

The Great Tower and the Crumbling Keystone

Why the Myth of Babel Poses a Foundational Crisis for the Book of Mormon



Based on "The Tower of Babel and Mormon Scripture,"
Mormon Stories Podcast Ep. 1626 & ldsdiscussions.com/babel

Mormon Scripture Chains Itself to a Literal Tower of Babel



The Great Tower

The Book of Mormon's credibility is not independent of biblical myths. Its entire Jaredite narrative—the origin story for one of its two major civilizations—begins at the Tower of Babel, presenting the Genesis story as a physical, historical event.

"...Jared came forth with his brother and their families... from the great tower at the time the Lord confounded the language of the people..."
—Ether 1:33

The LDS Church Teaches the Tower of Babel as Literal History, Not Parable.

While many faiths interpret Genesis origin stories metaphorically, Mormonism's foundational claims require a literal Babel for the Book of Mormon to be historical. Church leaders and official publications have consistently affirmed this stance.



“Latter-day Saints accept the story as it is presented in Genesis. Further, we have the second witness of the Book of Mormon... The book of Ether is a record of the people of Jared, who were scattered at the time the Lord confounded the language of the people when they were building a tower to get to heaven.”

—Donald W. Parry, BYU Professor, *Ensign*, 1998

But Modern Scholarship Shows the Tower of Babel is a Myth.

Overwhelming evidence from linguistics, archaeology, and textual criticism demonstrates that the Tower of Babel event, as described in Genesis, did not happen. We will examine the three major cracks in this “keystone” story.

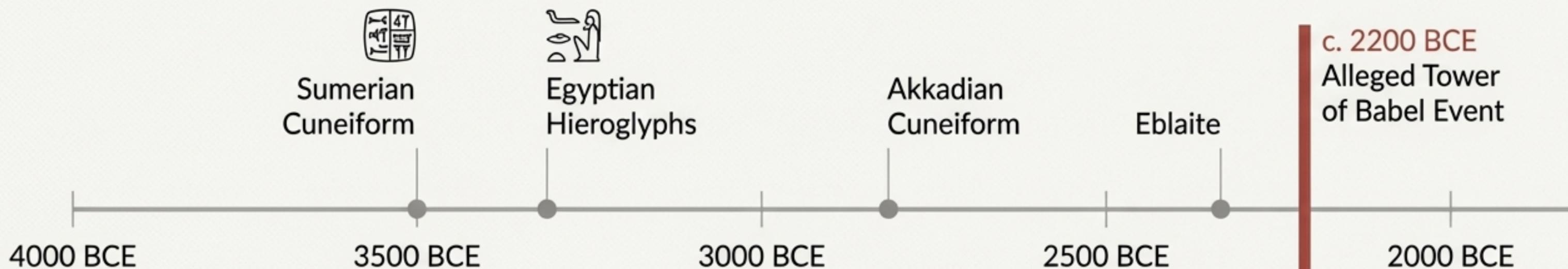
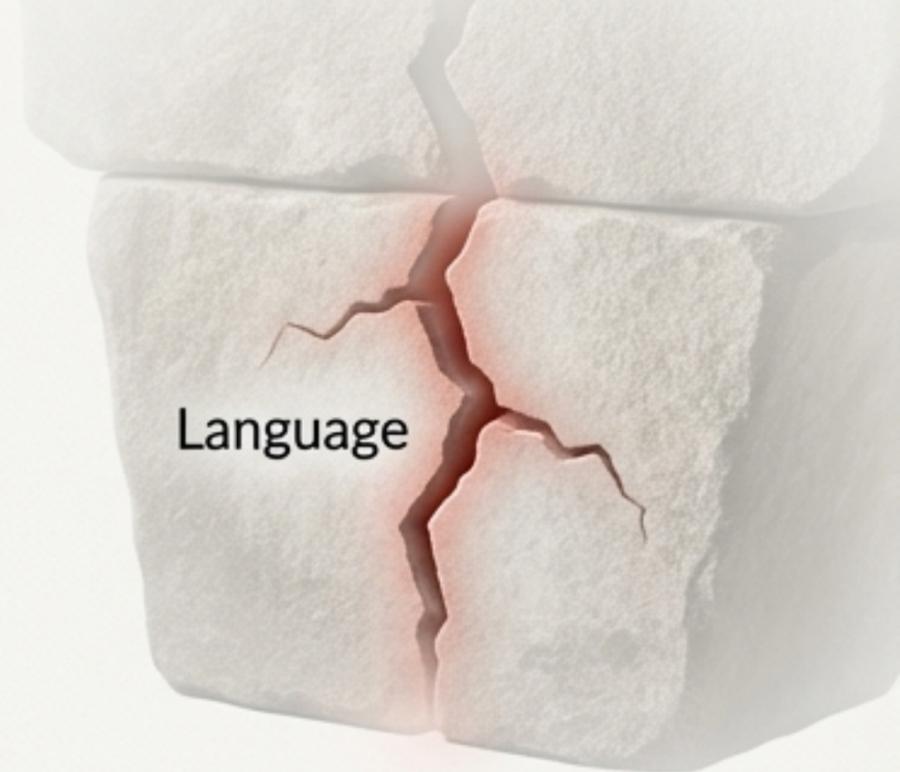
1. Language

2. Population

3. Origin

Crack #1: Diverse Languages Existed Long Before the Tower of Babel

The Genesis story claims one universal language was confounded around 2200 BCE. However, written records prove multiple, distinct language families were well-established centuries, even millennia, earlier.



