

Book of Mormon

Supplemental Study Material

Holy Land and Judaic Insights
by Daniel Rona

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The Ensign Foundation

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Daniel Rona was born in Israel -- educated in America -- and has been a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints since 1950. He was a well-known radio broadcaster in Salt Lake City, St. Louis, Chicago and New York, as well as an international newscaster for the “Voice of Israel.”

In 1974, he returned to Israel with his wife, Marilyn, and their three children. Their family has grown to five children. Like all Israelis, his sons and daughters served in the Israeli Military before their full-time missions.

Brother Rona directs the nonprofit ***ENSIGN FOUNDATION*** which unites the people of Judah and Joseph in educational, cultural and scientific activities. The Ensign Foundation also provides learning experiences in the Holy Land. For twenty-seven years, Brother Rona has been the only LDS licensed tour guide in Israel. His background is unique: he is an American, an Israeli, a Mormon, and a Jew!

Latter-day Saints, who have experienced **ISRAEL REVEALED** with Brother Rona, tell of greater enrichment in their lives through his spiritual and cultural insights. He harmonizes the language, the culture, the time and the places of the Holy Land, sharing the deep feelings and spirit of ancient and modern Israel. These are reflected in this Gospel Doctrine supplement material which he has also provided weekly on the Internet. His book, **ISRAEL REVEALED**, is an authoritative work bringing the ethnic cultures and traditions of the Holy Land into a spiritual and pictographic review. He also produced a TV mini-series about Israel. These six TV-films are also on home-video cassettes.

Brother Rona has served many years in the presidencies of the Israel District and Jerusalem Branches.

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Supplemental Information For Old Testament Studies

This material was prepared by Daniel Rona who, for twenty-seven years, has been the only LDS licensed tour guide in Israel. For almost thirty years, he has been teaching the Old and New Testaments in tours, as many as thirty times a year. Additionally, for years, he has directed numerous tours to the Book of Mormon Lands of Central America. Following the Footprints of the Savior, he brings people to the bridge connecting the Ancient Holy Land to the Modern Promised Lands. He was born and lives in Israel. As an active LDS member and Church leader, Brother Rona combines his gospel knowledge, Israel ethnicity and Jewish insights to assist in bringing the tribes of “Joseph” and “Judah” closer together. His background is unique in that he is an **American**, an **Israeli**, a **Mormon** and a **Jew**.

Under each scripture listing is a summary to the chapters being discussed. These are from the LDS Scriptures and are provided only as an overview. It is important that the actual scriptures be read. The Holy Land and Jewish insights are added to help the teacher and student “go back” to the setting in which the scriptures were given and also to better understand what general Judaic views are of those scriptures. Jewish views have varied with time and dispersion, yet understanding the Jews (basically Judah) will help Joseph in the prophetic mission of reuniting “Joseph and Judah.” That will bring us both back to the original understanding and truths that God gave to his children, yesterday and today as well as tomorrow.

Helps for the Teacher and Student

The young prophet Nephi gave us a substantial key to understanding the scriptures. Note how subtly he teaches us through a ‘chiasmus’ (an order of words listed in one direction to a center thought and then listed in the other direction in reverse order).

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. learning of my father 2. highly favored of the Lord 2. knowledge of the goodness and the mysteries of God 1. learning of the Jews 	<p>I, Nephi, having been born of goodly parents, therefore I was taught somewhat in all the learning of my father; and having seen many afflictions in the course of my days, nevertheless, having been highly favored of the Lord in all my days; yea, having had a great knowledge of the goodness and the mysteries of God, therefore I make a record of my proceedings in my days.</p> <p>Yea, I make a record in the language of my father, which consists of the learning of the Jews and the language of the Egyptians. (<i>1 Nephi 1:1-2</i>)</p>
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The center point of his instruction is the gift he acknowledges, the knowledge of mysteries. A synonym for mysteries is the “subtle understanding” of God’s word. This is available through the Gift of the Holy Ghost.

“For he that diligently seeketh shall find; and the mysteries of God shall be unfolded unto them, by the power of the Holy Ghost, as well in these times as in

times of old, and as well in times of old as in times to come; wherefore, the course of the Lord is one eternal round.” (1 *Nephi 10:19*)

“Angels speak by the power of the Holy Ghost; wherefore, they speak the words of Christ. Wherefore, I said unto you, feast upon the words of Christ; for behold, the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do.” (2 *Nephi 32:3*)

The center point is sandwiched by “learning of my father” and “learning of the Jews.” This material suggests some ‘learning of the Jews’ to add insight to the study of the same religion and scriptures that Nephi brought from Israel. Other Jewish insights may simply help Latter-day Saints better understand Judah and thereby bring our two families closer together. It is necessary for the teacher and the student to relate and coordinate this information with the material provided in their respective lesson manuals.

The basis of Jewish learning is based on the “Torah,” that is the first five books of the “Old Testament.”

“The Bible is holy to Jews because it represents the Word of God. This is particularly true of the Torah which is, so to speak, God's direct statement. The halakhah, or Jewish law, which is the authoritative guide for a Jew's life, is mainly based on the Torah, so obviously study of the Torah as well as the rest of the Bible is one of the prime religious duties.”

“The custom of reading the Torah publicly is very, very ancient --- originating with Ezra in the fifth-fourth centuries B.C.E. At some later date a reading from the *Nevi'im* was added; this corresponding passage from the Prophets is known as the *Haftorah*.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

The Latter-day Saint's use of the Book of Mormon is another part of LDS *Haftorah*. Literally, it is the reading of *Nevi'im*, the “Prophets,” in another land – with their explanations and heavenly insights – based on their constant advice to “go back” to the learning of their Fathers. The first verse of the Book of Mormon reveals this key of understanding God's will, “learning of the fathers.” The Hebrew word for “going back” is the same as “repent.” The Book of Mormon teaches **Faith** in the Lord as taught by true learning of the fathers. That leads us to **Repent**, make the true covenant of **Baptism** and rewards us with the blessing of the **Gift of the Holy Ghost**.

“The Keystone of Our Religion”

Scripture Summary: *Title page of the Book of Mormon: Taken from the plates of Nephi; Wherefore, it is an abridgment of the record of the people of Nephi, and also of the Lamanites—Written to the Lamanites, who are a remnant of the house of Israel; and also to Jew and Gentile—Written by way of commandment, and also by the spirit of prophecy and of revelation—Written and sealed up, and hid up unto the Lord, that they might not be destroyed—To come forth by the gift and power of God unto the interpretation thereof—Sealed by the hand of Moroni, and hid up unto the Lord, to come forth in due time by way of the Gentile—The interpretation thereof by the gift of God.*

An abridgment taken from the Book of Ether also, which 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—Which is to show unto the remnant of the House of Israel what great things the Lord hath done for their fathers; and that they may know the covenants of the Lord, that they are not cast off forever— And also to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that JESUS is the CHRIST, the ETERNAL GOD, manifesting himself unto all nations—And now, if there are faults they are the mistakes of men; wherefore, condemn not the things of God, that ye may be found spotless at the judgment-seat of Christ.

Supplemental

Holy Land and Judaic Insights:

The statement, “The Book of Mormon is the keystone of our religion” can be better understood by seeing remains of Roman architecture so prevalent in Israel. Each stone of an archway is angled to wedge the others in place. The center stone is like the center point. The center point in a chiasm is the focusing on the Lord. The Book of Mormon’s purpose is to focus on the Lord, the God of Israel. Consider the five “Standard Works (scriptures)” that Latter-day Saints use, the Old Testament, the New Testament, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants and the Pearl of Great Price. They are like an arch made of five stones. Every stone in the arch is necessary to have the advantage of the structure which holds a building in place as well as having the enjoyment of the beauty in something that holds itself together. This is a visual metaphor of truth.

Additionally, the Book of Mormon gives us a history of Jews leaving the land of Israel and going to what is called the land of America. This history is valuable because it is an unprejudiced account. Daniel Ludlow taught that even true history is usually prejudiced by the writer and his perceptions as he saw events happening. Conversely, true prophesy does not have prejudice, because it has not happened yet. He also taught that scriptural history has the least amount of prejudice because in most cases it carries a message of future events. It is prophesy in the form of history. Therefore, the history is accurate.

The ancient prophets could not (and would not) write all that happened. They selected to write those things which would apply as lessons of the future.

“And a hundredth part of the proceedings of this people, which now began to be numerous, cannot be written upon these plates; but many of their proceedings are written upon the larger plates, and their wars, and their contentions, and the reigns of their kings.” (*Jacob 3:13*)

“Wherefore, I chose these things, to finish my record upon them, which remainder of my record I shall take from the plates of Nephi; and I cannot write the hundredth part of the things of my people.” (*Words of Mormon 1:5*)

“But behold, a hundredth part of the proceedings of this people, yea, the account of the Lamanites and of the Nephites, and their wars, and contentions, and dissensions, and their preaching, and their prophecies, and their shipping and their building of ships, and their building of temples, and of synagogues and their sanctuaries, and their righteousness, and their wickedness, and their murders, and their robbings, and their plundering, and all manner of abominations and whoredoms, cannot be contained in this work.” (*Helaman 3:14*)

“And there had many things transpired which, in the eyes of some, would be great and marvelous; nevertheless, they cannot all be written in this book; yea, this book cannot contain even a hundredth part of what was done among so many people in the space of twenty and five years . . .” (*3 Nephi 5:8*)

“All Things According to His Will”

Lesson 2

1 Nephi 1–7

Scripture Summary: *An account of Lehi and his wife Sariah and his four sons, being called, (beginning at the eldest) Laman, Lemuel, Sam, and Nephi. The Lord warns Lehi to depart out of the land of Jerusalem, because he prophesieth unto the people concerning their iniquity and they seek to destroy his life. He taketh three days' journey into the wilderness with his family. Nephi taketh his brethren and returneth to the land of Jerusalem after the record of the Jews. The account of their sufferings. They take the daughters of Ishmael to wife. They take their families and depart into the wilderness. Their sufferings and afflictions in the wilderness. The course of their travels. They come to the large waters. Nephi's brethren rebel against him. He confoundeth them, and buildeth a ship. They call the name of the place Bountiful. They cross the large waters into the promised land, and so forth. This is according to the account of Nephi; or in other words, I, Nephi, wrote this record.*

Lehi takes his family into the wilderness by the Red Sea—They leave their property—Lehi offers a sacrifice to the Lord and teaches his sons to keep the commandments—Laman and Lemuel murmur against their father—Nephi is obedient and prays in faith; the Lord speaks to him, and he is chosen to rule over his brethren.

Lehi's sons return to Jerusalem to obtain the plates of brass—Laban refuses to give them up—Nephi exhorts and encourages his brethren—Laban steals their property and attempts to slay them—Laman and Lemuel smite Nephi and are reproved by an angel.

Nephi slays Laban at the Lord's command and then secures the plates of brass by stratagem—Zoram chooses to join Lehi's family in the wilderness.

Sariah complains against Lehi—Both rejoice over the return of their sons—They offer sacrifices—The plates of brass contain writings of Moses and the prophets—They identify Lehi as a descendant of Joseph—Lehi prophesies concerning his seed and the preservation of the plates. [Between 600 and 592 B.C.]

Nephi writes of the things of God—His purpose is to persuade men to come unto the God of Abraham and be saved. [Between 600 and 592 B.C.]

Supplemental

Holy Land and Judaic Insights: The very first verse of the Book of Mormon reveals several keys to understanding God's will. There is a lesson in honoring “goodly parents.” It is one of the basic commandments.

“Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.” (*Exodus 20:12*)

“It is also customary to visit the graves of deceased parents . . . The reasons for this custom vary from the belief that the righteous dead may help the living, to the idea that respect for parents and the inspiration gained from the example of their lives, are values to be emphasized especially at this time.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

There is a lesson in going back to the “learning of the fathers.” The Hebrew word for “going back” is the same as “repent.”

“Say nothing but repentance unto this generation; keep my commandments and assist to bring forth my work, according to my commandments, and you shall be blessed.” (*Doctrine & Covenants 6:9*)

There is a lesson in combining an understanding of the “Learning of the Jews” and knowing the “mysteries” of the Lord.

“For he that diligently seeketh shall find; and the mysteries of God shall be unfolded unto them, by the power of the Holy Ghost, as well in these times as in times of old, and as well in times of old as in times to come; wherefore, the course of the Lord is one eternal round.” (*Nephi 10:19*)

In using the learning of his fathers, Nephi uses one of the typical ways of Jewish learning, to consider the “opposite” point of view.

<u>Nephi, Son of Lehi</u>	<u>Laman & Lemuel, Sons of Lehi</u>
1. Goodly Parents 1 Nephi 1:1	1. Murmured 1 Nephi 2:11-12, 1 Nephi 3:5, 1 Nephi 4:14
2. Believed His Father 1 Nephi 2:16	2. Didn't Believe 1 Nephi 2:13
3. Went to The Lord for Understanding 1 Nephi 2:16, 19	3. Knew Not The Dealings of God 1 Nephi 2:12
4. Willing to Do What Lord Commanded 1 Nephi 3:7	4. Complained 1 Nephi 2:16, 1 Nephi 3:5, 1 Nephi 3:28, 1 Nephi 3:31, 1 Nephi 4:4
5. Refused to Return Without Records 1 Nephi 3:15	5. Wanted to Give Up 1 Nephi 3:14
6. Knew The Lord Was Mightier 1 Nephi 4:14	6. Doubted The Lord 1 Nephi 3:31

Nephi's experience with Laban and the subsequent slaying of Laban can be compared to two other occurrences. In Jesus' day, Caiaphas the high priest called for taking Jesus' life and then perpetrated a scheme to have Jesus crucified. In 1995, Yigal Amir planned a scheme and then was convicted of assassinating Yizhak Rabin, the Prime Minister of Israel. In each case the justification of taking a life was based on the premise that it would “*save the people.*”

<u>Nephi</u>	<u>Caiaphas</u>	<u>Yigal Amir</u>
<p>“And it came to pass that the Spirit said unto me again: Slay him, for the Lord hath delivered him into thy hands; Behold the Lord slayeth the wicked to bring forth his righteous purposes. <i>It is better that one man should perish than that a nation should dwindle and perish in unbelief.</i> And now, when I, Nephi, had heard these words, I remembered the words of the Lord which he spake unto me in the wilderness, saying that: Inasmuch as thy seed shall keep my commandments, they shall prosper in the land of promise.” (1 Nephi 4:12-14)</p> <p>Nephi’s belated decision to take Laban’s life came from true revelation and sanction from God.</p>	<p>“Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation. And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, Nor consider that <i>it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.</i> And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad.” (John 11:47-52)</p> <p>Caiaphas eagerly wanted Jesus dead because he and a few priests wanted to protect and keep power and position.</p>	<p>“YIGAL Amir completed his testimony in Tel Aviv District Court yesterday, declaring that he had indeed intended to kill Rabin, <i>justifying his actions</i>, and arguing with the judge.” (Jerusalem Post, Rainemarcus, March 8, 1996)</p> <p>“YIGAL Amir, testifying from the witness stand for the first time yesterday, told Tel Aviv District Court that <i>Halacha dictated he assassinate Yitzhak Rabin.</i>” (Jerusalem Post, News Agencies, March 5, 1996)</p> <p>“Months before the assassination of prime minister Yitzhak Rabin hundreds of people turned to Beit El rabbi Shlomo Aviner for an opinion on the <i>din rodef concept</i> as regards Rabin, the rabbi said in court yesterday.” (Jerusalem Post, Galit Lipkis Beck, March 18, 1998)</p> <p>Yigal Amir and others wanted Rabin dead based on their religious or political perception of protecting the people.</p>

A display in the Israel Museum of Jerusalem shows artifacts from a cave some twenty-three miles southwest of Jerusalem in an area known as *Lbi* (Lahi or Lehi). They are dated to six hundred years before Jesus’ time and seem to connect to Lehi’s family departing the area of Jerusalem. The oldest-known writing of the name Jerusalem and the spelling out of the name Jehovah appears in this cave.

Three sentences on the cave walls suggest that the writers were: Hiding from enemies seeking their lives, seeking forgiveness for wrong doings, and hoping for a salvation of Jerusalem. These could be considered similar to the descriptive Book of Mormon account of a “family of Jews” leaving Jerusalem in Judea at about six hundred years before Jesus’ time. Their father, Lehi, was one of the prophets of the day.

“For it came to pass in the commencement of the first year of the reign of Zedekiah, king of Judah, (my father, Lehi, having dwelt at Jerusalem in all his days); and in that same year there came many prophets, prophesying unto the people that they must repent, or the great city Jerusalem must be destroyed.” *(1 Nephi 1:4)*

Four brothers returned to retrieve their family and religious records. The record keeper sent his servants to kill them. Hiding in a cave, two brothers rebelled and then were called to repentance by a heavenly messenger. The brothers may have sought forgiveness.

“And it came to pass that we fled into the wilderness, and the servants of Laban did not overtake us, and we hid ourselves in the cavity of a rock. And it came to pass that Laman was angry with me . . . And it came to pass as they smote us with a rod, behold, an angel of the Lord came and stood before them, and he spake unto them, saying: Why do ye smite your younger brother with a rod? Know ye not that the Lord hath chosen him to be a ruler over you, and this because of your iniquities? Behold ye shall go up to Jerusalem again, and the Lord will deliver Laban into your hands.” *(1 Nephi 3:27-29)*

The youngest of these brothers later became a prophet and wrote of Jerusalem in latter days:

“And now this I speak because of the spirit which is in me. And notwithstanding they have been carried away they shall return again, and possess the land of Jerusalem; wherefore, they shall be restored again to the land of their inheritance.” *(2 NEPHI 25:11)*

Interestingly, that group was led by a man named Lehi and in archaeological records the cave is called “Khirbet (ruins) Bet (house) LHI (Lehi).

The Vision of the Tree of Life

Lesson 3

1 Nephi 8–11; 12:16–18; 15

Scripture Summary: *Lehi sees a vision of the tree of life—He partakes of its fruit and desires his family to do likewise—He sees a rod of iron, a strait and narrow path, and the mists of darkness that enshroud men—Sariah, Nephi, and Sam partake of the fruit, but Laman and Lemuel refuse.*

Nephi sees in vision: the land of promise; the righteousness, iniquity, and downfall of its inhabitants; the coming of the Lamb of God among them; how the twelve disciples and the twelve apostles shall judge Israel; the loathsome and filthy state of those who dwindle in unbelief.

Lehi's seed are to receive the gospel from the Gentiles in the latter days—The gathering of Israel is likened unto an olive tree whose natural branches shall be grafted in again—Nephi interprets the vision of the tree of life and speaks of the justice of God in dividing the wicked from the righteous. [Between 600 and 592 B.C.]

Supplemental Holy Land and Judaic Insights:

Dreams are one of the means God has of communicating with his children. Some of them, the Prophets, have the responsibility of teaching us what those dreams mean.

“Dreams have fascinated people through the ages. The Biblical view was that dreams are divine communication --- events transpiring on a supernatural plane. Thus, dreams were regarded as omens, which could be interpreted only by visionaries or prophets, who were in touch with this ‘divine dimension.’ In the Bible, ‘dreamer,’ ‘prophet,’ and ‘magician’ are related terms.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

The Biblical accounts of Joseph and Daniel have a great basis in dreams, some irritated family or friends and others brought redemption for people as well as condemnation of people in the lands where they lived.

“Joseph was one such interpreter; he explained Pharaoh's dreams of the fat and thin cows as symbolizing seven years of plenty followed by seven years of hunger (Genesis 41). God's promise to Abraham about the inheritance of the land of Israel came in a dream (Genesis 15) and Samuel's first prophecies were stimulated by God's calling to him in a dream (Samuel 1:3).”

“Because of his great wisdom and ability to interpret dreams, Daniel rose to positions of responsibility and honor in the court of kings Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar and Darius. However, as a Jew, he was constantly tormented by his rivals who denounced him for not worshipping the idols of the land. Daniel's piety and faith in God always stood firm and despite all dangers, he continued to pray daily in the traditional Jewish way. When, as punishment, his enemies cast him into a lion's den, he was prepared to sacrifice his life. The next morning when the king came to see Daniel's fate, he found him calmly reciting.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

The imagery of the Tree of Life is strong in Jewish culture. On the precious silver plates that I found in the store of a well known Jewish Scribe in the Old City of Jerusalem there is a “tree” with branches, laden with “fruit” with a stream of “water” flowing by. The words on this small sculpture fashioned as a flat square plate come from the Talmud. They recite part

of a parable that a tree watered by “living water,” has precious “fruit” that you would bring your children to partake of.

“Adam represents all of mankind; the Garden of Eden, the world; the Tree of Life, the Torah; and the serpent, the evil inclination. Just as Adam is placed in the Garden, in the midst of which stands the Tree of Life, so man is placed in the world in order to observe the commandments of the Torah.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Fruit has a strong imagery in the scriptures, as well.

