophet who watched it die closes the record clinging to the one thing the whole book pointed toward — *yeshu'ah*, salvation, the rescue that bears the name of the Christ the brother of Jared saw at the beginning.

From the Chapter's Architecture

```cross-references Gen. 4:8 (the first murder, brother against brother — the source of the war that ends here); Jer. 12:7 (I have forsaken / natash mine house, I have left mine heritage — the giving-up of v. 19); Jer. 31:15 (Rachel weeping for her children, refusing comfort — the shakal-grief of vv. 2, 16); Lev. 26:36–39 (the curse of a people wasting away, falling when none pursue — the self-destruction of vv. 19–22); Deut. 28:53–57 (the horrors of a people under the fulness of the curse — the extremity of vv. 15–22); Judg. 7:22 (the Lord sets every man's sword against his fellow — the mutual slaughter of vv. 6–22); 1 Sam. 17:51 (David smites off the head of Goliath with his own sword — the parallel to Coriantumr smiting off the head of Shiz, v. 30); Ps. 7:15–16 (the violent man's mischief returns on his own head — Shiz, sworn to vengeance, beheaded, v. 30); Isa. 9:19–21 (a people consuming one another, no man shall spare his brother — vv. 6–22); Isa. 63:10 (they rebelled and vexed his holy Spirit: therefore he was turned to be their enemy — the Spirit ceased striving, v. 19); Ezek. 33:11 (as I live... I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn... why will ye die? — Coriantumr's repentance too late, vv. 3, 19); Rom. 1:24–28 (God gave them up to a reprobate mind — the given up of v. 19); Gen. 6:3 (my spirit shall not always strive with man — the ceasing of v. 19); Omni 1:20–22 (Coriantumr found by the people of Zarahemla and dies among them — the fulfillment of his survival, vv. 29–32; Ether 13:21); Mosiah 8:7–11; 21:25–27 (the people of Limhi find the twenty-four plates — the record Ether hid, v. 33); Mosiah 28:17–19 (the Jaredite record's account of the destruction — vv. 1–33); Mormon 6:11–15 (the Nephite extinction at Cumorah, the same hill Ramah — the parallel destruction, v. 11); Mormon 8:2–4 (Moroni alone, whither I go it mattereth not — Ether's matching submission, v. 34); Ether 13:20–21 (the prophecy that all should be destroyed save Coriantumr — fulfilled, vv. 29–32); 3 Ne. 4:33; 9:2 (the secret combinations and their destruction — the end of the Jaredite combinations); D&C 1:33 (my Spirit shall not always strive with man... and when I depart, the day of calamity — the ceasing of v. 19). ```