Genesis 10, the chapter immediately preceding the Babel story, itself refers to different peoples being divided "everyone after his tongue," a direct internal contradiction.

Crack #2: The Population Numbers are Impossible.

The biblical timeline allows for only a tiny population to exist just 100 years after a **global flood**. This group could not have built a great tower, nor does it align with archaeological evidence of a thriving planet.



Biblical Implication c. 2200 BCE

Descendants of Noah's 8 Survivors



~150 people

Archaeological Estimate c. 3000-2000 BCE

Estimated World Population



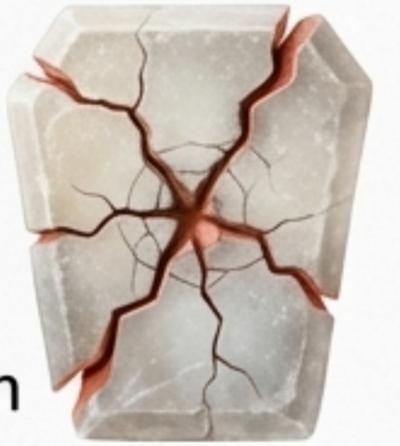
14-72 Million people

Crack #3: The Story Itself Was Borrowed From Earlier Myths

Language

Population

Origin



The narrative of a tower, angered gods, and confounded languages is not unique to the Bible. It closely parallels earlier Mesopotamian myths, strongly suggesting the Genesis account is a Hebrew adaptation of local legends.

Key Example: An Assyrian myth from the 8th century BCE describes a wicked king in Babylon whose people are building a strong tower. A god becomes angry, “confounded their speech,” makes their counsel “confused,” and scatters them abroad.



The Tower of Babel is an Etiological Myth, Not History.

Scholars agree the story was compiled late (c. 6th–5th cent. BCE during the Babylonian Captivity) for two reasons:

1. **Etiology:** To create an origin story explaining linguistic diversity.
2. **Polemic:** As a theological argument against Babylonian power and their massive ziggurat temples, like the Etemenanki.



If the Tower is a Myth, the Entire Jaredite Narrative Collapses.

The Book of Mormon makes a testable claim by grounding its origin story in a specific historical event. Because that event is non-historical, the narrative built upon it cannot be historical either.



→ No 24 Jaredite
Plates

→ No Jaredite
Migration

→ No Literal
Tower of Babel

A Mythical Event Cannot Produce Physical, Sacred Artifacts.

The Book of Ether claims that following the Tower event, the Lord physically touched 16 stones to provide light for the Jaredite barges. Two of these stones were preserved as sacred interpreters.

“...the two stones that were sealed up to translate the plates of Jared were also non-historical... those same two seer stones were later used as the Nephite interpreters.” —LDS Discussions



The Collapse Reaches Joseph Smith's Translation Claim.

If the Nephite Interpreters originated from a mythical event, they too are mythical. This means Joseph Smith's foundational story of finding physical interpreters with the gold plates cannot be historical. It strongly suggests he created the story, drawing on his background with "seer stones" in 19th-century treasure digging.



Was it a Different “Great Tower”? The Text Says No.

Some apologists suggest the Book of Ether refers to another tower, not the biblical Babel. This is contradicted by the Book of Mormon’s own text.

Identical Language

Genesis 11	Ether 1
“ confound their language, ” “scattered them abroad... upon the face of all the earth.”	“ confounded the language,” “scattered upon all the face of the earth.”

Identical Timeline



The “Smoking Gun”

The Book of Ether places the tower in the “valley of Nimrod”—the same biblical figure credited with building the Tower of Babel.

Ether 2:1



The Book of Mormon is a Product of its 19th-Century Worldview.

The inclusion of a literal Tower of Babel, a literal global flood, and a literal Adam and Eve reflects the common understanding of the Bible in Joseph Smith's era. This worldview, now superseded by modern scholarship, anchors the Book of Mormon's creation to early 19th-century America, not ancient America.



The Book of Mormon's Historicity Fails Before We Discuss Horses, Steel, or DNA.

The explicit dependence on foundational biblical myths is a fatal flaw in the Book of Mormon's claim to be an ancient, historical record. When the foundation is a myth, the structure built upon it cannot stand.



The Evidence Demands a Re-evaluation



Understanding the mythical nature of the Bible's origin stories is a critical first step to understanding the 19th-century origins of Mormonism.

Resources for Further Study

In-Depth Essay: ldsdiscussions.com/babel

Source Discussion: Mormon Stories Podcast, Episode 1626



LDS Discussions



Mormon Stories
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