“A part of the first harvest each year of grains and of fruits was to be brought to the Temple in Jerusalem as a thanksgiving offering to God obeying the commandment: ‘The choice first fruits of your soil shall you bring to the house of the Lord’ (Exodus 34:33).” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

White as a color is a combination of all colors. That may mean a “wholeness” or “completeness.” Garments used by religious Jews are often pure white.

“In Ashkenazi tradition it is not just the bride who wears white on her wedding day. The groom, too, stands under the canopy wearing his white *kitel*, or robe, over his wedding finery. The day of their marriage is a solemn one for the bride and groom. They pray that their past sins will be forgiven and they can start their life together afresh. The white of their clothing symbolizes the purity and the forgiveness of sin for which they are hoping. For this reason a similar garment is used to clothe the dead for burial. The *kitel* therefore also serves to remind the wearer of how brief life is, and of the necessity for atonement.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

The white bread used for the Sabbath apparently has to be sweet also.

“Rabbinic tradition made *hallab* a special mitzvah for women. Today the word is generally used to mean the white Sabbath and festival loaf. And the mitzvah of separating *hallab* is followed by observant Jews in their bakeries and in homes where the art of baking fresh *hallab* is still practiced.”

“Loaves of *hallab* appear in forms associated with special occasions and different areas. The most distinct special occasion is Passover, when *hallab* appears as *mazzah*, unleavened bread. Dough was often made into symbolic shapes. One example is the bird shape which represents the phrase ‘As birds hover, so will the Lord protect Jerusalem’ (Isaiah 31:5). The sweet *hallab*, often round in shape, is traditional for Rosh Ha-Shanah, to symbolize the prayer for a sweet and a full year.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

The word “rod” is one of the symbols of authority. For example: Moses prayed to God, then he lifted up his rod and the waters of the Red Sea parted, and the Israelites crossed safely to the opposite shore.

“And thou shalt take this rod in thine hand, wherewith thou shalt do signs.”
(Exodus 4:17)

“But lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go on dry [ground] through the midst of the sea.”
(Exodus 14:16)

“Therefore he was constrained to speak more unto them saying: Behold my brethren, have ye not read that God gave power unto one man, even Moses, to smite upon the waters of the Red Sea, and they parted hither and thither, insomuch that the Israelites, who were our fathers, came through upon dry ground, and the waters closed upon the armies of the Egyptians and swallowed them up?” *(Helaman 8:11)*

Mockery has no place in true religion.

“We believe that it is necessary for man to be placed in communication with God; that he should have revelation from him . . . I do not wonder that so many men treat religion with contempt, and regard it as something not worth the attention of intelligent beings, for without revelation religion is a mockery and a farce.” *(John Taylor, Gospel Kingdom, Pg.35)*

“The Things Which I Saw While I Was Carried Away in the Spirit”

1 Nephi 12–14

Scripture Summary:

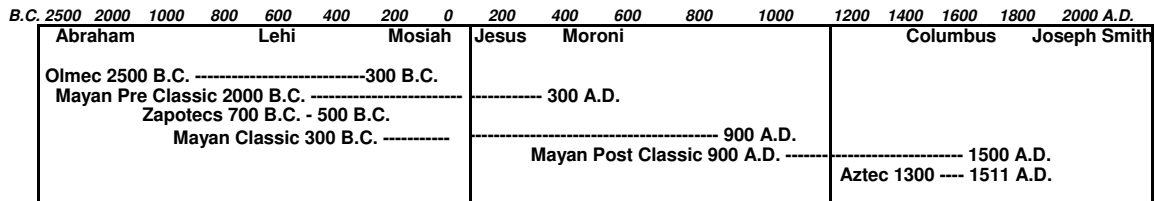
Nephi sees in vision: the land of promise; the righteousness, iniquity, and downfall of its inhabitants; the coming of the Lamb of God among them; how the twelve disciples and the twelve apostles shall judge Israel; the loathsome and filthy state of those who dwindle in unbelief.

Nephi sees in vision: the church of the devil set up among the Gentiles; the discovery and colonizing of America; the loss of many plain and precious parts of the Bible; the resultant state of Gentile apostasy; the restoration of the gospel, the coming forth of latter-day scripture, and the building up of Zion.

An angel tells Nephi of the blessings and cursings to fall upon the Gentiles—There are only two churches: the Church of the Lamb of God and the church of the devil—The saints of God in all nations are persecuted by the great and abominable church—The apostle John shall write concerning the end of the world. [Between 600 and 592 B.C.]

Supplemental Holy Land and Judaic Insights:

The general time line of the emerging cultures in the Book of Mormon Lands can be compared to Biblical and Book of Mormon personalities.



Jewish commentary about visions of the future acknowledge that only a Prophet is able to understand divine things.

“The Zohar (see Kabbalah) argues that the dreams of the wicked derive from the forces of impurity, while the dreams of the righteous contain visions, images and prophecies of a higher order. Maimonides rejected supernatural forces, believing that one's daytime thoughts are translated by the imagination into dreams . . . only a prophet, who rids himself of conscious base thoughts and desires is able to perceive divine things.”

“The early prophets played a prominent role in communal affairs and were consulted for advice and often influenced the political destiny of Israel; the prophet Samuel chose both Saul and David to be kings of Israel. Visions play an important role in the classical prophetic writings, but prophets did not merely predict the future. They often performed symbolic acts and used signs and wonders to authenticate their prediction of impending events. At times they had to bear the consequences of their own dire predictions --- Jeremiah was put into stocks for his unpopular prophecies.”
(Encyclopedía Judaica Jr.)

For many Moslems, Mohammed is called a Prophet although he apparently never claimed to be one. His writings did not particularly predict the future because he still held the Bible to be as accurate as he interpreted it.

“From about 610 C.E. (A.D.) Muhammad claimed to have visions and to have been commanded, as messenger of God (Allah) to recite certain verses which came to his mind. In order to win over the Arabs to his new religion Muhammad realized that his appeal would have to be national and not aligned to either the Christianity of Byzantium or the Judaism of Babylonia. The holy book of Islam, the Koran, soon attracted a small community of devotees, and its message at this time concentrated on God's goodness and power, the return to God and final judgment, the necessity for man to be humble and grateful to God and to worship Him, and the obligation of generosity and respect for the rights of the poor and defenseless.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

The prophecies of the “Colonization of America” in the Book of Mormon echo the blessings and prophecies given to Joseph, son of Jacob (Israel). The fascinating geographic connection in his blessing is the term, “everlasting hills.” Mountainous Israel is the “Crossroads of the East.” On the other hand, Utah (“Tops of the Mountains” in Navaho) is the “Crossroads of the West.” There are only two land masses on this planet that have a perpetual, unending range of mountains or “everlasting hills,” Israel and USA. The connection to God's everlasting ways is also noted.

“In the blessing given by Jacob to his son Joseph the inheritance of America is foreshadowed and predicted in the following words: ‘Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall: . . .The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills: they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren.’ (Genesis 49:26)” (*Joseph Fielding Smith, Doctrines of Salvation Vol.3, Pg.68*)

“He stood, and measured the earth: he beheld, and drove asunder the nations; and the everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills did bow: his ways are everlasting.” (*Habakkuk 3:6*)

The latter-day restoration included authority and clarification of ordinances such as baptism. Although the word “baptism” is not found in the Old Testament, observance of the Jewish ritual of immersion may give us a clue of what the ancient rituals were like. The Book of Mormon clearly explains these immersions and the picture that is created to a Jewish reader can be recognizable as being similar to Biblical practices. Some religious Jews who experience repeated immersions in a *Mikveh*, (monthly for women and regularly for men) step into their immersion font from the east side, immerse themselves, and then exit to the west side. This could be a reminder of entering into the gateway of cleanness as the Children of Israel entered into their Promised Land. For the religious Jews, immersions are favored below ground level in flowing water that emanates from bedrock - the “Rock of Salvation.”

“Mikveh (Hebrew: - ‘a collection [of water]’) a special pool of water constructed according to rigid legal specifications, immersion in which renders ritually clean a person who has become ritually unclean.”

“1) A mikveh must not be filled with water that has been drawn (i.e., has been in a vessel or a receptacle), but with water from a naturally flowing source; spring water or rainwater are the ideal sources, but melted snow and ice are also permitted.

2) The water must be able to flow into the mikveh freely and unimpeded (any blockage renders the water ‘drawn water’) and must reach the mikveh in vessels that are not susceptible to ritual uncleanness.

3) The minimum size of the mikveh is of a vessel which has a volume of ‘40 seah,’ variously estimated at between 250 and 1,000 liters (quarts).

4) The mikveh must be watertight and must be constructed of natural materials on the spot, for otherwise it is deemed itself to be a ‘vessel’ and renders the water in it ‘drawn water.’” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

When animals were sacrificed, the cleaned carcass had to be immersed. Likewise, in modern times, to make meat “kosher,” it must be “immersed” in salt water.

As stated in the Book of Numbers 19:1-9, there was a Red Heifer ritual for forgiveness of sins. This can be seen as a symbol of the "red" atonement of the Lord on the Mount of Olives. Jews have a tradition that this red calf offering had to be high on the Mount of Olives, above the Temple itself and opposite the Gate Beautiful. Those who have had the experience of sitting on the upper part of the Mount of Olives opposite of the present day Gate Beautiful can attest to the spirit of Gethsemane (well away from the traditional Church of Gethsemane on the lower part of the mount).

Water and sins do have a connection and a place in Jewish traditions:

“On the afternoon of the first day (of Rosh Hashana), it is customary to walk to the nearest body of running water and there symbolically ‘cast’ one’s sins into the water. The ceremony may be based on a verse in the biblical book of Micah: ‘And Thou (referring to God) shall cast all their sins into the depths of the seas’ (Micah 7:19). This practice, to which there is no reference in the Talmud, is generally called *Tashlikh*, probably after the Hebrew word meaning ‘cast’ (va-tashlikh) in the verse from Micah.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

In spite of the many similarities that Mormons and Jews have in their religious societies, it is inevitably essential for Latter-day Saints and Jews to have some dialogue on the definition of “Jew” and “Gentile.” Are Jews “Gentile” to the Mormons? Are Mormons “Gentile” to the Jews?

“An undoubted factor in the survival of the Jews as a people with a common identity has been their shared experience of persecution at the hands of gentiles (non-Jews).”

“In ancient Israel the acceptance of monotheism (the belief that there is only one God) became the chief factor distinguishing Jews from gentiles, who then worshiped many gods.”

“At this time gentiles were either natives living in Erez Israel or travelers passing through it. Resident gentiles were protected by traditional hospitality and by contractual agreements made between Israel and the neighboring states. Native gentiles were expected to be loyal to Israel's civil laws in return for protection, but were generally in a humbler position than the Israelite population.”

“During the latter part of the Second Temple period (from the second century B.C.E.) the prohibition against Jews marrying gentiles, limited originally to the seven Canaanite nations --- Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites (‘neither shalt thou make marriages with them’ Deuteronomy 7:3) --- was extended to include all gentiles, who might lure Jews away from the true God. In order to prevent the possibility of intermarriage the rabbis enacted a series of laws intended to limit social contact between Jew and non-Jew.”

“Jews were forbidden to emulate gentile customs of an idolatrous or superstitious nature. The prohibition (*bukkat ha-goi*) was derived from the biblical commandment ‘ye shall not walk in the customs of the nation’ (Leviticus 20:23 and 18:13). Its purpose was to prevent Jews being converted to other religions.”

“During the 500 years of the talmudic period to 499 C.E. widely differing attitudes toward gentiles were expressed. When Jews were being tortured during the reign of the Roman emperor Hadrian, Rabbi Simeon bar Yohai stated that the best of gentiles should be killed. In later, less hostile times, it was sometimes claimed that no difference between Jew and gentile would be made on the Day of Judgment (see End of Days). The concept of the righteous gentile (*hasidei ummot ha-olam* -- the pious ones of the nations of the world) is first found in the Midrash. The Tosefta teaches that they are as eligible to a place in the hereafter as any member of the House of Israel. Rabbi Isaac Arama states that ‘every true pious gentile is equal to a son of Israel.’ The Zohar states that all gentiles who do not hate Israel, and who deal justly with Jews, qualify as pious ones. According to Maimonides righteous gentiles were those who observed the Noachide laws and were motivated by belief in the divine origin and authenticity of Moses' prophecy . . .” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

I remember a humorous statement in an Israeli travel brochure outlining a tour of the USA. It included a stop in Salt Lake City . . . “the only place a Jew can walk down the street and be considered a Gentile!” Some day they will know, it's the same family!

“Hearken to the Truth and Give Heed unto It”

1 Nephi 16–22

Scripture Summary:

The wicked take the truth to be hard—Lehi’s sons marry the daughters of Ishmael—The Liabona guides their course in the wilderness—Messages from the Lord are written on the Liabona from time to time—Ishmael dies; his family murmur because of afflictions. [Between 600 and 592 B.C.]

Nephi is commanded to build a ship—His brethren oppose him—He exhorts them by recounting the history of God’s dealings with Israel—He is filled with the power of God—His brethren are forbidden to touch him, lest they wither as a dried reed. [About 592—591 B.C.]

The ship is finished—The births of Jacob and Joseph are mentioned—The company embarks for the promised land—The sons of Ishmael and their wives join in revelry and rebellion—Nephi is bound, and the ship is driven back by a terrible tempest—Nephi is freed, and by his prayer the storm ceases—They arrive in the promised land. [About 590—589 B.C.]

Nephi makes plates of ore and records the history of his people—The God of Israel shall come six hundred years from the time Lehi left Jerusalem—Nephi tells of His sufferings and crucifixion—The Jews shall be despised and scattered until the latter days, when they will return unto the Lord.

The Lord reveals his purposes to Israel—They have been chosen in the furnace of affliction and are to go forth from Babylon—Compare Isaiah 48.

Messiah shall be a light to the Gentiles and shall free the prisoners—Israel shall be gathered with power in the last days—Kings shall be their nursing fathers—Compare Isaiah 49.

Israel shall be scattered upon all the face of the earth—The gentiles shall nurse and nourish Israel with the gospel in the last days—Israel shall be gathered and saved, and the wicked shall burn as stubble—The kingdom of the devil shall be destroyed, and Satan shall be bound. [Between 588 and 570 B.C.]

Supplemental

Holy Land and Judaic Insights:

There are a few “sea and storm stories” in the scriptures. Their meanings and lessons for us, nowadays, have a common connection. Noah is saved by the Lord, Enoch was saved by the Lord, Jonah was saved by the Lord, the Apostles on the Sea of Galilee were saved by the Lord. Nephi was saved by the Lord. Apparently, the lesson is, when “sinking,” remember, we will be saved by the Lord.

“And every living substance was destroyed which was upon the face of the ground, both man, and cattle, and the creeping things, and the fowl of the heaven; and they were destroyed from the earth: and Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark.” (*Genesis 7:23*)

“And it came to pass that when they were buried in the deep there was no water that could hurt them, their vessels being tight like unto a dish and also they were tight like unto the ark of Noah; therefore when they were encompassed about by many waters they did cry unto the Lord, and he did bring them forth again upon the top of the waters gain upon the top of the waters.” (*Ether 6:7*)

“So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea: and the sea ceased from her raging. Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice unto the LORD, and made vows. Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.” (*Jonah 1:15-17*)

“And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep. And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish. And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith. Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm.” (*Matthew 8:24-26*)

“And it came to pass after they had loosed me, behold, I took the compass, and it did work whither I desired it. And it came to pass that I prayed unto the Lord; and after I had prayed the winds did cease, and the storm did cease, and there was a great calm.” (*Nephi 18:21*)

“He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still the waves thereof are still.” (*Psalms 107:29*)

“Though the Israelites were not really a seafaring nation, the Bible is full of references to the sea and ships, and in the Book of Jonah, one of the main parts of the story takes place at sea when the hero is thrown overboard in the hope of stopping a storm.”

“During the Middle Ages Jews became less involved in the actual owning and sailing of ships but remained active as sea merchants and brokers. Jews were known for producing nautical instruments and maps. Abraham Zacuto invented the astrolabe and drew up nautical tables that were invaluable to sailors. Christopher Columbus is thought by some to have been a Marrano (secret Jew) and his interpreter certainly was Jewish. In England a Marrano, Simon Fernandez, was chief pilot to Sir Walter Raleigh.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

In reviewing history, let's consider at least some types of technology for recording texts that become a library. Writing on leather is the most ancient method. As more space is needed for added texts, additional leather is sewn on to the existing scroll. One of the Dead Sea Scrolls, Isaiah, is about twenty-seven feet long! These scrolls are usually fastened to a stick at each end for better handling, rolling open and shut and for stability in storage.

Writing on metal plates required the processing and preparing of sheets of gold, brass or copper. They would be fastened with ring similar to a modern day binder. It is less likely to be able to simply add a few perfectly sized metal pages after the initial production. That means the scribe must determine approximately what he will include.

“And if our plates had been sufficiently large we should have written in Hebrew; but the Hebrew hath been altered by us also; and if we could have written in Hebrew, behold, ye would have had no imperfection in our record.” (*Mormon 9:33*)

“But whatsoever things we write upon anything save it be upon plates, must perish and vanish away; but we can write a few words upon plates which will give

our children, and also our beloved brethren, a small degree of knowledge concerning us, or concerning their fathers.” (*Jacob 4:2*)

Once he has collated his material and completed his transcript, he may have additional space or plates available and could thereby add more information, letters or testimonials.

“And now I, Moroni, write a few of the words of my father Mormon, which he spake concerning faith, hope, and charity; for after this manner did he speak unto the people, as he taught them in the synagogue which they had built for the place of worship.” (*Moroni 7:1*)

There is at least one case of thin metal sheets being fastened together as a scroll found in the Dead Sea Scroll collection. The sheer weight and difficulty in handling this type of text storage limited its use.

“In ancient times all books were scrolls. Those used for holy purposes were written on animal skin; others were made from tree bark, parchment and similar materials. The Talmud and Midrash speak often of scroll-books. We read that the high priest on the Day of Atonement read from a scroll during the Temple service and then rolled it up. There is no mention in the Talmud of books with folded pages.”

“Recently, archaeological discoveries, such as the Dead Sea scrolls, have once again revived Christian interest in the investigation of ancient texts.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

With the restoration of revelation through living prophets, we can see the use and re-use of prophetic statements as well as prophetic “tools such as the Liahona and the Urim and Thummim.” As the Liahona was described as a “ball,” it could be compared to a visual reminder of power and authority in many past monarchies – the “orb.” The word is still used in modern English denoting knowledge and source of guidance through information. There is an “ORB” online encyclopedia, for example. The Urim and Thummim will be discussed in an upcoming lesson.

The prophecies in the Book of Mormon about the scattering and gathering of Israel can be compared to ancient as well as to modern prophecies. A brief comparison of the Orson Hyde Dedicatory Prayer on the Land of Israel given October 24, 1842 with some of the verses from 1 Nephi 21 and 22 are an example.

<u>Book of Mormon</u>	<u>Orson Hyde's Israel Dedication</u>
<p>“They shall not hunger nor thirst, neither shall the heat nor the sun smite them; for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them.” <i>(1 Nephi 21:10)</i></p>	<p>“. . . remove the barrenness and sterility of this land, and let springs of living water break forth to water its thirsty soil. Let the vine and olive produce in their strength and the fig-tree bloom and flourish. Let the land become abundantly fruitful when possessed by its rightful heirs; let it again flow with plenty to feed the returning prodigals who come home with a spirit of grace and supplication; upon it let the clouds distil virtue and richness, and let the fields smile with plenty. Let the flocks and the herds greatly increase and multiply upon the mountains and the hills . . .”</p>
<p>“And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers; they shall bow down to thee with their face towards the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet; and thou shalt know that I am the Lord; for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me.” <i>(1 Nephi 21:23)</i></p>	<p>“. . . and let kings become their nursing fathers, and queens with motherly fondness wipe the tear of sorrow from their eye . . .”</p>
<p>“Wherefore, he will bring them again out of captivity, and they shall be gathered together to the lands of their inheritance; and they shall be brought out of obscurity and out of darkness; and they shall know that the Lord is their Savior and their Redeemer, the Mighty One of Israel.” <i>(1 Nephi 22:12)</i></p>	<p>“. . . let Thy great kindness conquer and subdue the unbelief of Thy people. Do Thou take from them their stony heart, and give them a heart of flesh; and may the sun of Thy favor dispel the cold mists of darkness which have beclouded their atmosphere . . .”</p>
<p>“For behold, the righteous shall not perish; for the time surely must come that all they who fight against Zion shall be cut off.” <i>(1 Nephi 22:19)</i></p>	<p>“. . . Let that nation or that people who shall take an active part in behalf of Abraham's children, and in the raising up of Jerusalem, find favor in Thy sight. Let not their enemies prevail against them, neither let pestilence or famine overcome them, but let the glory of Israel overshadow them, and the power of the Highest protect them; while that nation or kingdom that will not serve Thee in this glorious work must perish, according to Thy word --Yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted . . .”</p>

“Free to Choose Liberty and Eternal Life”

2 Nephi 1–2

Scripture Summary: *Lehi prophesies of a land of liberty—His seed shall be scattered and smitten if they reject the Holy One of Israel—He exhorts his sons to put on the armor of righteousness.*

Redemption cometh through the Holy Messiah—Freedom of choice (agency) is essential to existence and progression—Adam fell that men might be—Men are free to choose liberty and eternal life. [Between 588 and 570 B.C.]

