

“Eternally Indebted to Your Heavenly Father”

Lesson
15
Summary

Mosiah 1–3

Scripture Summary:

King Benjamin teaches his sons the language and prophecies of their fathers—Their religion and civilization have been preserved because of the records kept on the various plates—Mosiah is chosen as king and is given custody of the records and other things. [About 130—124 B.C.]

King Benjamin addresses his people—He recounts the equity, fairness, and spirituality of his reign—He counsels them to serve their heavenly King—Those who rebel against God shall suffer anguish like unquenchable fire. [About 124 B.C.]

King Benjamin continues his address—The Lord Omnipotent shall minister among men in a tabernacle of clay—Blood shall come from every pore as he atones for the sins of the world—His is the only name whereby salvation comes—Men can put off the natural man and become saints through the atonement—The torment of the wicked shall be as a lake of fire and brimstone. [About 124 B.C.]

Supplemental Holy Land and Jewish insights:

Nephi/King Benjamin Give Identical Keys of Understanding: The opening statements of both give a chiasmus pattern emphasizing the “learning of their Fathers,” “Mysteries (spirit) of God,” and the “language of the Egyptians.” They are indicating that their scriptures are being kept in a different language (Egyptian) than their spoken language (Hebrew). It may just be a possibility that ancient Joseph, reared in Egypt, may have started his family records/scriptures in the Egyptian tongue and it was continued that way by his descendants.

Children of Israel Have “Holy Convocations:” The erection of tents or temporary shelters to listen to a review of their history and be instructed in the prophecies of the future is precisely what the Biblical/Jewish holiday of Sukkot is all about. It is celebrated at the full moon closest to the autumn equinox. One builds a tabernacle, booth, bowery, hut or otherwise what is known as a Sukka. It is always facing toward the temple of Jerusalem. King David’s address to the Israelites, the book of Ecclesiastes, is read during Sukkoth.

Similarity of Kings David/Benjamin Teachings:

David, a preacher, made King (Eccl 1:12).

Benjamin, subject to infirmities, made King (Mosiah 2:11).

David preaches labor is from God (Eccl 1:24).

Benjamin extolls service of man as service of God (Mosiah 2:17).

David preaches wealth is from God (Eccl. 5:19).

Benjamin teaches God will prosper you (Mosiah 2:22).

David reminds, keep commandments (Eccl.12:13).

Benjamin reiterates, keep commandments, (Mosiah 2:31).

David speaks of Father of our spirit, (Eccl 12:7).

Benjamin tells we are His sons and daughters, (Mosiah 5:7).

Even the account of King Benjamin’s visit by an angel has similarity to Sukkot with its expectation of heavenly visitors (including David).

Holy Days With “Tents” or “Huts:” “Sukkot (Hebrew for ‘huts’ or ‘tabernacles’), [is] a seven-day festival beginning on the 15th day of the month of Tishrei, which falls in September or October. (In the Diaspora an extra eighth day is celebrated.) One of its main observances is living temporarily in huts, called *sukkot*, resembling those in which the Children of Israel dwelt during their forty years in the wilderness after the Exodus from Egypt.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Bring Offerings: “. . . throngs of pilgrims used to make their way up to Jerusalem carrying the gaily decorated baskets of fruit and grain . . . to the Temple as a thanksgiving offering . . . townsfolk greeted them with music. The pilgrims then ascended the broad marble staircase that led from the City of David to the summit of the Temple Mount, where they would present their offerings to the Priests.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Consecration of Temple: “This holiday was also the occasion for the consecration of the Temple built by Solomon and every seventh year on Sukkot, the Torah was read by the king before the assembled people. In his vision of the end of days, the prophet Zechariah foretells that all the nations of the world will assemble for the festival of Sukkot in Jerusalem to worship God.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Temporary Lodging: “The *sukkah* is a structure with at least three walls, made of any material. It must be at least ten handbreadths in height, and in area at least seven handbreadths square. The roof covering, or *sekhakh*, is usually leafy branches, and these must be arranged so that there is more covered than open space.” “. . . Jews construct *sukkot* in their gardens, on the sidewalks, and on the roofs and balconies of their houses, just as they did at the time