Supplemental

Holy Land and Judaic Insights:

The Life of Lehi is in itself a type and symbol of the plan of salvation. The long journey from Israel to the new promised land is like our mortal journey from pre-life to after-life. The dialogue, prayer and respect shared before Lehi’s death is very typical in Biblical and Jewish tradition. Consider how many Prophet-fathers gathered their families, taught and blessed them before their mortality ended. Abraham blessing Jacob (instead of Esau), Jacob blessing Joseph, Joseph blessing his sons and Moses transferring his authority to Joshua are just a few examples.

“Numbers which describes Moses' transfer of his authority to Joshua prior to his death. Joshua is told by God, through Moses, that in his capacity as leader of the Israelites, ‘he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall inquire for him by the judgment of the Urim before the Lord.’”

“In literary tradition the Jewish People (see Jew) is one large family descended from Jacob, who was given the name ‘Israel’ in honor of his mysterious and victorious struggle with the angel of God. The different branches of this family are descended from the 12 sons born to Israel by his four wives. In biblical times the father was head of the family, the *bet av* or ‘house of a father,’ and owner of its property; he was its chief authority and was expected to show love and mercy to his family. His blessing carried legal weight in the distribution of family wealth and privilege.”

“According to Judaism, great respect must be paid to the dying and the dead, and nothing at all may be done to disturb or anger a dying person. All his wishes must be fulfilled even after he dies, so that he should not become upset because of uncertainty. Also everything possible must be done to prolong his life even if there is only a slight chance of it succeeding. For this purpose all the prohibitions of Jewish law, such as working on the Sabbath, for example, are suspended.”

“An ancient tradition is to light a candle in the presence of a person nearing his end (known in Hebrew as a *goses*) to symbolize the flickering of the human soul and it is considered to be a great act of piety to stay with the *goses* to reassure him and be present at the departure of his soul. There is an old custom to encourage a dying man to confess his sins; however this should not be done in the presence of women and children in order not to distress them and thus disturb the *goses*. All in all, Judaism does not see death as something to be terrified of; it must be accepted because it is inevitable and everything must be done to enable the dying man to meet his death calmly.”

“Before his death Jacob made Joseph swear to bury him in the ancestral vault in Hebron. After blessing his sons and grandsons, Manasseh and Ephraim, and predicting the ultimate return to Canaan, Jacob bestowed on Joseph a parting gift . . .”

Even at Masada, the zealot leader, Eliezar ben Yair, spoke to his people and reminded them of their “pact” or covenant that they would rather die than serve under the Romans. Their credo was incorrect, yet the “before death speech” was in keeping with a “before death philosophical dialogue” common in Jewish culture. Consider also the numerous attempts to teach the Egyptians preceding the ultimate firstborn deaths and subsequent death in the Red Sea.

Likewise, the instruction Jesus gave his closest associates, the Twelve, at the “Last Supper” preceded His inevitable death the next day. A religious Jew is taught – what will become a natural instinctive exercise – that his or her last words before death are a prayer.

“The *Shema* is the first prayer taught to a Jewish child; it is the last prayer recited by a religious person before death; it has become the prayer which captures and expresses the beliefs and goals of the Jewish religion.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

As Father Lehi reviews the Plan of Salvation, he teaches about the atonement. Two words are emphasized, Justice and Mercy. In Judaism, “Elohim” stands for justice and “YHWH” (Jehovah - I Am) stands for mercy.

“The exercise of mercy is an obligation for all Jews. By this it is meant that they must act with compassion and forgiveness towards all mankind, and perform deeds of charity and kindness. This quality is an essential characteristic of God who is known as Rahum (“Merciful”) and, in accordance with the tradition which sets as man's goal the imitation of God: ‘As He is merciful, so be you merciful.’ Just as God is bound by His covenant of mercy with His people, so is the Jew bound by specific commandments to act mercifully to the oppressed, the alien, the orphan, the widow, and indeed, every living creature.”

“The stress placed upon this quality is evident both in the many charitable institutions existing in Jewish communal life, and in the daily prayers which implore God to deal compassionately even with the undeserving man. Human beings are frail, imperfect creatures constantly open to error, and so they are totally dependent on God's mercy.”

“But God, as depicted by the rabbis, embodies a combination of justice and mercy, of strict judgment and lenient compassion. This combination of justice and mercy in God is represented by the two names of God --- Elohim and YHWH. The former stands for justice and the latter for mercy. Though they may seem contradictory, one actually complements the other and, when there is a conflict between the two, God usually favors mercy.”

“Judaism demands of its judges this same balance, and the principle of mercy thus assumes extreme importance in the administration of Jewish law. The prophet

Zechariah (7:9) put it: “. . . execute the judgment and show mercy and compassion every man to his brother.”

“The Hebrew word for justice is *zedek*, and indicative of Judaism's attitude is the fact that another form of the same root *zedakah*, means ‘charity.’ For justice must be tempered with mercy and indeed the main attribute of God is His integration of justice and mercy. Yet another Hebrew word derived from the same root is *zaddik*, which means ‘righteous.’ The righteous man is one who is both just and merciful.”
(*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Lehi well understands the principles of “going back.” He takes his family “back” to the creation. In Judaism, some of the “learning of the Fathers” has been lost. There is a Jewish tradition (Agaddah) of a conflict in the creation process:

“When the first man was to be created, says the Aggadah, God consulted the angels. Some favored his creation, because of the love and mercy he would show; others were opposed -- because of the falsehood and strife he would stir up. In the end, for reasons best known to Himself, the Holy One decided to create man.”

“In their search for lessons on man's place in God's universe, the rabbis discussed at great length the biblical account of the creation of Adam, which is outlined above. Thus, for example, the Midrash observes that each newly created form of life ruled over what preceded it in the order of creation. Adam and Eve were thus created last in order that they should rule over all creation, and in order that they should be able to enter a banqueting hall that was waiting ready for them. In the words of the Midrash, ‘The matter may be likened to an emperor's building a palace, consecrating it, preparing the feast, and only then inviting the guests.’ On the other hand, the rabbis taught that Adam was created last, so that if he should become conceited, he could be told: ‘The gnat was created before you.’” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Along with losing a clear personal identity of God (see upcoming **Lesson 8**), references to Satan as a personage have also largely disappeared from Jewish thought. Talmudic teachings include the following description:

“In the Talmud, Satan is at times identified with the yezer ha-rah (the evil inclination), but he also assumes certain aspects of a fully personalized entity. Thus, he is the angel of death, or he is the tempter lying in ambush not only for Job but also for Abraham and all the biblical personalities. Or he is the accuser, ha-mekareg, constantly waiting for man to sin so as to bring down upon him the wrath of God.”

“Several references to Satan have found their way into the liturgy, for example the plea in the hashkivenu prayer of the evening service to ‘remove from us the enemy, pestilence . . . and Satan.’” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

“I Know in Whom I Have Trusted”

2 Nephi 3–5

Scripture Summary: *Joseph in Egypt saw the Nephites in vision—He prophesied of Joseph Smith, the latter-day seer; of Moses, who would deliver Israel; and of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon.*

Lehi counsels and blesses his posterity—He dies and is buried—Nephi glories in the goodness of God to him—Nephi puts his trust in the Lord forever. [Between 588 and 570 B.C.]

The Nephites separate themselves from the Lamanites, keep the law of Moses, and build a temple—Because of their unbelief, the Lamanites are cursed, receive a skin of blackness, and become a scourge unto the Nephites. [Between 588 and 559 B.C.]

Supplemental

Holy Land and Judaic Insights:

The account of ancient Joseph is truly a chiasm paralleled by the modern story of Joseph. It is a prefiguring of the Savior’s mission. The lesson comes from Joseph’s life as he is chosen by his father and then rejected by his brothers. In slavery, his identity is really unknown, yet he serves and saves those around him. Later, he serves and saves his brothers before identifying himself. The Book of Mormon connects the symbolism of the ancient Joseph with a latter-day Joseph.

Ancient Joseph was blessed and authorized by his father Jacob when Jacob laid his hands on Joseph’s head.

“In the same way that priests lift their hands in blessing, so parents place their hands on the heads of their children when they bless them. (For example, in the Bible, Jacob blessed his grandsons, Ephraim and Manasseh, by placing his hands on their heads.) Placing the hands on another person is symbolic not only of transferring blessing but also of passing on authority. In talmudic times, scholars received their rabbinic ordination through the symbolic act of placing of the hands (known as *semikhah*.)” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

In modern Judaism, there is a powerful traditional and legendary history of Joseph and his future role. Some of these excerpts can give “modern Joseph” a little insight into what the Jews are still anticipating.

“Based on the famous story of Joseph and his brothers, the Talmud warns against favoring one child over another . . . Jealousy is considered such a serious evil that it is mentioned in the Ten Commandments where the tenth commandment is an outright prohibition of envy: . . . the rabbis of the Talmud developed the philosophy that a truly rich man is one who is happy with his portion in life and does not envy others.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

“According to the Talmud, the Messiah will be a descendant of the House of David and will be preceded by a secondary Messiah, from the House of Joseph . . .” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

When the Chief Rabbi, Avraham HaKohen Kook was appointed in Palestine in the 1920's, he was asked if the Jews could now build the Temple (destroyed since year 70 A.D.). His response was that the priestly rights were gone and referred to the great 12th century rabbi Moses Maimonides. Maimonides said, in effect, "We are waiting for a Messiah Ben-Joseph, to him will be given the keys of the gathering of Israel, he will restore Temple worship."

The chiasmas shows that ancient Joseph saved his family, and they did not know who he was. Latter-day Joseph is saving his brothers again, (more foreign aid goes to Israel from the U.S.A., the land of Joseph, than from all other countries combined) and they don't know that it is "Joseph." In the meridian of times there was "One" who saved us all - and still most people don't know it.

There is an abundant amount of imagery still existing in Judaism that can be interpreted as referring to a personal shield or protector. Jews wear garments that have four markings, the knotted strings, on each corner of the *Tallith*. One of the fascinating things in Judaism is the repetitive keeping of customs even long after their meanings have faded. For example, when visiting the Western (Wailing) Wall, you will see reminders of ancient temple worship. Men are on one side, women on the other. Head covering is used and robes (*Talith*) are placed on one shoulder and then another while certain words are recited. There is a sash (or "girdle") tied with the bow on one side. Levites wear aprons. Some Jews still remove their shoes when approaching the Wall. Small pieces of paper are placed between the cracks of the old temple wall stones with names written on them, names of people who require special prayers and blessings. There is a minimum of ten who form a prayer circle (*Minyan*) so that prayers, readings of the scriptures and instructions can be done. Someone is always at hand to assist the person reading or reciting to use correct intonations and to follow proper clothing and recitation procedures.

Some practices have ceased, even though they were still in use just a hundred years ago. One of those practices is reflected in the thousands of old nails protruding slightly out of the cracks in the wall. An old Rabbi described them as the "sure nails" pounded into the wall to fasten their sins so that people could leave their burdens and get on with life.

Isaiah speaks clearly about this in five powerful verses in his twenty-second chapter. The term "house of David" honors him who purchased "Temple Square" and gathered the materials to build the "House of the Lord." The sealing powers of the Lord are referred to as "he shall open" and "he shall shut." The Lord will be nailed surely (there is written and archaeological evidence that the Romans nailed in the hands and in the wrists to make the crucifixion stronger). The "Glorious throne of His Father's House" means the Lord was willing to take the sins of all mankind upon Himself.

We are blessed in that we can "fasten our sins" upon him. Apparently, in ancient times these sins were symbolically collected, small sins in cups, larger ones in flagons, so that they could be disposed of. Sometimes this was done by placing them on a lamb or goat and letting it escape out the Gate of Mercy, also known as the Gate of Forgiveness and the Gate Beautiful, to die on its own.

"And I will clothe him with thy robe, and strengthen him with thy girdle, and I will commit thy government into his hand: and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah.

And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open.

And I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place; and he shall be for a glorious throne to his father's house.

And they shall hang upon him all the glory of his father's house, the offspring and the issue, all vessels of small quantity, from the vessels of cups, even to all the vessels of flagons.

In that day, saith the LORD of hosts, shall the nail that is fastened in the sure place be removed, and be cut down, and fall; and the burden that was upon it shall be cut off: for the LORD hath spoken it.” *(Isaiah 22:21-25)*

“O How Great the Goodness of Our God”

Lesson

8

2 Nephi 6–10

Scripture Summary: *Jacob recounts Jewish history: Their Babylonian captivity and return; the ministry and crucifixion of the Holy One of Israel; the help received from the gentiles; and their latter-day restoration when they believe in the Messiah.*

Isaiah speaks Messianically—Messiah shall have the tongue of the learned—He shall give his back to the smiters—He shall not be confounded—Compare Isaiah 50.

In the last days, the Lord shall comfort Zion and gather Israel—The redeemed shall come to Zion amid great joy—Compare Isaiah 51 and 52:1-2.

Jews shall be gathered in all their lands of promise—Atonement ransoms man from the fall—The bodies of the dead shall come forth from the grave, and their spirits from hell and from paradise—They shall be judged—Atonement saves from death, hell, the devil, and endless torment—The righteous to be saved in the kingdom of God—Penalties for sins set forth—The Holy One of Israel is the keeper of the gate.

Jews shall crucify their God—They shall be scattered until they begin to believe in him—America shall be a land of liberty where no king shall rule—Be reconciled to God and gain salvation through his grace. [Between 559 and 545 B.C.]

Supplemental

Holy Land and Judaic Insights: In the chapters being studied, we read that Jacob is consecrated by his brother. Jesus is our Eldest Brother, He sets us apart, consecrates us to the Father and becomes our King and Protector.

“(The word *Herem* in Hebrew), means banned or set apart. The term is applied in various ways: 1) Articles consecrated to God were sacred, irrevocably, and in the highest degree. They could not be redeemed or put to any other use and were forbidden, *herem*, to the community. 2) An idolatrous Israelite was *herem*. He and all his possessions were to be destroyed. The idolatrous enemy was also to be destroyed, as they were a threat to the purity of the Israelite's faith. The intention of *herem* was to protect Israel against the influence of a debased way of life. ‘. . . lest they lead you into doing all the abhorrent things they have done for their gods . . .’ (Deuteronomy 20:18). During the conquest of Canaan, Joshua always issued proclamations inviting the nations to choose peace and abandon idolatry. Jericho refused and was destroyed. The Gibeonites, fearing the same fate, chose peace, gave up idolatry and became servants, the ‘hewers of wood and drawers of water’ for the sanctuary (see also Gibeon). 3) *Herem* is also the word used for excommunication, the separation of individuals or a group as punishment for forbidden behavior. Ezra the scribe, one of the leaders who restored communal life in desolate Judea when the exiles returned from Babylon (about 450 B.C.E.) was among the first to use this *herem*. It was invoked as a punishment to force obedience to communal authorities and was used most by Ezra to root out intermarriage. *Niddui* (a lighter type of *herem*) consisted of isolating the offender from the community which then held him in enforced contempt for a period of not less than thirty days. He had to live in confinement with only his family; no outsider could greet him, eat or drink with him. He could not be included in a *minyan* (quorum) of ten men required for prayer. *Niddui* was announced by the rabbinical court. The more severe *herem* was proclaimed in the synagogue, either before the open Ark or while holding a Torah scroll. The *shofar* was sounded and a warning was issued, with a plea for the welfare of the faithful.

All those present held candles which they put out after the excommunication was declared.

“*Kiddushin* is a legal act of acquisition of the bride by the groom: by handing over an object of value (usually a simple ring) to the bride in the presence of two witnesses and reciting the formula, ‘Behold you are consecrated unto me with this ring according to the law of Moses and Israel,’ the groom signifies his intent to reserve the bride exclusively to himself, and by accepting the ring the bride signifies her consent.”

“The most famous Nazirites in Jewish history -- Samson and Samuel --- were consecrated as such by their parents from the moment of their conception, with the intention that they remain Nazirites all their lives.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

The scattering and gathering of Israel are models of repentance and forgiveness. The contrast of Israel and the Gentiles is another model of repentance. Nowadays, to the Jews, there is a new concept of “Righteous Gentiles.” It is a beginning of the concept of being “saved” by Gentiles.

“MIGRATION, wandering from place to place, has been one of the major components of Jewish history, for since the time of the Patriarchs the ‘wandering Jew’ has suffered from a lack of territory, government, and defense. Major Jewish migrations in search of favorable living conditions and in flight from harassment, persecution and expulsion, include the Exodus from Egypt, the Babylonian exile, Jewish settlement outside Erez Israel during the Second Temple period, the dispersion under the Roman and Near Eastern empires after the destruction of the Second Temple. The scattering of Jews throughout the Christian and Islamic states, culminating in the expulsion from the Iberian peninsula in 1492 and their settlement in the New World since the early stages of the European colonization, a process that greatly accelerated in the latter half of the 19th century. Throughout the period of the Diaspora, small numbers of Jews made their way back to Erez Israel, the land promised them in covenant with their God.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Some of the names of the Lord and words that represent the Savior’s mission and atonement include:

Deliver	2 Nephi 6:17, 7:2
Redeem	2 Nephi 7:2
Comfort, comforteth	2 Nephi 8:3, 12
Light	2 Nephi 8:4
Judgement, judge	2 Nephi 8:4-5
Salvation	2 Nephi 8:5-6

“. . . the two confessions *Ashammu* and *Al-Het* were introduced into the prayers for the Day of Atonement which is a special occasion for repentance and forgiveness. However, even when a sinner has done all these things, his repentance is still not

final until he has been exposed to the same temptation and withstood it. Of course he should not deliberately put himself on that spot again.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Repentance in Hebrew is known as *teshuvah*, which literally means "return," and signifies a return to God.”

“An opportunity for salvation would be given Israel by their merciful God: ‘Turn to Me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with lamentation’ (Joel 2:12). Repentance will bring forgiveness and the Lord will turn His terrible wrath on the exilers of His people and the plunderers of His Temple:” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

In the New Testament we read that Jesus’ life was about 12,053 days long. Yet, there is only an account of 31 of those days. What did the writers choose to report? Maybe, much like the Book of Mormon prophets, they wrote “a hundredth part.”

“And a hundredth part of the proceedings of this people, which now began to be numerous, cannot be written upon these plates; but many of their proceedings are written upon the larger plates, and their wars, and their contentions, and the reigns of their kings.” (*Jacob 3:13*)

“Wherefore, I chose these things, to finish my record upon them, which remainder of my record I shall take from the plates of Nephi; and I cannot write the hundredth part of the things of my people.” (*Words of Mormon 1:5*)

“But behold, a hundredth part of the proceedings of this people, yea, the account of the Lamanites and of the Nephites, and their wars, and contentions, and dissensions, and their preaching, and their prophecies, and their shipping and their building of ships, and their building of temples, and of synagogues and their sanctuaries, and their righteousness, and their wickedness, and their murders, and their robbings, and their plundering, and all manner of abominations and whoredoms, cannot be contained in this work.” (*Helaman 3:14*)

“And there had many things transpired which, in the eyes of some, would be great and marvelous; nevertheless, they cannot all be written in this book; yea, this book cannot contain even a hundredth part of what was done among so many people in the space of twenty and five years;” (*3 Nephi 5:8*)

A mathematic review of the events of Jesus’ life seems to give us a key to understanding the purpose of the scriptures, namely, teaching us the atonement.

Jesus’ 1 st 30 years	=	18 events
1 st year ministry	=	18 events
2 nd year ministry	=	27 events
3 rd year ministry	=	150 events, 75 occurred in the last days/hours/moments

Look for the meaning of all other events by focusing on him and his atonement. Even his names have meaning, a way of explaining the atonement. In lesson #37 of the Old Testament Supplemental Material you can study the list of the Lord's names.

The concept of resurrection in Judaism is a fading and (sometimes forgotten) principle.

“Jewish theology, as opposed to Jewish philosophy, has no clear doctrine on the relationship between body and soul. Some Talmudic rabbis did not consider views on such a purely theoretical subject important; rather, they focused their interest on the practical question of the resurrection of the body, and God's future judgment. Other sages did speculate on the subject.”

“The whole subject of afterlife is not explicitly stated in the Bible and many scholars are of the opinion that belief in afterlife was adopted by Jews during the Babylonian exile after the destruction of the First Temple when they came into contact with eastern religions such as Zoroastrianism. Traditional believers claim that there are ‘hints’ to future life in the Torah, such as the verse ‘Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song’ (Exodus 15:1). The Hebrew word for ‘sang’ is in the future tense and the sages took this to mean that Moses and the Israelites will sing in the future, that is, in the world to come.”

“The unity of the Jewish nation was considered an historic and spiritual concept, in addition to being a social reality. All generations of Jews (including converts to Judaism) were viewed as having been present at Mount Sinai and sharing in the responsibilities of the covenant with God. Likewise, the righteous of all generations will be reunited at the time of the resurrection of the dead during the messianic period. This concept of and shared fate is referred to often in the Talmud with the terms *kelal Yisrael* and *keneset Yisrael*.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Look how Ezekiel, in chapter 37, teaches the concept of resurrection and gathering in the same metaphors. A powerful metaphor in the scriptures is the word “ruah.” As mentioned in previous lessons, the word “ruah” means wind, breath and spirit. Ruah Elohim is the spirit or breath of God.

“Flesh is the term used in the Bible to distinguish mortal man from God. The Hebrew word for flesh, *basar*, is contrasted with the Divine Spirit, *ru'ah*, with which man is temporarily endowed. Thus: ‘My spirit shall not abide in man forever, for that he is also flesh; therefore shall his days be a hundred and twenty years’ (Genesis 6:3). The Talmud and Midrash refer to man as *basar va-dam* (‘flesh and blood’) to indicate his mortality as against the eternity of God.”

“*Ruah ha-Kodesh* (holy spirit) is often used as a synonym for prophecy. However, according to some rabbis, unlike prophecy, there are some types of *ruah ha-kodesh* which also can be attained by doing good deeds.”

“The Talmudic rabbis thought the body to be separable, in a sense, from the soul. God breathed the soul into the body of Adam (Genesis 2:7).” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Ezekiel spoke of breath and of wind bringing life into a dead skeleton. As the sticks (ETZ-emot) of the body are clothed again with flesh and come alive, so shall the stick (ETZ) of Judah, the dead skeleton of a once true and living religion come together with the stick of Joseph, embodying the true religion and with the “breath” of the Lord, his spirit - a resurrection - a new life begins again. That new life will include a new sanctuary of the Lord.

“. . . and the bones came together, bone to his bone . . . the sinews and the flesh came up upon them . . . and the breath came into them, and they lived . . . Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel . . . And when the children of thy people shall speak unto thee, saying, Wilt thou not show us what thou meanest by these? Say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, even with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in mine hand. . . . Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side . . . And I will make them one nation . . . Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore.” (*Ezekiel 37*)

The term “Presence of God” is used in Judaism, yet the personal reality of God and His presence have also been forgotten or at least obscured.

“The exact nature of this afterlife is the subject of great discussion in classical Jewish sources. All agree that after death the soul continues to live. The souls of the righteous enter paradise, or *Gan Eden* (Garden of Eden) as it is generally called. In that state ‘there is no eating or drinking... no envy, hatred or competition but only this: that the righteous sit with crowns on their heads and delight in the splendor of God's presence’ (Talmud). The souls of the wicked enter hell, or *Gebinnom*, as it is known, where they undergo purification before they too can enter paradise. The general view is that the stay in *Gebinnom* is not longer than 11 months and can only be permanent in the case of exceedingly wicked persons.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Some time ago at a Bar Mitzvah celebration at the Western (Wailing) Wall, I observed a grandfather keeping his Bar Mitzvah grandson from retrieving the Torah Scroll out of the “Ark” until he had first knocked. The boy questioned the “knocking” procedure, the only explanation that his grandfather would give was that inside the Ark, behind the curtain, represented the “Presence of God.” The scrolls were “His Word,” and it was only polite to knock before entering. Inside the Ark were several Torah scrolls draped with beautiful cloths or enclosed in beautiful containers. Retrieving them is often accompanied by a gentle kiss and a prayer utterance.

The wicked shall have a perfect knowledge of guilt, uncleanness, and nakedness. The righteous shall have a perfect knowledge of enjoyment, righteousness, being clothed with purity, the robe of righteousness.

“My Soul Delighteth in the Words of Isaiah”

2 Nephi 11–25

Scripture

Jacob saw his Redeemer—The law of Moses typifies Christ and proves he shall come.

Summary:

Isaiah sees the latter-day temple, gathering of Israel, and millennial judgment and peace—The proud and wicked shall be brought low at the Second Coming—Compare Isaiah 2.

Judah and Jerusalem shall be punished for their disobedience—The Lord pleads for and judges his people—The daughters of Zion are cursed and tormented for their worldliness—Compare Isaiah 3.

Zion and her daughters shall be redeemed and cleansed in the millennial day—Compare Isaiah 4.

The Lord’s vineyard (Israel) shall become desolate and his people shall be scattered—Woes shall come upon them in their apostate and scattered state—The Lord shall lift an ensign and gather Israel—Compare Isaiah 5.

Isaiah sees the Lord—Isaiah’s sins are forgiven—He is called to prophesy—He prophesies of the rejection by the Jews of Christ’s teachings—A remnant shall return—Compare Isaiah 6.

Ephraim and Syria wage war against Judah—Christ shall be born of a virgin—Compare Isaiah 7.

Christ shall be as a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense—Seek the Lord, not peeping wizards—Turn to the law and to the testimony for guidance—Compare Isaiah 8.

Isaiah speaks Messianically—The people in darkness to see a great Light—Unto us a child is born—He shall be the Prince of Peace and shall reign on David’s throne—Compare Isaiah 9.

Destruction of Assyria is a type of destruction of wicked at the Second Coming—Few people shall be left after the Lord comes again—Remnant of Jacob shall return in that day—Compare Isaiah 10.

Stem of Jesse (Christ) shall judge in righteousness—The knowledge of God shall cover the earth in the Millennium—The Lord shall raise an ensign and gather Israel—Compare Isaiah 11.

In the millennial day all men shall praise the Lord—He shall dwell among them—Compare Isaiah 12.

Destruction of Babylon is a type of destruction at Second Coming—It shall be a day of wrath and vengeance—Babylon (the world) shall fall forever—Compare Isaiah 13.

Israel shall be gathered and shall enjoy millennial rest—Lucifer cast out of heaven for rebellion—Israel shall triumph over Babylon (the world)—Compare Isaiah 14.

Nephi glories in plainness—Isaiah’s prophecies shall be understood in the last days—The Jews shall return from Babylon, crucify the Messiah, and be scattered and scourged—They shall be restored when they believe in the Messiah—He shall first come six hundred years after Lehi left Jerusalem—Nephites keep the law of Moses and believe in Christ, who is the Holy One of Israel. [Between 559 and 545 B.C.]

Supplemental

Holy Land and Judaic Insights:

One of the reason Nephi rejoices in the words of Isaiah is because they brought a vivid memory of Nephi’s homeland. Comparing the geographical consideration of the ancient Holy Land and the new Promised Land is a way to emphasize an all encompassing testimony of the Lord. In ancient times, the word of the Lord came from the “tops of the mountains,” Jerusalem, where the tribe of Judah and the prophets of Israel lived. These mountains create a backbone of the country of Israel. In fact, the land of Israel has mountains from its northern to its southern borders. It is a mountain range that is “everlasting.”

In latter times, the word of the Lord comes from the “tops of the mountains,” Salt Lake City, where the prophets and leadership of the Lord’s kingdom and the tribe of Joseph are presently situated. The Ute Indians used the word Utah to denote the tops of the moun-

tains. It is also the only other range of mountains that extends from the northern to the southern borders of the land. It is also the “land of everlasting hills.”

Judah and Utah even sound linguistically similar. There is an Arab village close to Hebron that is called Yatta. An old synagogue of the first century was found there with characteristics of Levitical use. Some even suggest it to be the wilderness area of Judah where John the Baptist (a Levite) might have lived.

The blessings of the “everlasting hills” have affected, are affecting and will continue to affect all the world.

“The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills: they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren.” (*Genesis 49:26*)

“And the boundaries of the everlasting hills shall tremble at their presence.” (*Doctrine & Covenants 133:31*)

“Everlasting is also used to signify the eternal, lasting, and enduring nature of some particular thing. For instance: the ‘everlasting covenant’ (D. & C. 1:15), ‘the everlasting gospel’ (D. & C. 36:5), ‘songs of everlasting joy’ (D. & C. 45:71), ‘an everlasting inheritance’ (D. & C 57:5), ‘the everlasting hills.’ (D. & C. 133:31.)” (*Mormon Doctrine, Bruce R. McConkie, Pg.243*)

Isaiah, who knew the mountains of Judah, also knew the Lord and combined the majesty of both in teaching us about the Savior.

“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!” (*Isaiah 52:7*)

Looking at the sacred event that redeemed us from the sins of life, bruises of experience, captivity of conscience, blindness of bigotry, hurt of hearts broken, poverty of stinginess and the imprisonment of self pity, we are drawn to the Mount of Olives. Two thousand years ago, He sank below all things, experiencing deeper depths than we would ever reach so that we would never have to. Bleeding from every pore of His body, he was stained for us. How beautiful upon the Mount of Olives are the feet of Him who brings good tidings. Good tidings are the “good news,” the gospel of joy. Isaiah wrote the words of the Savior’s testimony seven hundred years before the Savior would speak them.

“The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound;” (*Isaiah 61:1*)

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised . . .” (*Luke 4:18*)

Although the principle of “one atoning for our sins” in Judaism has diminished over the years, one day every year is set aside as the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur.

“The tenth of the Hebrew month of Tishrei is Yom Kippur, a day of fasting and prayer for all Israel, a day which has been significant to Jews throughout the ages. The Day of Atonement is the last of the Ten Days of Penitence which begin with Rosh Ha-Shanah, and is the climax of the repentance and soul-searching incumbent on every Jew during this period.”

“Perhaps the most beloved ritual of the Day of Atonement, *Kol Nidrei* is . . . chanted before sunset as the . . . worshipers are wrapped in *tallitot* and some even robed in white gowns (*kitels*).” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Since 1967, when Jerusalem became open for Jews, the congregant’s response is “Next year in Jerusalem-rebuilt.” This is an expression of rebuilding the temple in the mountains of Judah.

“And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.” (*Isaiah 2:3*)

“Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts.” (*Malachi 3:1*)

“I am Jesus Christ, the Son of God; wherefore, gird up your loins and I will suddenly come to my temple. Even so. Amen.” (*Doctrine and Covenants 36:8*)

How beautiful upon the mountains of Judah and Joseph are the feet of Him who brought salvation to all of us! How beautiful are the garments of them that are worthy to bow at His feet. Jews use garments to remind them of ancient temple rituals. The garment is called a ‘Tallit’ and it has four sets of Zizit (strings), with knots that are reminders of the binding covenants.

“According to the Bible, God commanded the Jews to wear fringes on the corners of their garments as a reminder of the Lord’s commandments: ‘And it shall be unto you for a fringe that ye may look upon it and remember all the commandments of the Lord’ (Numbers 15:39). This fringe is called *zizit*.”

“The *tallit* is usually white and made either of wool, cotton, or silk . . . Although the ordinary *tallit* is worn only in the synagogue, strictly observant Jews wear the *tallit katan* (small *tallit*) under their upper garments the whole day.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

In many Jewish weddings, a special white garment is worn called the Kitel. Let’s look at a repeat of this quote.

“In Ashkenazi tradition it is not just the bride who wears white on her wedding day. The groom, too, stands under the canopy wearing his white *kitel*, or robe, over his wedding finery. The day of their marriage is a solemn one for the bride and groom. They pray that their past sins will be forgiven and they can start their life together afresh. The white of their clothing symbolizes the purity and the forgiveness of sin for which they are hoping. For this reason a similar garment is used to clothe the dead for burial. The *kitel* therefore also serves to remind the wearer of how brief life is, and of the necessity for atonement.”

“The *kitel* is traditionally worn on those important occasions when the Jew is concerned with such thoughts. It is worn during prayer services on Rosh Ha-Shanah and Yom Kippur; at the seder on Passover eve; by the *hazzan* on the eighth day of Sukkot when the prayer for rain is recited and the first day of Passover during the prayer for dew.”

(Encyclopædia Judaica Jr.)

In the ancient Temple, there were great “feasts” that centered around the proper and meticulous ritual of sacrifices. Even in modern times, the subject of sacrifice connects with Temples.

“The Hebrew term for sacrifice, *korban*, is from a root meaning ‘to draw near,’ and originally denoted that which was brought near, or offered, to God. It is also possible that the term signified ‘that which brings man near to God’ and, indeed, a late aggadic source interprets sacrifices in this sense.” *(Encyclopædia Judaica Jr.)*

Where would be a better place than going to the mountain of the Lord’s house and drawing near to Him?

Isaiah’s writings have one purpose . . . to bring us to the Lord. His writings have been found in the 2000 year-old Dead Sea Scrolls. They are the oldest Biblical texts ever found in Hebrew. When compared to the texts of Isaiah in the Book of Mormon, the veracity of his Bible texts are confirmed . . . because the Book of Mormon texts come from older manuscripts, metal plates from Jerusalem, dating 2600 years ago. Other metal plates with scripture verses have been found in Jerusalem, substantiating the Book of Mormon technology.

“He Inviteth All to Come unto Him”

2 Nephi 26–30

Scripture Summary: *Christ shall minister to the Nephites—Nephi foresees the destruction of his people—They shall speak from the dust—The gentiles shall build up false churches and secret combinations—The Lord forbids men to practice priestcrafts. Darkness and apostasy shall cover the earth in the last days—The Book of Mormon shall come forth—Three witnesses shall testify of the book—The learned man cannot read the sealed book—The Lord shall do a marvelous work and a wonder—Compare Isaiah 29.*

Many false churches shall be built up in the last days—They shall teach false and vain and foolish doctrines—Apostasy shall abound because of false teachers—The devil shall rage in the hearts of men—He shall teach all manner of false doctrines.

Many gentiles shall reject the Book of Mormon—They shall say: We need no more Bible—The Lord speaks to many nations—He will judge the world out of the books thus written.

Converted gentiles shall be numbered with the covenant people—Many Lamanites and Jews shall believe the word and become a delightful people—Israel shall be restored and the wicked destroyed. [Between 559 and 545 B.C.]

Supplemental

Holy Land and Judaic Insights: The Word of The Lord is for ALL people. Although the Jews think there are fewer laws for the Gentiles, the Book of Mormon teaches that the Gentiles have to learn the Law, they then will depart from it. It will be restored, first to the Gentiles and then to the Jews.

“Seven laws which were supposed by the rabbis to have been binding on all mankind even before the revelation at Sinai. They are referred to as ‘Noachide’ because of their universality, since the whole human race was supposed to be descended from the three sons of Noah, who alone survived the flood. Exegetically derived from statements made by God to Adam and to Noah, six of them are negative:

Not To:

- 1) worship idols; 2) blaspheme the name of God; 3) kill; 4) commit adultery;
- 5) rob; 6) eat flesh that had been cut from a living animal.

Must Do:

- 1) to establish courts of justice.

These seven laws are binding on all non-Jews even today. Whoever observes them is considered to be among the ‘Righteous Gentiles.’” (*Encyclopædia Judaica Jr.*)

Likewise, the Jews consider the Messiah as coming to redeem them. The Book of Mormon teaches that the Messiah is for ALL people.

“The Hebrew word for Messiah, *mashi'ah*, means ‘anointed’ and indicates that the Messiah has been chosen by God. The coming of the Messiah therefore has come to mean the redemption of the Jewish people and an end to its suffering and tribulations.” (*Encyclopædia Judaica Jr.*)

“And as I spake concerning the convincing of the Jews, that Jesus is the very Christ, it must needs be that the Gentiles be convinced also that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God;” (*2 Nephi 26:12*)

In Judaic thought, when the Messianic period arrives, the divine aspect of the Messiah is discounted, probably because the concept of God and the Godhead has deteriorated throughout time in Judaism.

“In traditional Judaism, the Messiah will be a human being --- albeit it a perfect one -- who will come and bring harmony to the world. He will not have a divine aspect other than having been chosen by God for his task.” (*Encyclopædia Judaica Jr.*)

Reading the term Bible, as referred to in the Book of Mormon, can be understood as a record of “The Jews” including the era of Jesus and his disciples. In Ezekiel’s vision of the “dry bones” (chapter 37), the term for the Bible is the “stick” (or bones) of Judah and it is compared to the Book of Mormon, the “stick” of Joseph.

Judaic description of the Bible refers just to the period of time preceding Jesus of Nazareth. The Jews are very much involved in writing and books. It is clear to see that both “Judah” and “Joseph” are culturally and scripturally the “People of the Book.”

“In the Talmud the Bible is known as *Mikra*, which is a noun formed from the verb *kara* meaning ‘to read.’ The commonly used Hebrew name for the Bible, however, is *Tanakh*. This word is formed from the initial letters of the Hebrew names of the three parts of the Bible: *Torah* (the first five Books), *Nevi'im* (The Prophets) and *Ketuvim* (The Writings, or Hagiographa). The English name, ‘Bible,’ is from the Greek meaning ‘book,’ and the other accepted English name, ‘Scriptures’ (or Holy Scriptures), is from the Latin and means ‘writings.’”

“Books and learning are so much a part of Jewish tradition, that Jews are called ‘the people of the Book.’ Indeed, many of the violent acts of anti-Semitism throughout history were accompanied by the defacement and burning of books. The persecutors, knowing how much anguish this would cause, identified the book with the Jew. Today, all over the world, with books and paperback editions readily accessible, Jewish book collectors are common. Israel ranks second in the world in the number of books of all kinds bought per person.”

“‘The land between the rivers’ [Tigris and Euphrates], Mesopotamia, is the ancient name for the region today covered by Iraq, Iran and parts of Syria and Turkey. Western civilization (the establishment of written language, codified law, cities and trade) began in this region toward the end of the fourth millennium (i.e., four thousand years) B.C.E. when the Sumerians emerged as the dominant element in an intermingling of several migrant peoples. Sumer became the name of the land at the head of the Persian Gulf and Sumerian its language. To the Sumerians we owe the full development of writing, possibly the invention of bronze metallurgy . . .”

“Writing had a profound effect on Judaism. The covenant between God and the Chosen People was transformed into a written text; the central religious object became the Ten Commandments, inscribed on stone; and later the Torah scroll was to be revered. The biblical society as a whole became ‘book centered.’ In contrast to

many other societies, the Israelites did not limit the acquisition of the arts of reading and writing to the nobility --- any tribesman, even a non-priest, could become a literate leader. Certainly by King Hezekiah's time (eighth century B.C.E.), a great deal of literary activity was taking place.”

“Writing usually required a professional to execute it. In ancient times a royal court officer, the *sofer* (scribe), was undoubtedly the letter-writer as well. The professional letter-writer was an important post even into the 20th century. Seals which were used to sign and close the documents of antiquity as well as letters, are displayed in the Israel Museum, and in other collections.” *(Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)*

The term *seal* and “sealed book” has a Jewish connection that Nephi was familiar with.

“Seals employed from the beginning of historical time as the most common means of identifying property, appear both functionally and incidentally in various biblical stories, and many seals from biblical times have actually been uncovered by archaeologists. References in Kings, Isaiah and Job point to the common use of seals for letters and documents, while the function of the seal as the symbol of royal power is very clearly demonstrated in the Book of Esther, with King Ahasuerus giving Haman and Mordecai in turn his own personal signet ring to use in their correspondence with the settlements of his dominion. Archaeological excavations in Erez Israel have yielded many vessels from the eighth to the sixth centuries B.C.E. which are imprinted with their owners' seals. Of particular interest are jars bearing the stamp ‘of the King’ which presumably were used in the collection of royal taxes.” *(Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)*

The Book of Mormon is the tool of the convincing of the Jews and the Gentiles that Jesus is the Messiah. It corrects the mistaken perceptions of Jesus as God the Father AND the Son AND the Holy Ghost. It came forth through the prophet Joseph Smith, a latter-day descendant of ancient Joseph who saved his brothers. It is revealed to all mankind in preparation of the coming of the Messiah, the Son of God and a descendant of ancient David.

“According to the Talmud, the Messiah will be a descendant of the House of David and will be preceded by a secondary Messiah, from the House of Joseph.” *(Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)*

“Press Forward with a Steadfastness in Christ”

2 Nephi 31–33

Scripture Summary: *Nephi tells why Christ was baptized—Men must follow Christ, be baptized, receive the Holy Ghost, and endure to the end to be saved—Repentance and baptism are the gate to the strait and narrow path—Eternal life comes to those who keep the commandments after baptism.*

Angels speak by the power of the Holy Ghost—Men must pray and gain knowledge for themselves from the Holy Ghost.