of the return from the Babylonian exile, as described in the Book of Nehemiah: “So the people went forth . . . and made themselves booths, every one upon the roof of his house, and in their courts, and in the courts of the house of God . . . and there was very great gladness.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Festive Decoration: “Though the *sukkah* is only a temporary dwelling for the week . . . it is used as if it were one's permanent home. Thus it is customary to beautify the *sukkah* with all sorts of decorations, such as hanging fruit from the ceiling, and adorning the walls with paper cut-outs and pictures of festival motifs and biblical scenes. And for the meals eaten there, the family's best china and silverware are used.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Festive Meals: “On the first night of the festival, a person is obliged to eat his festive meal in the *sukkah*. During the remainder of the festival, any full meal should be eaten in the *sukkah*, . . . However, if rain is likely to spoil one's food (the *sekhakh* must not be rainproof), one may continue the meal indoors. Living in the *sukkah* instead of in the security of one's home is thus a reminder that we are dependent on God's favors. Where the climate allows it, some people sleep in the *sukkah* . . . Hospitality to the needy, which is always encouraged, is especially praiseworthy during this festival. Indeed, the Midrash states that the Children of Israel were divinely protected by ‘clouds of glory’ during their 40-year wanderings in the wilderness, because the Patriarch Abraham had given shelter to three strangers in need.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Expected Heavenly Visitors: “When a family performs the *mitzvah* of the *sukkah* joyfully, they are said to be visited in the *sukkah* by seven ‘guests of the festival’ (the *ushpizin*) who are present in spirit. Each day it is customary to invite and welcome one of these seven guests --- Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Aaron and David --- by an appropriate recitation.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Light and Music: “In the days of the Temple, each day during the last six *hol ha-mo'ed* days of the festival (though not on the Sabbath), the priests used to fill a golden flagon with water drawn from the beautiful spring of Siloam in the valley to the south of the Temple Mount, and carry it up the hill for a ceremony at the altar. This ceremony was called *Simbat Bet ha-Sho'evah* (the joy of the water-drawing) . . . golden candlesticks, 50 cubits high, were lit with wicks made out of worn-out garments of the priests, and the light emitted was so bright that ‘there was not a courtyard in Jerusalem that did not reflect the light of the *Bet ha-Sho'evah*.’ Men of piety and good deeds used to dance before the candlesticks with burning torches in their hands, singing songs and praises. And countless Levites played on harps, lyres, cymbals, trumpets and other musical instruments, on the 15 steps leading from the Court of the Israelites to the Court of the Women.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Biblical Time for Conference: In the Bible we read of holy convocations in the Spring and in Autumn, (Passover and Sukkot). Apparently, King Benjamin wanted this particular holy convocation to be heard and experienced by all, so he built a tower and had the words written and distributed throughout the people. Latter-day Saints have holy convocations in the spring and in autumn (general conferences). The modern day prophets use the broadcasting antenna towers and the written word to bring the messages to all the people.

Service is Godly: King Benjamin's sermon also reminds us how the Children of Israel compromised with God's word, preferring a standard of explicit do's and do not's rather than relying on the spirit to guide them. They may have preferred to remain in a “slave mentality” rather than “serve each other” as prompted by the mystery (spirit) of God. One of the timeless messages (and personal examples) of King Benjamin is about service. He repeats the legacy given to his forefathers by Joseph in Egypt who learned that being a slave is “mental.” He simply decided to be the best slave and became a servant instead. He learned what the Savior would say later in mortality.

“Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ. But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.” (*Matthew 23:10-12*)

Daniel Rona, born in Israel and living in Jerusalem has authored Old & New Testament and Book of Mormon Supplement Study Materials to be used in conjunction with the weekly LDS Gospel Doctrine Lesson study. NOTE: Three versions of the supplemental study materials are available *FREE* at www.HolyLandsRevealed.com. (Just click “LDS SUPPLEMENTS”)

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