Nephi's words are true—They testify of Christ—Those who believe in Christ will believe Nephi's words—They shall stand as a witness before the judgment bar. [Between 559 and 545 B.C.]

Supplemental

Holy Land and Judaic Insights:

The term “feasting” on the word of the Lord has a great Jewish tradition. A religious Jewish family will always engage in discussion of the Torah during every meal. You might remember that for them the eating tables must be square or at least have four corners. That is because the sacrificial Altar of the Lord doesn’t exist any more and the tables with food simulate the sacrificial offering.

“A feast held in connection with religious acts is called *se'udah shel mitzvah* and is the duty of every Jew. Whether to celebrate a joyous family occasion such as a wedding, or to honor a holiday by eating festive meals, a *se'udah shel mitzvah* must be eaten in the spirit of pleasure and enjoyment, blessing and thanksgiving, being particularly careful to avoid overeating.”

“The Talmud describes in detail the various modes of conduct to be observed at meals. For example persons should engage in a discussion of Torah during the meal so that they will be ‘as though they had eaten at the table of God.’ Furthermore, the table is regarded as a substitute for the altar in the Temple, and therefore, it must be treated with reverence. Before any meal, the hands must be washed pronouncing the appropriate blessing over the washing, after which bread is eaten. The meal is concluded with the Grace after Meals. When a meal is eaten for the purpose of honoring a festival or rejoicing in the fulfillment of a commandment, it is considered more than an ordinary meal; it is a *se'udah shel mitzvah*. Psalm 126, *shir ha- ma'alot*, is recited before Grace after Meals, and in the Grace itself, there is usually an additional paragraph appropriate to the occasion. Such festive meals include the following:

- 1) The meals eaten on the Sabbath and festivals. *Kiddush* over wine is recited before two of the meals of the Sabbath or holiday (evening and morning) and the third meal which is required on the Sabbath and which is known as *se'udah shelishit*, is often accompanied by a short sermon of Torah. All these meals are characterized by the singing of hymns (*zemivot*), the presence of two loaves of bread (*hallot*), and the eating of fish or meat which are considered festive dishes. In addition, each holiday has its own traditional dishes which are served at its festive meals.
- 2) A *melaveh malkah*, a festive meal held after the departure of the Sabbath,
- 3) the Passover seder,

- 4) the Purim dinner,
- 5) the meal before the fast of the Day of Atonement (*se'udat mafseket*),
- 6) the *siyyum*, a feast made on the completion of the study of a Talmudic tractate. Such a feast is usually held on the morning of the eve of Passover so that the firstborn can participate (and thereby be exempt from fasting on that day), and
- 7) the banquet of the *hevra kaddisha* (the burial brotherhood) held on the Seventh of Adar.

Joyous family occasions also have various *se'udot shel mitzvah* connected with them:

- 1) the circumcision feast,
- 2) the meal at the ceremony of the redemption of the firstborn (*pidyon ha-ben*),
- 3) the festive meal celebrating a bar mitzvah,
- 4) the betrothal and wedding feasts, and
- 5) the occasion of dedicating a new home (*se'udat hanukkat ha-bayit*).

“The Fast of Tammuz is also traditionally associated with the fast mentioned by the prophet Zechariah as the ‘Fast of the Fourth Month.’ According to the prophet, this fast in messianic times will be transformed into ‘joy and gladness and cheerful feasts for the house of Judah.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

“Thus saith the LORD of hosts; The fast of the fourth month, and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth, shall be to the house of Judah joy and gladness, and cheerful feasts; therefore love the truth and peace.” (*Zecharia 8:19*)

Remember that for the religious Jew there is a fasting day each month. It stands to reason that the meal afterwards is a “feast” of sorts - with prayers. It is the custom among religious Jews to pray before and after every meal. Each prayer is preceded by a washing of hands in “living water” that is naturally flowing. Over time, these and other prayers have come to be pre-written. Yet that was not the biblical custom or instruction.

“In general, biblical prayer was spontaneous and personal; the more formal aspect of worship probably consisted of bringing sacrifices at set times and with a fixed ritual. It seems, however, that even during the period of the First Temple there were already some prayers whose wording was set and which were always recited on certain specific occasions. Some scholars, basing themselves on Psalms 55:18 and Daniel 6:11, believe that the practice of worshiping at least three times a day may be traced back to the biblical period.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

There is an effort in Judaism to at least say the pre-written prayers with real intent. This is called *Kavvanah* (direction, intention or concentration).

“Because the times of the services and even the words which were to be recited, were fixed, there was a danger that prayer would lose its vitality and become mere routine. In order to overcome this danger, the rabbis urged the worshiper to meditate before he began to worship, to think of ‘before Whom he was standing’ in

prayer, and to create a new prayer every time he worshiped. They placed great emphasis on the emotional aspect of prayer, calling it ‘service of the heart’ and stressing that God appreciates most the pure intentions of the worshiper. Later authorities sought to embellish the fixed prayers with original poems (*piyyutim*,) or with short introductions (*kavvanot*) whose purpose was to direct the heart and mind of the worshiper. Melodic chanting was used as a means of increasing *kavvanah* and worshipers were taught to sway as they prayed, thus throwing their entire body into the worship.”

“Books containing the texts of the customary daily and festival prayers did not exist in ancient times. The reader would pray aloud and the congregants would chant the words along with him, or they would simply say ‘amen’ to the blessings. Only after the completion of the Talmud, when many of the components of the Oral Tradition were first compiled in written form, were the prayers written down. Thus, the very first ‘prayer book’ was produced only in the ninth century.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Nephi speaks to the Jews as a Jew and to the Gentiles as he is in the diaspora of his day.

“I have charity for the Jew--I say Jew, because I mean them from whence I came. I also have charity for the Gentiles. But behold, for none of these can I hope except they shall be reconciled unto Christ, and enter into the narrow gate, and walk in the strait path which leads to life, and continue in the path until the end of the day of probation.” (*2 Nephi 33:8-9*)

I remember when Rabbi Wagner, who was chairman of a Denver Inter Faith committee, was telling me that, after associating with Mormons, he wanted the Mormons to be part of that committee. Rabbi Wagner’s personal friend, a Pastor and an associate member of that committee objected strenuously to Mormons being included. He even threatened to leave the Inter Faith Committee and challenged the friendship. The Rabbi told me, “I have seen and heard this kind of thing before.” Mormons were included and the Pastor resigned; however, the friendship continued. It takes two to make or break a friendship.

The Book of Mormon Prophet, Nephi, prays for acceptance or, at least, respect for his and the Lords words, wherever they come from.

“And you that will not partake of the goodness of God, and respect the words of the Jews, and also my words, and the words which shall proceed forth out of the mouth of the Lamb of God, behold, I bid you an everlasting farewell, for these words shall condemn you at the last day.” (*2 Nephi 33:14*)

“Seek Ye for the Kingdom of God”

Jacob 1–4

Scripture Summary: *Jacob and Joseph seek to persuade men to believe in Christ and keep his commandments—Nephi dies—Wickedness prevails among the Nephites.*

Jacob denounces the love of riches, pride, and unchastity—Men should seek riches to help their fellow men—Jacob condemns the unauthorized practice of plural marriage—The Lord delights in the chastity of women.

The pure in heart receive the pleasing word of God—Lamanite righteousness exceeds that of Nephites—Jacob warns against fornication, lasciviousness, and every sin.

All the prophets worshipped the Father in the name of Christ—Abraham’s offering of Isaac was in similitude of God and his Only Begotten—Men should reconcile themselves to God through the atonement—The Jews shall reject the foundation stone. [Between 544 and 421 B.C.]

Supplemental

Holy Land and Judaic Insights:

It can be understood that there were several records being kept by the people who left Jerusalem in 600 B.C. Although they were historical, we can see that Jacob was instructed by his father, Nephi, to keep a separate history that dealt more with sacred instructions. These instructions were to lead the people to their identity with their Lord. Jewish thought on history has some parallel.

“Now and again attempts are made to present a systematic history of the Jewish people, but these efforts are relatively few. As early as biblical times records were kept but these have since been lost. The Bible itself is not a history although it contains a vast amount of historical information and is the major literary source for our knowledge of the biblical period.”

“The study of Jewish history continues to grow and in many cases helps to deepen Jewish self-identification . . . Jewish nationality and achievement.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Jacob’s first recorded “sacred” teaching included a call to repent from focusing so much on wealth accompanied by immorality. These result in the abuse and even the abandonment of the family. This type of instruction is evident in Talmudic teachings.

“The rabbis taught that a man is truly ‘rich’ when he is ‘happy with his portion’ --- when he recognizes and appreciates the good in his life. Ultimately, a man’s material poverty or wealth is irrelevant; what is really important is his spiritual worth.”

“Like other basic human desires, sex is regarded in a positive light in Jewish teaching, especially as it is the means of fulfilling the first biblical commandment: ‘Be fruitful and multiply.’ Judaism does not encourage the unbridled fulfillment of desire, however, but rather imposes restrictions which raise the act to the level of holiness.”

“Detailed legislation concerning sexual behavior can be found in the Bible as well as in the Talmud and subsequent rabbinic literature. Celibacy (complete abstinence from all sexual activity) is discouraged as an unnatural state and detrimental to the human personality.”

“The primary restriction of sexual activity in Jewish law is that it should take place within marriage, as an expression of love between husband and wife as well as out of a desire to fulfill God's commandments. An element of holiness is added by the laws of *niddah* (separation during the period of menstruation; which ensure that the couple does not indulge in sex on impulse but rather directs the act to holiness).”

“In general, moderation and self-control in sexual activity are encouraged. Chastity, the goal to be aimed for, does not mean the avoidance of all sex but of illegal sex. This includes adultery, incest, sodomy, rape and seduction. Adultery is defined as sexual relations between a married woman and any man other than her husband.”

“Judaism encourages modesty as one of the means to chastity. Thus the Jewish woman is enjoined to dress and act modestly at all times. Furthermore, a man is forbidden to be alone with a woman with whom he is not permitted to have sexual relations from considerations of both chastity and modesty.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

The Book of Mormon teachings of Jacob reflect the repeated teachings to the Children of Israel which show concern for family identity and sacredness of marriage, marital companionship and the sanctity of children.

“The mother . . . occupied a place of honor next to her spouse. At his death, if no sons were of age, she could become the legal head of the household. Concern for her welfare as a widow was considered the duty of a good society.”

“The successful marriage in the eyes of the prophets and the rabbis was the most perfect symbol of a meaningful and purposeful relationship and was taken by them as the closest approximation to the idealized relationship between God and Israel, and between Israel and the Torah.”

“‘Lo, children are a heritage of the Lord; the fruit of the womb is a reward’ (Psalms 127:3). In Jewish tradition, the central purpose of marriage is to have children. Children are considered a great blessing; they are the hope and the promise of continuing life. The joys of parenthood bring also many responsibilities and it is the parents' religious duty to fulfill them.”

“As the children grow, they must be educated and trained for their future roles in Jewish life. The father's duty is to provide for his children, to give them a proper education, to teach them a trade, and to prepare them for marriage.”

“Great emphasis is placed on the importance of education and religious training, which should begin early in the home. The mother's role is vital since she is the one who creates the home atmosphere in which basic values are fostered and transmitted. She trains her sons and daughters in *mitzvot* and prepares them for formal education. The rabbis advised parents to be loving but firm in the upbringing of their children, and warned against showing favoritism.”

“In some communities it is customary for the father to bless his children on the Sabbath eve when he returns from the synagogue.”

“Children are obliged to treat their parents with honor and respect. Children must provide dependent parents with food, clothing and personal attention if it is necessary. This obligation is removed from a daughter when she marries.”

“Children may not abuse their parents. According to the Bible, if a son is extremely rebellious and incorrigible and refuses to mend his ways (*ben sorer u-moreh*), his parents may agree to bring him to the town elders for judgment and punishment, which could be death by stoning. However, there is no record of such punishment ever having been carried out.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

As Jacob rebuked the Nephite men for their mistreatment of their wives and children, so have other prophets given the same counsel. Jewish philosophy carries the same theme.

“It is said that a man without a wife lives without joy, blessing and good, and that a man should love his wife as himself and respect her more than himself. Women have greater faith than men and greater powers of discernment. The Torah, the greatest joy of the rabbis, is frequently pictured as a woman and is represented as God's daughter and Israel's bride.”

“In modern Israel, the Declaration of Independence ensures complete equality of political and social rights to all its inhabitants, regardless of religion, race, or sex, but the real Magna Carta of the Israeli woman was the Women's Equal Rights Law of 1951, giving women equal legal status with men. The only field of law in which there remains a degree of discrimination against women is that of personal status. Matters of marriage and divorce come within the exclusive jurisdiction of the religious courts and thus, for example, a divorce must be given by the husband to the wife. On the other hand, in accordance with the *halakhab*, children take the national identity of their mother and not that of their father.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Mistreatment of anybody is simply ungodly. The Jews, as a people, have experienced mistreatment. That probably makes them more concerned about being kind and removing racial prejudice.

“In 1975 the UN passed resolution 3379 which equated Zionism with racism. In 1992, U.S. Pres. Bush took a major initiative to have the UN repeal the resolution stating that Israel could not move forward with the peace process in the Middle East as long as the resolution existed. In 1992, the General Assembly voted overwhelmingly to revoke the resolution. Following the repeal, UN attitude toward Israel began to change and in October, an Israeli was elected to the executive of the UN's environmental group after being banned for so many years.” (*Encyclopædia Judaica Jr.*)

Unfortunately, as Jacob taught, wealth leads to immorality. Immorality leads to family abandonment and that leads to discrimination and prejudice. In reflection of this lesson, the history (large plates) was not as important as the lessons of history (small plates). In these few verses, Jacob uses the repeated lessons of history as a guideline for finding the “Kingdom of God.”

The Allegory of The Olive Tree

Lesson 13

Jacob 5–7

Scripture Summary: *Jacob quotes Zenos relative to the allegory of the tame and wild olive trees—They are a likeness of Israel and the gentiles—The scattering and gathering of Israel are prefigured—Allusions are made to the Nephites and Lamanites and all the house of Israel—Gentiles shall be grafted into Israel—Eventually the vineyard shall be burned.*

The Lord shall recover Israel in the last days—Then the world shall be burned with fire—Men must follow Christ to avoid the lake of fire and brimstone.

Sherem denies Christ, contends with Jacob, demands a sign, and is smitten of God—All of the prophets have spoken of Christ and his atonement—The Nephites lived out their days as wanderers, born in tribulation, and hated by the Lamanites. [Between 544 and 421 B.C.]

Supplemental

Holy Land and Judaic Insights:

The symbol of olive trees has been used throughout the scriptures. Consider the following descriptions of olives and olive trees while you are accessing the wonderful imagery of God’s chosen people, their diversity and their effect on the rest of God’s children.

The olive branch has long been a symbol of peace, and the silvery-leaved olive tree has been considered sacred from at least as far back as the 17th century B.C. Native to the Mediterranean area, the olive is a small, oily fruit that contains a pit. It is grown both for its fruit and its oil in subtropical zones including the United States (Arizona, California and New Mexico), Latin America and throughout the Mediterranean. Olive varieties number in the dozens and vary in size and flavor. All fresh olives are bitter, and the final flavor of the fruit greatly depends on how ripe it is when picked and the processing it receives.

Like the olives that originate in the Mediterranean area and spread throughout the world, so also did the Children of Israel originate in the Mediterranean and proliferate throughout the world. As olives vary in size and flavor, the Children of Israel grew to include many ethnic backgrounds. The olives must be ripened and processed, the Children of Israel were given time to mature and prove their worthiness to be the covenant people.

“The olives, so plentiful in Erez Israel, were beaten down from the trees with poles and pounded into pulp. The pulp was placed in a wicker basket from which the lightest and finest oil could easily run off. This grade of oil, known as beaten oil, is mentioned five times in the Bible. It served as fuel for the *Menorah* (lamp) in the Tabernacle and as an element in the obligatory daily meal offerings. After the removal of the beaten oil, a second grade was produced by heating and further pressing the pulp.”

“Oil was used in burnt offerings and was considered a symbol of honor, joy and favor. Therefore, it was to be avoided in times of mourning or sorrow.”

“Anointing with oil was symbolic of change in a person's status. Thus, for example, Aaron was anointed with oil before becoming a priest. Kings were anointed before taking the throne and even brides were anointed with oil before marriage. A person

cured of leprosy had to go through a whole purification ritual involving the sprinkling and anointing with oil.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

To understand the simplicity of Jacob’s allegory of the olive trees in the Book of Mormon, let me suggest the following verses as guide lines. The allegory speaks of planting, scattering, gathering and an ultimate harvest.

“Hearken unto me, O Jacob and Israel, my called; I am he; I am the first, I also am the last.” (*Isaiah 48:12*)

“But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first.” (*Matthew 19:30*)

“So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen.” (*Matthew 20:16*)

“And the time cometh that he shall manifest himself unto all nations, both unto the Jews and also unto the Gentiles; and after he has manifested himself unto the Jews and also unto the Gentiles, then he shall manifest himself unto the Gentiles and also unto the Jews, and the last shall be first, and the first shall be last.” (*1 Nephi 13:42*)

“And when these things come, bringeth to pass the scripture which saith, there are they who were first, who shall be last; and there are they who were last, who shall be first.” (*Ether 13:12*)

“But remember that all my judgments are not given unto men; and as the words have gone forth out of my mouth even so shall they be fulfilled, that the first shall be last, and that the last shall be first in all things whatsoever I have created by the word of my power, which is the power of my Spirit.” (*D&C 29:30*)

“I am the first and the last; I am he who liveth, I am he who was slain; I am your advocate with the Father.” (*D&C 110:4*)

In a very simple sense, Jacob’s use of the allegory of the olive tree portrays the children of Israel, genetically and spiritually set apart to be a covenant nation in a land of everlasting hills. The lessons of scattering and gathering span millennia yet the principles are the same.

“For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth.

The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people:

But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt” (*Deuteronomy 7:6-8*)

Due to lack of faith, followed by disobedience, they begin to apostatize. Prophets are sent to teach them.

“Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets . . . the Lord GOD hath spoken . . . Publish in the palaces . . . Assemble yourselves . . . For they know not to do right, saith the LORD . . . An adversary there shall be even round about the land; and he shall . . . bring down thy strength from thee, and thy palaces shall be spoiled.” (*Amos 3:7-11*)

Non-Israelites (Gentiles) were brought in and parts of the original “chosen” were cut off.

“But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:

Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.” (*1 Peter 2:9-10*)

At times, young, tender and yet strong members were sent elsewhere to the nethermost part of the world.

“Is this your joyous city, whose antiquity is of ancient days? her own feet shall carry her afar off to sojourn.” (*Isaiah 23:7*)

“And I will set a sign among them, and I will send those that escape of them unto the nations, to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, that draw the bow, to Tubal, and Javan, to the isles afar off, that have not heard my fame, neither have seen my glory; and they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles.” (*Isaiah 66:19*)

“. . . O God of our salvation; who art the confidence of all the ends of the earth, and of them that are afar off upon the sea.” (*Psalms 65:5*)

Lehi, Nephi, and those who left Jerusalem about 600 B.C. were sent to the “ends of the earth.” Their prophets continued teaching the same truths that were given in the original vineyard. What they recorded as their scriptures became an even clearer source of teaching materials for later generations. Even in the distant or “poorest” spot of land, the truths thrived and the righteous created a “genetic imprint” of true dealings with God.

As an additional example of poor land producing fruit, let me remind you that returning Jews are making the wilderness “blossom as a rose.” More roses are exported from Israel than any country in the world. They are growing in the desolate Jordan valley where the rainfall has been recorded at one inch or less per year. With the vast flower farms and date groves, the rainfall has increased to six or seven inches per year in the new agricultural areas. Israel’s genetic engineering has taken the genetic structures of date palms which grow well in depleted or poor soil and placed them into other domestic crop structures. This means that elsewhere in the world, the poor spot of land can also become fruitful.

Even though, ethnically, Israel looks like a tossed salad of mixed fruit, the roots still bear the genetic imprints of the original House of Israel. Connecting to those roots will trigger a recollection of the covenants made of old. So, when the fruit in the nethermost part of the vineyard becomes apostate, there still is a root connection to the old tree.

It is touching to hear the servant of the landlord pleading to preserve the old and the new trees. Our prophets have and still do plead for us. Our Lord pleads for us. Hold on! There is a recollection that will bring our families back together.

“. . . the book of life is the record of the acts of men as such record is written in their own bodies. It is the record engraven on the very bones, sinews, and flesh of the mortal body. That is, every thought, word, and deed has an affect on the human body; all these leave their marks, marks which can be read by Him who is Eternal as easily as the words in a book can be read.” (*Bruce R. McConkie, Mormon Doctrine, Pg.97*)

“There is something in man, an essential part of his mind, which recalls the events of the past . . . May I say to you that in reality a man cannot forget anything? He may have a lapse of memory; he may not be able to recall at the moment a thing that he knows, or words that he has spoken; he may not have the power at his will to call up these events and words; but let God Almighty touch the mainspring of the memory, and awaken recollection, and you will find then that you have not even forgotten a single idle word that you have spoken.” (*Joseph F. Smith, Gospel Doctrine, Page 311*)

I believe that the experiences of my forefathers have blessed my life today. I know that they were believers and that many were faithful in following the Lord, before his mortal ministry, others during his mortality and now my family follows him in the latter-days. In a very real sense, my family is another example of the allegory of the olive tree.

I was born in Israel. At the tender age of five years old, I was plucked out of the old decaying tree and brought to the “nethermost part” of the vineyard. My father and I were introduced to the restoration of God’s ancient covenant. Now, I have returned to my home land and in a very real sense have been grafted back into the old tree. My family and I are

committed to bring health and strength . . . connecting with our ancient roots and bringing life back to the old tree, teaching the restored ancient true covenants.

This is a short biography as it appears in the Book, **Israel Revealed, Discovering Mormon and Jewish Insights In The Holy Land.**

Daniel Rona was born in 1941 in Israel. His German-Jewish parents separately fled the Holocaust, then met and married in the British Mandate of Palestine where Daniel was born. Daniel spent his first years in Israel then later went to New York City with his father. As a child, Daniel was brought up with Jewish traditions and holiday keeping. Daniel's grandparents were killed at Auschwitz.

Daniel's father was searching for answers to the reason six-million Jews could have been allowed to perish without, at least, a warning from God. He found the profound message of living prophets at an LDS Ward which was meeting in a synagogue in a predominantly Jewish neighborhood in Manhattan. He was impressed that becoming an LDS member was a fulfilling step in his Jewish life.

Daniel and his father moved to Salt Lake City where Daniel grew up as a Mormon, but still keeping his Jewish identity. After serving a successful mission in Germany, Daniel had the opportunity to visit his mother, Kitty, and stepfather, Zvi Tohar, in Israel. Captain Tohar was famous because he was the Israeli pilot who flew Adolph Eichman, the Holocaust war criminal, to Israel for trial.

Apostle Ezra Taft Benson asked Daniel to report on his mission and, more important, his Israel experiences at LDS Headquarters in Salt Lake City. After his mission, Daniel met Marilyn Minardi (who had also accepted the gospel). They married and now have five children, three born in the U.S. and two born in Israel.

Daniel began a successful career in broadcasting the U.S. In 1967 the "Six-Day War" in Israel had a great emotional impact on Daniel; and in 1973, when the "Yom Kippur War" broke out, Daniel still avoided contact with any news media because he found it hard to deal with the "pull to return to Israel." But the "pull" came anyway! Marilyn was supportive. It wasn't easy, but by August 1974, they had moved their family to Israel.

New immigrants to Israel usually get some kind of financial aid, but someone had told the immigration authorities that Daniel's association with Mormons somehow "negated his genes" which meant he was not accepted as a returning citizen of Israel. This meant that he couldn't be employed in Israel and receive the usual government support for immigrants. Luckily, Daniel had packed tools, paint brushes and rollers in his suitcases. Daniel worked at odd jobs and was able to support his family without any governmental assistance. Eventually he was accepted as a returning Jew and a full Israeli Citizen.

Daniel saw that Latter-day Saint tourists coming to Israel desired to experience the spirit of the land and learn more of the cultures and traditions of their brothers and

sisters of the House of Israel. Unfortunately, they were often disappointed. They often sought Daniel's insights because he is a native Jew and a Mormon. These experiences prompted Daniel to become serious about providing a professional, as well as spiritually oriented, touring experience for Latter-day Saints and others. This career change came, along with a 'peace of mind and heart,' as he was accepted by the Ministry of Tourism Course for Guides at the Hebrew University. After two years of study and training Daniel became the first, and is still the only LDS licensed guide and tour operator in Israel.

He has also created a major television production of six half-hour programs that highlight the beauty, geography, history, and most important, the spirit of Israel.

Daniel has had many responsibilities as teacher, counselor and in various presidencies in the Jerusalem Branch and District. He has founded the Ensign Foundation, a charitable, nonprofit organization that fosters bridges of understanding and exchanges of science and technologies as well as cultural and religious ideas between Israel and other nations and peoples. This foundation, among other things, is funding Daniel's various speaking engagements throughout the world. The foundation has also been involved in archeological digs, scientific and medical research, and other activities in harmony with its mission. Daniel and his wife and children make their home in Jerusalem.

The gathering of Israel is happening. To many, their gathering starts even before they know the Lord. On the other hand, our family is truly blessed to be gathered home and know the Lord!

“And they that are far off shall come and build in the temple of the LORD, and ye shall know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me unto you. And this shall come to pass, if ye will diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God.”
(Zechariah 6:15)

The allegory concludes with another lesson for the future: prepare for one last millennium - and then Satan will be loosed for a little season.

“And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years,

And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.” *(Revelation 20:2-3)*

“For a Wise Purpose”

Lesson 14

Enos, Jarom, Omni, Words of Mormon

Scripture Summary:

Enos – Enos prays mightily and gains a remission of his sins—The voice of the Lord comes into his mind promising salvation for the Lamanites in a future day—Nephites sought to reclaim the Lamanites in their day—Enos rejoices in his Redeemer. [Between 544 and 420 B.C.]

Jarom – The Nephites keep the law of Moses, look forward to the coming of Christ, and prosper in the land—Many prophets labor to keep them in the way of truth. [Between 420 and 361 B.C.]

Omni – Omni, Amaron, Chemish, Abinadom, and Amaleki, each in turn, keep the records—Mosiab discovers the people of Zarahemla who came from Jerusalem in the days of Zedekiah—He is made king over them—The Mulekites had discovered Coriantumr, the last of the Jaredites—King Benjamin succeeds Mosiab—Men should offer their souls as an offering to Christ. [Between 361 and 130 B.C.]

Words of Mormon – Mormon abridges their history onto the plates of Mormon—He inserts the plates of Nephi into the abridgement—King Benjamin establishes peace in the land. [About A.D. 385]

Supplemental

Holy Land and Judaic Insights:

Enos used the same expression as Nephi in saying that he was taught in the language of his father. He expressed his faith in the Lord that his sins would be forgiven. Like other Apostles and Prophets, Enos also taught “When thou art converted, convert thy brother.”

“But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.” *(Luke 22:32)*

“Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.” *(James 5:20)*

“Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.” *(1 Timothy 4:16)*

“And if it so be that you should labor all your days in crying repentance unto this people, and bring, save it be one soul unto me, how great shall be your joy with him in the kingdom of my Father!

And now, if your joy will be great with one soul that you have brought unto me into the kingdom of my Father, how great will be your joy if you should bring many souls unto me!” *(D&C 18:15-16)*

As a harmonic or echo of the allegory of the olive tree, Enos reminds us that records can help future generations, even if the future generations descend from present unbelievers. Again, in a lesson of faith in the Lord, he knows that the records of the Nephites and the Lamanites would be saved.

In closing his account, Enos reaches back to his roots to where his forefathers came from, Jerusalem, the City of the Lord. Then in a fitting conclusion, he anticipates entering into the mansions of his Heavenly Father.

“As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the LORD of hosts, in the city of our God: God will establish it for ever.” (*Psalms 48:8*)

“The sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee; and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet; and they shall call thee, The city of the LORD, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel.” (*Isaiah 60:14*)

“And he spake also concerning the house of Israel, and the Jerusalem from whence Lehi should come--after it should be destroyed it should be built up again, a holy city unto the Lord; wherefore, it could not be a new Jerusalem for it had been in a time of old; but it should be built up again, and become a holy city of the Lord; and it should be built unto the house of Israel.” (*Ether 13:5*)

In Jarom, written by Enos’ son, I find an interesting parallel to modern Israel. Jarom’s reminder that, notwithstanding the “hardness of their hearts,” the Lord is exceedingly merciful. Israel’s people do not remember who their Lord Jehovah is (even so, they keep the Sabbath day better than most peoples I know). They are surrounded by proclaimed enemies, yet they are protected. They are becoming prosperous and definitely fine in their workmanship (and weaponry). At the same time, a growing society of “believers” is apparent with an estimated thirty-thousand “Messianic” Jews among the more than five million inhabitants in Israel. For both, the believers and others, a growing expectance of the Messiah is also evident.

The words of Omni, Amaron, Chemish, Abinadom and Amaleki also seem to be echoed in Israel’s modern times. These are men who have valiantly fought to preserve Israel’s independence and freedom. These officers unabashedly say that they are not “observant” in keeping religious laws yet, like Omni, they keep connected to “God’s line.” They, as these Book of Mormon writers, may be more religious than they openly express. A case in point is a story of General Moshe Dayan. When asked if he believed in miracles, he responded, “No, we just count on them!”

Israel’s high interest in its scattered relatives is another parallel to Mosiah finding a lost part of those who left Jerusalem. There are close to thirty-thousand Ethiopian (black) Jews who did not know of the existence of other Jews (white) in the world. An effort to have them “catch up” with Jewish history is similar to the discovery of the people of Zarahemla.

The discovery of the “plates” and their subsequent reading reveals something of the technology used to prepare them. As mentioned in a previous lesson, plates of various metals, preferably gold, were prepared by pounding them into book-like sheets. They were fastened and their blank sides waited for some future use. There was only a certain amount of capacity in the “book.” On the other hand, scrolls, like the forefathers of the Nephites and Lamanites used, were prepared from skins of animals. If one needed more space to continue an account, another skin would simply be sewn onto the existing scroll. This became obvious in the Dead Sea Scrolls where one document was about twenty-seven feet long and another was twenty-one feet in length. Some of the plates that Mormon was editing had sufficient space that he could add other writings to those that had been passed on to him from the past.

As mentioned at the beginning of this lesson supplement, scripture is not intended to be a running history. Scriptures contain historical pictures and accounts that make a lesson or doctrine more “viable” and more understandable. The wisdom of God, as shown by his prophets, is eternal and has a wonderful way of connecting the past with the present in order for us to prepare for the future.

Lesson
15

“Eternally Indebted to Your Heavenly Father”

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 Judaic Insights:

The opening statements of both King Benjamin and Nephi have such similarity that I wanted to show them side by side. They speak in a chiasmus pattern that emphasizes their roots and their connection to revelation. They also seem to indicate that their scriptures and records 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.

<u>Nephi</u>	<u>King Benjamin</u>
<p>1 Nephi 1 1 I, Nephi, having been born of goodly parents, therefore I was taught somewhat in all the learning of my father; and having seen many afflictions in the course of my days, nevertheless, having been highly favored of the Lord in all my days; yea,</p>	<p>Mosiah 1 2 And it came to pass that he had three sons; and he called their names Mosiah, and Helorum, and Helaman. And he caused that they should be taught in all the language of his fathers, that thereby they might become men of understanding; and that they might know concerning the prophecies which had been spoken by the mouths of their fathers, which were delivered them by the hand of the Lord.</p>
<p>having had a great knowledge of the goodness and the mysteries of God, therefore I make a record of my proceedings in my days.</p>	<p>Mosiah 1 3 And he also taught them concerning the records which were engraven on the plates of brass, saying: My sons, I would that ye should remember that were it not for these plates, which contain these records and these commandments, we must have suffered in ignorance, even at this present time, not knowing the mysteries of God.</p>

1 Nephi 1	Mosiah 1
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2 Yea, I make a record in the language of **my father**, which consists of the learning of the Jews and the **language of the Egyptians**.

4 For it were not possible that **our father, Lehi**, could have remembered all these things, to have taught them to his children, except it were for the help of these plates; for he having been taught in the **language of the Egyptians** therefore he could read these engravings, and teach them to his children, that thereby they could teach them to their children, and so fulfilling the commandments of God, even down to this present time.

The culture, religion and customs of the Children of Israel is evident as we see the pattern of collecting the families of the communities in a “holy convocation.” 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. The book of Ecclesiastes is read during Sukkoth. Note the similarity in what King Benjamin is saying to his people.

“Ecclesiastes or Kohelet, is one of the five *Megillot*. It has won enduring popularity because of its wise maxims and its counsel on life. "Ecclesiastes" from the Greek and 'Kohelet' in Hebrew, mean leader or teacher of a group.”

“The Book reveals the wisdom acquired by Kohelet on his journey through life. He experiences joy and sorrow, faith and doubt, vanity and humility, hypocrisy and truth. The struggle to find meaning and purpose in life was as baffling for him as it is for us today. Kohelet arrives at the conclusion that the true joy of life lies not in wealth nor in vain pleasure but in the spiritual riches of fulfilling *mitzvot*, God's commandments. Love and reverence for the Almighty help man to accept his fate and to overcome the obstacles and temptation that continually beset him.”

(Encyclopedía Judaica Jr.)

Let's take a few moments to reflect on the rich cultural heritage of the festival of Sukkot and imagine something similar to King Benjamin's convocation with his people. Even the account of King Benjamin's visit by an angel has similarity to Sukkot with its expectation of heavenly visitors.

“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.

“This autumn festival was the last of the three ‘pilgrim’ festivals connected with the farming year. From all corners of the Land of Israel throngs of pilgrims used to make their way up to Jerusalem carrying the gaily decorated baskets of fruit and grain which they brought to the Temple as a thanksgiving offering. At the gates of the city

the 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.”

“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.”

“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.”

“In present-day Israel, as in other countries, 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.’”

“Though the *sukkah* is only a temporary dwelling for the week of the festival, 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. Caucasian Jews build the walls of their *sukkot* with fir branches, while the Mountain Jews of Daghestan decorate their *sukkot* walls with tapestries and carpets. The Kurdish Jews sit on rugs in the *sukkah* as they do at home and in the synagogue, and in Aden, Jews were accustomed to decorate their *sukkot* with ornate glass lamps.”

“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*, and the blessing ‘who commanded us to dwell in the *sukkah*’ is recited, usually after the blessing over bread. 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*. Synagogues usually build a *sukkah* for the benefit of members who have none of their own. The world over, the festive meals in the *sukkah* are accompanied by the happy singing of the family and its guests. 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.”

“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.”

“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 *Simhat 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.” (*Encyclopædia Judaica Jr.*)

In the Bible we read of holy convocations occurring 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.

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*)

Lesson
16

“Ye Shall Be Called the Children of Christ”

Mosiah 4–6

Scripture Summary: *King Benjamin continues his address—Salvation comes because of the atonement—Believe in God to be saved—Retain a remission of your sins through faithfulness—Impart of your substance to the poor—Do all things in wisdom and order.*

The saints become the sons and daughters of Christ through faith—They are then called by the name of Christ—King Benjamin exhorts them to be steadfast and immovable in good works. [About 124 B.C.]

King Benjamin records the names of the people and appoints priests to teach them—Mosiah reigns as a righteous king. [About 124—121 B.C.]

Supplemental

Holy Land and Judaic Insights:

The term “Children of Christ” is obviously foreign to a Jew, yet the principle of subservience, humility and searching for more knowledge is similar to “being children.” Note the expressions of “continuing life,” “provide,” “proper education” and “preparation for marriage” have a familiar ring to the Savior’s desire for us.

“Children are considered a great blessing; they are the hope and the promise of continuing life.”

“As the children grow, they must be educated and trained for their future roles in Jewish life. The father's duty is to provide for his children, to give them a proper education, to teach them a trade, and to prepare them for marriage. “

”Great emphasis is placed on the importance of education and religious training, which should begin early in the home.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

As children are dependant, King Benjamin’s question is not about “begging” particularly, but about a dependency on God.

“Are we not all beggars . . . Do we not all depend upon the same Being, even God, for all the substance which we have, for both food and raiment, and for gold, and for silver, and for all the riches which we have of every kind?” (*Mosiah 4:19*)

“Although the Bible is concerned with the poor and the needy, there is hardly a reference to begging or to beggars, and there is, in fact, no biblical Hebrew word for it. The needs of the poor were provided by various laws of charity. Possible references are contained in the assurances that whereas the children of the righteous will not have to ‘seek bread,’ the children of the wicked man will, after his untimely death, be vagabonds ‘and seek their bread out of desolate places’ (Psalms 37:25; 109:10).”

“Everybody is obliged to give charity; even one who himself is dependent on charity should give to those less fortunate than himself.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

“For the poor shall never cease out of the land; therefore I command thee saying, Thou shalt open thy hand wide to thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy in thy land.” (*Deuteronomy 15:11*)

In this sense, it is beautiful to consider that the principle of receiving from the Lord is reflected in what we give others. The giving can be a simple hand of friendship. The term “hand” is used often in the scriptures and the term “right hand” has symbolic meanings. Among the Bedouin, it is improper to eat with the left hand. The right hand is always extended in greeting, the left hand extended as a greeting can be offensive. Among the Arabs and the Jews, a popular amulet or “good luck charm” is a right hand with an all-seeing eye in the palm of the hand. The word for arm and hand in ancient Hebrew is the same.

“Of course *tefillin* and *mezuzot* are not amulets. Their use is a commandment by God ‘as a sign on your hand and . . . on the doorpost of your house’ (Deuteronomy 6:8-9). They are reminders to the Jew of his duty to bear witness to one God. Phylacteries, the common translation for *tefillin*, comes from a Greek word meaning protection against danger or disease, and is therefore incorrect.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

When the Torah scroll is read in the Synagogue, a pointer molded in the shape of a miniature hand (*yad*) is used to follow the words. It is as if the “finger of God” is pointing the way. Unfortunately, these descriptions of God’s hand or finger are not taken literally among most Jews.

“The same is true with regard to descriptions of God which are found in the Bible and in other sources. We talk, for instance, of ‘the hand of God’ although God does not have a hand; we also use descriptions such as ‘God is angry,’ although the word ‘angry’ as it is used with regard to human beings cannot possibly have any meaning with regard to God. The reason for this use of language is that human beings think about God and want to talk and write about Him and can only use words out of the framework of their own experience.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

In mortality, the hands are to be clean, both in personal hygiene and in rituals.

“The rabbis made it mandatory to perform a ceremonial washing of the hands on certain occasions. This washing is strictly ritual in nature and should not be confused with washing for the sake of cleanliness. This is evident from the fact that the hands must be clean before the ceremony is performed.”

“The hand washing ritual is commonly known as *netilat yadayim*, a term whose source is not entirely clear. In order to establish the practice, the rabbis warned of dire consequences for those who disregarded it, even going so far as to predict premature death. It is said that Rabbi Akiva, who personally disapproved of the ordinance, nevertheless used the limited water allowed him in the Roman prison for this ritual rather than for drinking.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

It has been the custom in religion as well as in civil covenant making that the right hand is used in a sign or symbol.

“The custom, evidently by divine direction, from the very earliest time, has been to associate the right hand with the taking of oaths, and in witnessing or acknowledging obligations. The right hand has been used, in preference to the left hand, in officiating in sacred ordinances where only one hand is used.” *(Joseph Fielding Smith Jr., Doctrines of Salvation, Vol.3, p.107)*

One of the purposes of King Benjamin’s instruction is to bind the repentant believers in a covenant that would record their names. In that way they would be identified both in mortality and eternally. The forgiveness they experienced revived and saved them. Being a covenant, it meant that they took upon themselves the name of God and He would be given their names that He might know them.

“Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me: thou shalt stretch forth thine hand against the wrath of mine enemies, and thy right hand shall save me.” *(Psalms 138:7)*

“And now it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall not take upon him the name of Christ must be called by some other name; therefore, he findeth himself on the left hand of God.” *(Mosiah 5:10)*

Names have always been important and their meanings in the scriptures often tell something about the person. As there are other histories coming forth, some paralleling biblical history, sometimes another name is used for the same person. That may be because in that language or culture the person was known by another name. A modern example is my name. In Hebrew it is Daniel ben Herbert. That means Daniel, son of Herbert. Yet, in Arabic it is Daniel, Abu Dauod. That is Daniel, father of David (my honorable firstborn son). The name Daniel is explained as; Dan - Judge, El - God, or in context, God is my judge, or in another context, a judge for God. Either way, I have taken His name upon myself!

“Names are more than just arbitrary labels for people. Each Jewish name tells a story of its own and very often reflects the nature of the time, place and atmosphere in which it was chosen.”

“The most important source for Hebrew proper names is the Bible, and biblical names were usually descriptive and meaningful, often incorporating the name of God in praise or gratitude; thus, Nathaniel (God has given), Eleazar (God has helped), Joshua (God the Savior). Other biblical names describe the circumstances surrounding the birth. Thus Abraham called his son Yizhak [Isaac] from the Hebrew word for laughter, because Sarah had laughed at the idea of bearing a child in her old age. And Yizhak named one of his sons Ya'akov [Jacob], a play on the Hebrew word *akev* ('heel'), because he was born grasping the heel of his twin brother Esau.”

“The Talmud attaches great importance to the preservation of Hebrew names, viewing foreign names as a sign of assimilation. According to the Talmud, one

reason for the deliverance of the Children of Israel from Egyptian bondage was the fact that they did not change their names. Yet, despite this subtle warning, Jews have tended to adapt their Hebrew names to the language of their neighbors or to take on purely non-Jewish names. This tendency, first noticeable during the Middle Ages, accelerated during the late 18th and 19th centuries. Some governments encouraged the process by passing laws which forced Jews to adopt European names. Napoleon issued such a decree, hoping to assimilate the Jews.”

“Like most peoples of the world, the Jews have evolved certain traditions regarding the use of names. For example, Ashkenazi Jews consider it wrong to name a child after a living father or grandfather, whereas Sephardim consider it an honor to do so for a grandparent. According to the Hasidei Ashkenaz, it is wrong to marry a woman with the same name as the husband's mother. The reason for this seems to be because of respect; the man might tell his wife to do something and the mother might think he meant her.”

“Jewish boys are officially named at the circumcision ceremony eight days after birth, and a girl's Jewish name is publicly announced when the father is first called to the Torah after her birth. Converts are also given new names --- usually ben Abraham or bat Abraham (son or daughter of Abraham) because conversion is equated with rebirth. (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*) (Underlines added)

The term rebirth connotes being a child again. It involves learning a new life, preparing to become an honorable son of the Father. Some know that is possible through the redemption by our “Elder Brother.”

Lesson
17

“A Seer . . . Becometh a Great Benefit to His Fellow Beings”

Mosiah 7–11

Scripture Summary: *Ammon finds the land of Lehi-Nephi where Limbi is king—Limbi’s people are in bondage to the Lamanites—Limbi recounts their history—A prophet (Abinadi) had testified that Christ is the God and Father of all things—Those who sow filthiness reap the whirlwind, and those who put their trust in the Lord shall be delivered. [About 121 B.C.]*

Ammon teaches the people of Limbi—He learns of the twenty-four Jaredite plates—Ancient records can be translated by seers—The gift of seership exceeds all others. [About 121 B.C.]

Zeniff leads a group from Zarahemla to possess the land of Lehi-Nephi—The Lamanite king permits them to inherit the land—There is war between the Lamanites and Zeniff’s people. [About 200—187 B.C.]

King Laman dies—His people are wild and ferocious and believe in false traditions—Zeniff and his people prevail against them. [About 178—160 B.C.]

King Noah rules in wickedness—He revels in riotous living with his wives and concubines—Abinadi prophesies that the people will be taken into bondage—His life is sought by King Noah. [Between 160 and 150 B.C.]

Supplemental Holy Land and Judaic Insights:

The beginning of this study material is a chapter about an Ammon and his fifteen men who search for relatives they knew about but did not know their whereabouts. I am struck with the similarity of Jews seeking out Jews wherever they might be in the world. Can you imagine the surprise of black Jews in Africa when white Jews discovered them, an entire nation of black Ethiopian Jews, just a few decades ago?

“In Ethiopia, members of this group refer to themselves as Beta Israel . . . They practice an early form of Judaism; the chief rabbis of Israel have recognized them as Jews. Until brought to Israel, they lived in the provinces around Lake Tana. According to their tradition, their ancestors were Jerusalem notables who came with Menelik, the son of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, when he returned home. A theory says they form part of the original population and were converted to Judaism by south Arabian Jews.”

“According to Ethiopian history, Judaism was widespread before the mass conversion of the population to Christianity. Beta Israel refused to convert, living under their own rulers, and remained faithful to Judaism, thereby suffering persecution. Jewish captives, brought by Ethiopian King Kaleb in 525, were settled among the Beta Israel, reinforcing the population practicing Judaism.”

“From 1270, under the influence of the Christian church, the kings decided to put an end to their independence. Many were forced to convert, others were massacred or sold into slavery and their property seized. Throughout their persecution the Beta Israel proved their devotion to their religion.”

“In the middle of the 19th century, the number of Beta Israel was estimated at 250,000. During the Italian occupation (1936-41), the Beta Israel were loyal to the

Emperor Haile Selassie, then in refuge in Jerusalem. By 1993 almost all Beta Israel had left Ethiopia for Israel.”

“Of all Diaspora Jewish communities, none has undergone more dramatic change than the Beta Israel. Prior to 1977, all but a handful lived in Ethiopia. After the establishment of the State of Israel, the Jewish Agency took an interest in the welfare of the Beta Israel . . .” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

The absorption and integration of Ethiopian Jews into Israel’s society have some parallels with Ammon’s discovery of the people of Limhi. Limhi’s people had lost their identity and their covenant relationship to God. They lost their “seer.” Now, they were given a chance to get a “proper education” as they expressed their desire for pure light and knowledge once again.

The late Prophet, John Taylor, once spoke of Light and Truth being names for the Urim and Thummim. They were some of the spiritual “tools” God gave to discern truth and verify revelation. Ammon speaks of the Urim and Thummim.

“The first mention of the *Urim* and *Thummim* appears in the passage in Numbers which describes Moses’ transfer of his authority to Joshua prior to his death. Joshua is told by God, through Moses, that in his capacity as leader of the Israelites, ‘he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall inquire for him by the judgment of the *Urim* before the Lord.’ Much later, in the Book of Samuel, King Saul unsuccessfully sought information from the *Urim* and *Thummim* about the outcome of an impending battle with the Philistines, and his failure to receive any response led him to seek advice from the witch of En-Dor who conjured up for him the spirit of the dead prophet Samuel.”

“It is not known exactly when the *Urim* and *Thummim* ceased to function, but the latest period for which there is evidence of their use is that of King David. Subsequently, oracles and predictions about future events were conveyed exclusively by the prophets.”

“The exact meaning of the words ‘*Urim*’ and ‘*Thummim*’ have puzzled scholars over the generations. Both in the Greek and Latin translations of the Bible they were rendered as ‘revelation and truth’ or ‘teaching and truth’ and this understanding gave rise to the incorporation of the Hebrew words *Urim ve-Thummim* on the official seal of Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

The Magen David is always shown as two triangles, interwoven. One possible explanation is that the two triangles represent a characterization of the Urim and Thummim. According to statements attributed to Joseph Smith, the Urim and Thummim were two triangular stones connected by a silver bow. One pointed up and the other pointed down. Superimposed they make a fascinating Magen David!

According to a paper given at Hebrew University by John Tvedtnes, now Senior Researcher at FARMS (BYU), the words Urim and Thummim may come from Egyptian words similar

to “RMMM” and “TMMM,” one meaning yes or act upon it (positive), the other a more negative meaning (leave it alone).

Since the Urim and Thummin were revelatory tools, it is possible that they represent a procedure or operate on a simple principle of revelation with answers of yes or no.

“But, behold, I say unto you, that you must study it out in your mind; then you must ask me if it be right, and if it is right I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall feel that it is right.” (*Doctrine & Covenants 9:8*)

As a reminder, even though the Magen David is so prevalent in Jewish art and culture, the official symbol of the State of Israel is the seven-branched Menorah.

From the Journal of Discourses, I found a statement by the Prophet, John Taylor, that adds some enlightening insights about light and perfection.

“In the discourse read by Brother Reynolds, this morning, it says, among other things: ‘Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled.’ I also read with regard to Abraham: He was a man of God, and he tells us in his history that he was a follower after righteousness; that he desired to obtain more righteousness, and that upon examining into the history of his fathers, he found that he had a right to the Priesthood and sought ordination, and he received that ordination. He was ordained by Melchizedek, who was prince of Salem, and a servant of the Most High God, and held the Priesthood called after his name. It is the Priesthood which is after the order of the Son of God, a Priesthood which possesses the power of an endless life. Abraham received a knowledge of these things; and when he obtained the Priesthood what did he do? Did he, after the manner of some religionists, ‘sing himself away to everlasting bliss?’ No, he did not. What then did he do? He kept seeking after more righteousness. Jesus recognized that principle in his sermon--‘Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled.’ Abraham sought the Lord diligently, and finally he had given unto him a Urim and Thummim, in which he was enabled to obtain a knowledge of many things that others were ignorant of. I think the meaning of the name of this instrument is Light and Perfection, in other terms, communicating light perfectly, and intelligence perfectly, through a principle that God has ordained for that purpose. Did Abraham stop there? No; he did not rest until he could communicate with God Himself.” (*Journal of Discourses, Vol.24, p.264 - p.265 - p.266, John Taylor, June 24th, 1883*)

It is a blessing to have righteous leaders, especially those called of God. The Book of Mormon chapters being examined this lesson show a contrast of leaders, righteous and unrighteous. In the Middle East, the followers of Islam, a religion started by Mohammed, are called Moslems. The word “Moslem” means a follower. Today, we can see how deeply ingrained their culture is in following – righteous and unrighteous leaders.

As we read of Zeniff, we can reflect on the importance of information, even gathering information about those who choose to be our enemies. The tiny nation of Israel has many parallels to “spying” mentioned in the Book of Mormon. One Israeli military leader, a skilled spy and archaeologist was Nelson Glueck.

“Nelson Glueck was an important archaeologist and conducted excavations throughout Transjordan. In 1937 he uncovered the Nabatean Temple at Jebel el-Tannur, and in 1938 he began excavating the Iron Age site of Tell-el-Kheleifeh (Ezion-Geber), near Eilat. From 1952 onward he surveyed ancient sites in the Negev. As president of Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, Glueck opened branches of the college in New York, Los Angeles and Jerusalem. He wrote many articles in learned journals, and several important books on archaeology.”

(Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

Another military leader, trained intelligence gatherer, statesman and archaeologist was Dr. Yigal Yadin.

“When 16 years of age, Yadin joined the Haganah, Israel's pre-State defense force. As its operations and planning officer, he was responsible for drawing up and directing the operations of the War of Independence (1948). In 1949 he was appointed chief of staff, and in three years established the standing army, compulsory military service, and particularly the system of reserves.

From 1952 Yadin devoted himself to archaeology, in 1956 receiving the Israel Prize for Jewish Studies for his research on one of the Dead Sea Scrolls. In his excavations at Hazor, a large Canaanite and Israelite city in Upper Galilee, he uncovered and explained, layer after layer, 21 levels of occupation, starting with the 27th century B.C.E., and including fortified cities mentioned in the Bible, an Assyrian citadel, and pagan temples. He decoded scrolls found in the caves of the Judean Desert, and at Masada threw new light on the second-century Bar Kokhba revolt against the Romans. He also found the rebels' *tefillin* intact and described them.

Yadin headed the Hebrew University's Institute of Archaeology from 1970 until 1977 when elected to the Knesset as representative of his newly formed Democratic Movement for Change. He served as a deputy prime minister for the Ninth Knesset and left politics, returning to academic life, in 1981.” *(Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)*

Many tragic things that happened to the Jews came from misinformation about the Jews and their effort to keep together as a society.

“In history, hostility towards the Jews has manifested itself in many different ways: violence against Jewish persons or property; expulsions from countries; legislation discriminating against Jews: and even attempts --- often successful --- to annihilate Jewish communities.”

“Although the treatment accorded to the Jews in Islamic countries was generally a little better than in Christian countries, the Muslims could never forgive the Jews for not accepting Muhammad and their new faith. Jews were very definitely second-class citizens and suffered from a variety of disabilities. Special heavy taxes were levied on them and they were forbidden to engage in all kinds of occupations.”
(Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

One of the tragic things that have happened to Arabs living around Israel is the amount of false information they have been given about the Jews.

“In a sense, the unbelievable excesses of Nazism shocked the world for a while. People began to realize what anti-Semitism could lead to. But only for a while. Anti-Semitism began to rear its ugly head again, particularly in Soviet Russia under Stalin and, because of their conflict with the State of Israel, many Arab countries adopted anti-Semitic propaganda.”

“After the 1973 Yom Kippur War, some of the Arab states claimed that they would recognize the State of Israel if it would return all the territory it conquered in the 1967 Six Day War and if it would also acknowledge the rights of the Palestinian refugees. These latter are the people who fled Israel during the 1948 War of Independence. They settled in Arab lands, mainly Jordan and Lebanon, where they were not allowed to integrate into the population but were kept in refugee camps where they were fed vicious anti-Israel propaganda.” *(Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)*

In a very real sense, history repeats itself. There are numerous parallels of the Book of Mormon peoples, the Nephites and the Lamanites and the Middle East peoples, the Jews and the Arabs.

“God Himself . . . Shall Redeem His People”

Mosiah 12–17

Scripture Summary: *Abinadi is imprisoned for prophesying the destruction of the people and the death of King Noah—The false priests quote the scriptures and pretend to keep the law of Moses—Abinadi begins to teach them the Ten Commandments.*

Abinadi is protected by divine power—He teaches the Ten Commandments—Salvation does not come by the law of Moses alone—God himself shall make an atonement and redeem his people.

Isaiah speaks Messianically—Messiah’s humiliation and sufferings are set forth—He makes his soul an offering for sin and makes intercession for transgressors—Compare Isaiah 53.

How Christ is both the Father and the Son—He shall make intercession and bear the transgressions of his people—They and all the holy prophets are his seed—He bringeth to pass the resurrection—Little children have eternal life.

God redeems men from their lost and fallen state—Those who are carnal remain as though there was no redemption—Christ brings to pass a resurrection to endless life or to endless damnation.

Alma believes and writes the words of Abinadi—Abinadi suffers death by fire—He prophesies disease and death by fire upon his murderers. [About 148 B.C.]

Supplemental Holy Land and Judaic Insights:

One of the first things that came to my mind in reading about Abinadi is the parallel with other prophets. One in particular is Jonah. King Noah and his nobles did not repent when the prophet Abinadi spoke to them. However, in Jonah’s case, the king and his nobles heeded the words of God’s chosen prophet. Jonah tells his account in a way that humbly acknowledges that God himself is the Redeemer and that the prophet speaks for Him, not himself.

“The phenomenon of prophecy is founded on the basic belief that God makes His Will known to chosen individuals in successive generations. A prophet is a charismatic individual endowed with the divine gift of both receiving and imparting the message of revelation. A prophet does not choose his profession but is chosen, often against his own will, as in the case of Jonah, to convey the word of God to the people regardless of whether they wish to hear it. The prophet, although conscious of being overwhelmed by the divine word and of being involved in an encounter with God, is still capable of reacting and responding, and may even engage God in dialogue.”

“The individuality of the prophet is never affected. No two prophets prophesied in the same style. God speaks to the prophet and the prophet in turn speaks out.”
(*Encyclopædia Judaica Jr.*)

Jonah teaches the atonement through the experience God gives him of being in a great fish three days and three nights. The book of Jonah is read by religious Jews on Yom Kippur, The Day of Atonement. It is accompanied by a full day of fasting and prayer. The prayers given that day ask for forgiveness and for the Lord’s spirit to be with them.

Abinadi makes it clear that the Children of Israel preferred a “strict law” rather than following the spirit. The giving of the Law of Moses, as it became known, is celebrated fifty days after Passover, the festival of redemption from Egypt. In the Savior’s time, the giving of the Higher Law, the gift of the Holy Ghost, was also fifty days after Passover. This is also called Pentecost, the time of the Hebrew holiday of Shavuot, the giving of the law. Coincidentally, most classes will be studying this lesson close to this year’s Shavuot. Let’s review part of the Old Testament supplement of **Lesson Number 28 - “We Are Witnesses.”**

The profound gift of the Holy Ghost was given so that a witness could be given of the completion of the Savior’s atonement process. Being “set at liberty from our bruises” and happy to share our new-found freedom, we need the gifts of the Holy Ghost to be witnesses. Fifty days after the Passover when Jesus was crucified and resurrected there was a “Day of Pentecost.” To this day it is a holy day for the Jews, called Shavuot. The most significant thing celebrated is the receiving of the Torah, the Law of Moses.

“Shavuot (Hebrew for ‘Weeks’), is the name of the festival which celebrates the end of the spring barley harvest and the beginning of the summer wheat and fruit harvests. According to rabbinic tradition, Shavuot is also the day on which the Torah was revealed to the Jewish people on Mount Sinai.”

“Shavuot is the only holiday for which the Torah does not give a specific date. The biblical text (Leviticus 23:4) states that Passover should be celebrated on the fifteenth of the first month (Nisan). It then says ‘From the day after the Sabbath . . . you shall keep count [until] seven full weeks have elapsed . . . you shall count fifty days . . . then you shall bring an offering of new grain to the Lord.’ What is the meaning of ‘the day after the Sabbath?’ Does the word ‘Sabbath’ mean ‘Saturday’ or does it mean ‘the day of rest’ which can also apply to the festival? The rabbis of the Talmud understood it in the latter sense and so Shavuot always falls 50 days after the second day of Passover. These 50 days represent the period of the counting of the *Omer*. In English, the festival is often known as Pentecost, from the Greek word which means ‘the fiftieth day.’”

“The Bible refers to Shavuot as *Hag Shavuot* (‘The Festival of Weeks,’ Exodus 34:22; Deuteronomy 16:10), and *Hag ha-Kazir* (‘The Harvest Festival,’ Exodus 23:16). Shavuot is also called *Yom ha-Bikkurim* (‘The Day of the First Fruits,’ Numbers 28:26) and is, therefore the festival which marks the beginning of the summer fruit harvest as well as the beginning of the wheat harvest. According to the Book of Leviticus (23:17) two loaves of bread, baked from the first wheat crop, were brought to the sanctuary as part of the festival offering. According to the Book of Deuteronomy (16:9), Shavuot is a holiday on which the entire community is to rejoice ‘at the place where the Lord your God will choose to establish His name (Jerusalem).’ The observance of Shavuot also included a ‘freewill’ offering in proportion to one’s ability to contribute.”

“Seven weeks after the Exodus from Egypt a horde of slaves stood before Mount Sinai and freely accepted the spiritual and moral teachings which gave meaning and depth to their newfound freedom.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

The imagery of receiving the Torah from above on Shavuot (Jewish Pentecost), leads to understanding the “New Testament” day of Pentecost, when the Holy Ghost came down. The Holy Ghost came down so that the Savior could go up. Likewise, we must have the Holy Ghost come down on us so that we can go up to our Savior, who will bring us to his and our Father in Heaven.

As Moses came down from Mount Sinai, he did shine.

“And when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone; and they were afraid to come nigh him.” (*Exodus 34:30*)

From his manner of preaching, one may get a glimpse of Abinadi’s countenance as he rebuked the wickedness of the people listening to him. The Children of Israel did not reject the Lord completely. They accepted a “lesser law,” one with strict rules and regulations rather than accept the spirit-guided “higher law.” The people of Nineveh repented. Yet, the people of King Noah rebelled even more, resulting in the martyrdom of the Prophet Abinadi.

Let me add some Jewish thought on martyrdom. It may have some significance.

“Martyrdom is permitted only in the most exceptional circumstances; to lay down one’s life, even for the fulfillment of divine laws, when such sacrifice is not required by law, is regarded as a mortal offense.”

“The willingness to sacrifice life rather than faith, is one of the most significant concepts of Judaism, and has paradoxically been a factor in Jewish survival, where other oppressed groups have assimilated and disappeared. The laws of martyrdom were first formulated at the rabbinic council of Lydda in the second century C.E. when *kiddush ha-Shem* (‘Sanctification of the Name [of God]’) was declared obligatory with regard to three situations: idolatry, unchastity, and murder. Rather than worship idols, commit an unchaste act, or murder, the Jew is commanded to choose death. All other commandments may be violated rather than suffer death. But should a Jew be forced into breaking any commandment in the presence of ten Jews (or more) in order to demonstrate his apostasy (abandonment of faith) he is obliged to sanctify God’s name by choosing death. If ten Jews are not present, he should transgress rather than be killed. These rules were to apply in ‘normal’ times. In periods of persecution of the whole community, however, death was to be chosen even if no other Jews were present. The rabbis understood the first verse of the *Shema*, ‘And you shall love the Lord your God . . . with all your soul,’ as meaning even if He demands your soul from you, and, indeed, the proclamation of the *Shema*,

‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One,’ was the phrase with which martyrs went to their death.”

“Martyrdom when sacrifice was not obligatory became a matter of dispute. Maimonides held that one who chose death when the law decided for life was guilty of an offense. Others, like the tosafists and most medieval Jews of Germany, considered such voluntary death praiseworthy. The sages of the Talmud were divided as to whether gentiles are required to sanctify God's name by martyrdom. Rava maintained that rather than break one of the Noachide laws, the gentile should choose death.”

“Jewish history is replete with examples of those willing to die for their faith from Shadrach, Meshach and Abednigo, who in the Book of Daniel refused to worship an idol and thus endangered their lives, up to the present generation of Soviet Jews who suffer indescribable hardships rather than give up their Jewishness.”

“In modern times, the lessening of religious fanaticism, and growing secularization of Jewish life, accompanied by trends toward assimilation and emancipation, have led to the disintegration of Jewish values; as the necessity for self-sacrifice diminished, so the idea of *kiddush ha-Shem* appeared to lose its significance. However, renewed persecution under the Nazis revived the ancient tradition in the ghettos and concentration camps of Europe and very many cases of honorable death among the six million who perished must have gone unrecorded.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Another example of the Lord’s prophet speaking out against the people - at the peril of his own life - was Jeremiah. He, like Abinadi, prophesied against the government and the people who followed their wickedness.

“Therefore the princes said unto the king, We beseech thee, let this man be put to death: for thus he weakeneth the hands of the men of war that remain in this city, and the hands of all the people, in speaking such words unto them: for this man seeketh not the welfare of this people, but the hurt. Then Zedekiah the king said, Behold, he is in your hand: for the king is not he that can do any thing against you. Then took they Jeremiah, and cast him into the dungeon of Malchiah the son of Hammelech, that was in the court of the prison: and they let down Jeremiah with cords. And in the dungeon there was no water, but mire: so Jeremiah sunk in the mire.” (*Jeremiah 38:4-6*)

These prophets were models of their Master, the Savior, who would prophesy against the corrupt part of the Jewish government and the people who followed their wickedness.

“And after all this, after working many mighty miracles among the children of men, he shall be led, yea, even as Isaiah said, as a sheep before the shearer is dumb, so he opened not his mouth. Yea, even so he shall be led, crucified, and slain, the

flesh becoming subject even unto death, the will of the Son being swallowed up in the will of the Father.” (*Mosiah 15:6-7*)

Abinadi knew that those who listen with their hearts and their spirits, would be redeemed and become his seed.

“For these are they whose sins he has borne; these are they for whom he has died, to redeem them from their transgressions. And now, are they not his seed? Yea, and are not the prophets, every one that has opened his mouth to prophesy, that has not fallen into transgression, I mean all the holy prophets ever since the world began? I say unto you that they are his seed. And these are they who have published peace, who have brought good tidings of good, who have published salvation; and said unto Zion: Thy God reigneth!” (*Mosiah 15:12-14*)

As Abinadi gave his life, he succeeded in reaching through the crowd of wickedness to one soul. One Alma hears the voice of the prophet. More importantly, he feels the spirit of the Lord and he becomes a prophet to speak to the people for God.

Lesson
19

“None Could Deliver Them but the Lord”

Mosiah 18–24

Scripture Summary: *Alma preaches in private—He sets forth the covenant of baptism and baptizes at the waters of Mormon—He organizes the Church of Christ and ordains priests—They support themselves and teach the people—Alma and his people flee from King Noah into the wilderness. [About 148—145 B.C.]*

Gideon seeks to slay King Noah—The Lamanites invade the land—King Noah suffers death by fire—Limbi rules as a tributary monarch. [Between 145 and 122 B.C.]

Lamanite daughters are abducted by the priests of Noah—The Lamanites wage war upon Limbi and his people—They are repulsed and pacified. [Between 145 and 122 B.C.]

Limbi's people are smitten and defeated by the Lamanites—They meet Ammon and are converted—They tell Ammon of the twenty-four Jaredite plates. [Between 145 and 121 B.C.]

Plans are made for the people to escape from Lamanite bondage—The Lamanites are made drunk—The people escape, return to Zarahemla, and become subject to King Mosiah. [About 121 B.C.]

Alma refuses to be king—He serves as high priest—The Lord chastens his people, and the Lamanites conquer the land of Helam—Amulon, leader of King Noah's wicked priests, rules subject to the Lamanite monarch. [Between 145 and 121 B.C.]

Amulon persecutes Alma and his people—They are to be put to death if they pray—The Lord makes their burdens seem light—He delivers them from bondage, and they return to Zarahemla. [Between 145 and 120 B.C.]

Supplemental Holy Land and Judaic Insights:

Alma, transformed as a result of the inquisition of Abinadi, works diligently to bring people to the Lord. Following their new-found faith and repentance he baptizes converts in “living waters.” Immersion, or baptism, as Latter-day Saints call it, is a covenant that brings God’s children a step closer to him. Let us review a few thoughts from the Gospel Doctrine Supplements of the Old Testament, **Lesson Number 18 - “Be Strong and of a Good Courage.”**

“As an everlasting covenant, baptism began on this earth with Adam (Moses 6:64-67) and has continued ever since whenever the Lord has had a people on earth. (D. & C. 20:23-28; 84:26-28) It was not a new rite introduced by John the Baptist and adopted by Christ and his followers. The Jews were baptizing their proselytes long before John, as is well attested from secular sources. The Inspired Version of the Bible, the Book of Moses being a part thereof contains ample evidence of the practice of baptism in Old Testament times. The part of the Book of Mormon of the pre-Christian Era contains some of the best information we have relative to this eternal law.” **(Bruce R. McConkie, Mormon Doctrine, Pg. 71)**

“Since the tribes of Israel under Joshua crossed the Jordan to enter Erez (land) Israel after the Exodus from Egypt, the Jordan river has come to have a deep significance for Jews, symbolizing the gateway to the homeland after years of wandering in exile in the desert. The Bible relates that Joshua led the Israelites to a place across the Jordan from Jericho, and that the waters suddenly and miraculously stopped flowing, enabling the Israelites to cross into the Promised Land. Folklore and mythology have

popularized the Jordan as the gateway to Paradise, and crossing it is seen as stepping from a world of troubles to one of peace. The river is also important to Christians because John the Baptist performed baptisms on its banks and Jesus was baptized there.”

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(Encyclopædia Judaica Jr.)

Some religious Jews who experience repeated immersions (monthly for women and regularly for men), step into their immersion font from the East side, immerse themselves and then exit to the West side. This could be construed as a reminder of entering into the gateway of cleanness as the Children of Israel entered into their Promised Land.

For the religious Jews, immersions are favored below ground level in flowing water that emanates from bedrock - the “Rock of Salvation.” Consider that the lowest spot on the face of the earth where water flows originating in bedrock is where the Children of Israel crossed into their erstwhile homeland. Judaism and Christianity agree that it is also the likely spot where Jesus came to John the Levite in Judea and was immersed.

As mentioned earlier, other Jewish customs of immersion or use of the mikveh, can give added insight to an eternal covenant.

“Like the synagogue and the cemetery, the *mikveh* is a basic element of Jewish family and communal life, and thus the erection of a *mikveh* was among the first projects undertaken by Jewish communities throughout the world from earliest times.”

“Just how to construct a *mikveh* in accordance with the numerous legal specifications involved constantly posed a technological problem of great seriousness, and over the generations rabbinic thinkers were repeatedly challenged to come up with novel solutions to this unusual problem which demanded a rare combination of technologic and halakhic ingenuity.”

“Briefly the basic legal requirements are these:

- 1) A *mikveh* must not be filled with water that has been drawn (i.e., has been in a vessel or a receptacle), but with water from a naturally flowing source; spring water or rainwater are the ideal sources, but melted snow and ice are also permitted.
- 2) The water must be able to flow into the *mikveh* freely and unimpeded (any blockage renders the water ‘drawn water’) and must reach the *mikveh* in vessels that are not susceptible to ritual uncleanness.
- 3) The minimum size of the *mikveh* is of a vessel which has a volume of ‘40 *seah*,’ variously estimated at between 250 and 1,000 liters (quarts).

4) The *mikveh* must be watertight and must be constructed of natural materials on the spot, for otherwise it is deemed itself to be a ‘vessel’ and renders the water in it ‘drawn water.’”

“Where large amounts of rainwater or spring water are available, the problem of establishing an adequate feed to replenish the *mikveh* is not great, but since most *mikva'ot* are built in urban centers where such supplies are not available, the technological and legal solution of a valid *mikveh* depends upon a fifth principle which stipulates that once a properly constructed *mikveh* is filled with the minimum amount of non-drawn water, drawn water can then be added to it indefinitely and not render it invalid.”

“Several ingenious designs have been developed over the generations which take advantage of this principle, but no one design was ever universally accepted, and thus many of the *mikva'ot* differ in many of their details, in accordance with the rabbinic authority whose solution was adopted.”

“The reasons for purity or impurity are not given in the Torah, and the rabbis devote little discussion to that aspect of the subject. It is clear, however, that ritual impurities are not to be regarded as infectious diseases or the laws of purification as hygienic measures. Indeed, immersion in a *mikveh* must be preceded by careful cleansing of the body. In the Bible, the Israelites are warned against making the land impure by their transgressions, while the rabbis described purity as one of the grades on the path toward a state of holiness. Maimonides wrote: ‘Uncleanliness is not mud or filth which water can remove . . . but is dependent on the intention of the heart.’ The sages have therefore said: ‘If one immerses himself, but without special intention, it is as though he had not immersed himself at all.’” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

In Alma’s case, the people had prepared themselves by true faith and repentance and he baptized them in pure water.

“Now, there was in Mormon a fountain of pure water, and Alma resorted thither . . .” (*Mosiah 18:5*)

Their immersions became a bond to sustain each other and bear each other’s burdens as they prepared themselves to return to their God. It is a “bondage of freedom” from the chains of the adversary. Most people consider the term bondage as slavery. Indeed we are “slaves” to our God. He has bought and paid for us!

“And now, in the first place, he hath created you, and granted unto you your lives, for which ye are indebted unto him. And secondly, he doth require that ye should do as he hath commanded you; for which if ye do, he doth immediately bless you; and therefore he hath paid you. And ye are still indebted unto him, and are, and will be, forever and ever . . .” (*Mosiah 2:23-24*)

Slavery in the Bible had a different connotation than in modern times.

“Slavery was very widespread in the ancient world and the Bible and subsequent Jewish law recognized it as a basic social institution. However, in contrast to the conception, common in the ancient Near East, of the slave as an acquired chattel, the *halakhab* tended to view the slave more as a hired laborer and it established numerous rules and regulations which sought to assure that the human dignity of slaves was properly maintained.”

“Strictly speaking, a Jew could not be sold as a slave. He could give himself voluntarily into bondage (for example, to a creditor to whom he could not pay his debts) or a court of law could hand him over as a slave (for example, if he was a thief and could not make restitution for his theft). In either case, the Jew would then be considered an *eved Ivri* and could serve a maximum of six years. In the seventh he had to be set free, unless he willingly decided to stay in his master's service. In such a case he would remain a slave until the next Jubilee Year and then go free.”

“Aliens and non-Jews could be bought and sold as slaves on the market and they could, in theory, serve in perpetuity. However, they were considered to be members of the master's household and as such they enjoyed many benefits as well as being subject to certain obligations. They had to be circumcised and were obligated to keep the Sabbath and the festivals. They partook of the Passover sacrifice and even succeeded the master if he had no direct heirs. They could acquire and own property, and if they came into money, they could redeem themselves from the status of slaves.”

“Slaves were to be treated in much the same way as hired laborers. They could not be given a work-load which exceeded their physical strength and they could not be physically mistreated. A slave who was wounded by his master would automatically be set free, and a fugitive slave was not to be returned to his master, but was to be given sanctuary and assistance.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

The Sabbath and keeping the Sabbath Day holy is one additional teaching in the lesson where Jewish commentary is valuable for insight as well as contrast. God requires the keeping of the Sabbath as a reminder that he freed us from slavery. Lest we forget, violating the Sabbath in Biblical times was a capital offense, punishable by death.

“The Sabbath is mentioned --- directly and explicitly --- in the fourth of the Ten Commandments in both the version in Exodus 20:8-11 and that in Deuteronomy 5:14--15. The Exodus version states that: ‘Six days you shall labor . . . but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord, our God: you shall not do any work --- you, your son or daughter, your male or female slave, or your cattle . . . for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth . . . and He rested on the seventh day . . .’ In the repetition of the Decalogue in Deuteronomy it says much the same except that it ends: ‘. . . so that your male and female slave may rest as you do. Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt and the Lord your God freed you from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; there for the Lord your God has commanded you to

observe the Sabbath day.’ In this version another dimension is added to the Sabbath --- that it is a day of rest, not only for you but for your slaves and that God, so to speak, has the right to demand it because He freed you from slavery.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

“Six days may work be done; but in the seventh is the Sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD: whosoever doeth any work in the Sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death.” (*Exodus 31:15*)

“The Hebrew name for the Sabbath is Shabbat, which derives from a root meaning to cease or desist. It gets this name because the Bible tells us that on the seventh day of Creation, God ‘*shavat mi-kol melakhto*’--- He ‘ceased’ or ‘desisted’ from all His work (i.e., of Creation). It is from this that the supreme importance of the Sabbath derives; observance of the Sabbath is an act of testimony to the fact that God created the world.”

“The first mention of the Sabbath in the Bible is in connection with the manna. On each of the first five days of the week the Israelites received one day's ration of manna; on the sixth day, Friday, they received a double portion --- for the day itself and for the following day.”

“The manna of the first five days went bad if kept overnight; but the Friday manna remained fresh over the Sabbath. The Jews learned from this that they must desist from their daily food gathering on Shabbat and that day is a ‘Sabbath to the Lord.’”

“Throughout the Prophetical Books of the Bible the Sabbath is referred to as a holy day, a festival, a delight and the Jews are often castigated by the prophets for not observing it properly.”

“In the course of time observance of the Sabbath became the identifying mark of the Jew. It set him apart from all other religions. According to the First Book of Maccabees (2:31--41), at the beginning of the Hasmonean revolt against Syria, the Jews would not fight on the Sabbath but let themselves be killed. Later they realized that was a mistake and that if danger to life is involved, the Sabbath is suspended.”

“The rabbis of the Talmud thought that the Sabbath is the most important of all the laws of the Torah and that by itself it is equal to all the rest. One statement is that ‘if Israel keeps one Sabbath as it should be kept, the Messiah will come.’ They saw Shabbat as a special privilege; a gift that God gave His people Israel and as a foretaste of the world-to-come.”

“In traditional Judaism there are two aspects to the Sabbath: the positive, i.e., what you should do, and the negative, i.e., what you must not do. The negative side is to desist from ‘work.’ But just what does ‘work’ include? As we have seen, the Bible expressly forbids kindling fire and, by implication, gathering wood, but is that a sufficiently exact definition of ‘work’? The rabbis, basing themselves on the Oral

Law, pointed out the fact, mentioned above, that the laws of Shabbat immediately preceded the law about building the Tabernacle, and they thus deduced that the categories of work involved in the construction of the Tabernacle are those which are forbidden on Shabbat. They worked out that there were 39 main categories of work involved; in Hebrew these are known as *Avot Melakhab*, 'Fathers of Work.' Each 'father' has 'offspring,' *toledot*, i.e., sub-categories. For example, one of the 'fathers' is sowing because in order to get the linen for the priestly garments you would have to sow the plants; watering plants is an 'offspring.' Another example is lighting a lamp; one of its 'offspring' would be to add oil to an already kindled lamp. All the laws are discussed in a complete tractate in the Talmud called, very logically, *Shabbat*. All the 'fathers' and 'offspring' are considered of biblical authority. The rabbis added on some laws of their own such as a prohibition against asking a non-Jew to do something forbidden to a Jew, and the law that it is forbidden even to touch something whose use is forbidden on Shabbat. That law is known as *mukzeh*."

"But besides the things you must not do, there are positive acts you should do in order to sanctify the Sabbath. The Sabbath law in the Ten Commandments in Deuteronomy starts with the admonition 'Observe the Sabbath day . . .' This the rabbis understood as referring to the prohibitions of Shabbat. The Ten Commandments in Exodus, however, begin: 'Remember the Sabbath day . . .' which means the positive acts of sanctification. These include ushering in Shabbat with *Kiddush*, a declaration of the Sabbath's holiness which is made over a festive goblet of wine and the eating of three Sabbath meals."

"Many thinkers have devoted a great deal of time to explaining the laws of Shabbat. One great authority described the day as a 'Temple in Time' and a retreat from the world of machines and activity that the weekdays constitute. This means that everything on Shabbat must be different so that one is constantly aware that it is Shabbat and different from the rest of the week. This aim is achieved by all the 'do not' laws insofar as a person in fact develops a different life style on Shabbat."

"The Talmud relates that many distinguished rabbis used to help in the physical preparation for Shabbat, such as chopping wood for the oven and cleaning the fish, and considered such activity as a privilege. One authority, Shammai, used to set aside any choice item of food he came across during the week for the Sabbath. If later on he found a choicer item, he ate the first during the week and the later one was reserved for consumption on the Sabbath day. Just before the onset of Shabbat, the rabbis --- and since then all Jews --- used to wash themselves and put on their best clothes to greet the Sabbath which they pictured as a great queen. In the Middle Ages the kabbalists of Safed used to go out into the fields outside town to greet the Sabbath, much as people do to greet a distinguished visitor. There they recited psalms, out of which custom grew today's practice of the *Kabbalat Shabbat* service."

"But even before the actual onset of Shabbat, the preparations already begin. Because cooking is forbidden on Shabbat, all the meals have to be prepared

beforehand and are just kept warm in the oven. The house also is cleaned. All this activity creates a special atmosphere for Friday and even for Thursday nights.”

“Many pious people still have the custom of reviewing the whole portion of the Torah to be read that week together with the Aramaic translation known as the *Targum* and Rashi's commentary. A hasidic and Sephardi custom is to recite the whole Song of Songs just before Shabbat.”

“The first real act of ushering in the Sabbath is when the housewife lights the Shabbat candles. This takes place slightly before sundown and marks the start of the holy day. Most women light two candles --- one corresponds to ‘Remember the Sabbath’ and the other to ‘Observe the Sabbath’ -- but some have the custom of adding a candle for each child or grandchild. The kindling of lights is of very ancient origin and was a special ritual so that it should not be dark in the house on Shabbat. Even after other methods of lighting the house became common, the Shabbat candles continued to be the supreme sign in the home that the day is Shabbat. In many communities a special oil lamp, usually suspended from the ceiling was used for Shabbat. When she lights the candles, the mistress of the house recites a special blessing. Although lighting the candles has become the housewife's duty, if there is no lady of the house, the man is required to light them and recite the benediction.”

“In the Home.

A delightful Talmudic sermon has it that two angels accompany a man on his way back from synagogue, one good and one bad. When they arrive home, if the table is laid nicely and all the Sabbath preparations have been made, the good angel says, ‘May it be so next week’ and the bad angel is forced to say, ‘Amen!’ If, however, the home is not Sabbath-like, the bad angel invokes: ‘May it be so next week,’ and the good angel has to answer ‘Amen!’ This *aggadah* is the basis of a special Sabbath hymn recited in the home on return from prayers. It was written by the kabbalists of Safed and welcomes the angels into the house. Many families also recite Proverbs 31:10--31 which describe the perfect wife and mother as an appreciation of the lady of the house. In some homes the parents bless the children.”

“At the table, between courses, special Sabbath table songs, called *zemiroth*, are recited. These were written throughout the ages (many by our old friends, the Safed kabbalists) and there are dozens of delightful melodies to them. Ideally, talk at the table should be about subjects fitting for the Sabbath. The weekly Torah reading is a favorite subject for discussion and the children often tell what they learned about it during the week. In the Grace after Meals a special paragraph is added celebrating the Sabbath as a day of rest.”

“SOME SPECIAL LAWS

Carrying

One of the prohibitions of the Sabbath is carrying any object from one private domain to another, from a private domain into the public domain, or inside the public domain itself. This applies to any object, even a handkerchief. However, the rabbis instituted a method of making the whole town into one private domain by

surrounding it with a sort of fence. This is known as *eruv*, a Hebrew word meaning 'mix,' because it mixes all the domains, public and private, into one. All cities and towns in Israel are surrounded by an *eruv* and thus one can carry freely in them. It is the function of each local religious council to maintain the *eruv* and make sure that it does not fall down."

Electricity

Orthodox rabbis have ruled that it is forbidden to use electricity on Shabbat. Since a great deal of our comfort depends on electricity, automatic clocks have been developed which switch on the lights and electrical appliances at pre-set times. In Israel, many high-rise apartment houses have special Shabbat elevators which stop at each floor and do not require the passenger to operate them. Many Conservative rabbis have permitted the use of electricity on Shabbat on the grounds that it does not constitute work. Reform Judaism negated the halakhic aspects of Shabbat in keeping with its general policy."

"The Conservative Rabbinic Assembly of America also permitted the use of automobiles on Shabbat for the purpose of attending synagogue and visiting the sick. The reasoning was that these two activities are *mitzvot* which overrule the Sabbath laws. Orthodoxy very definitely opposed this on the grounds that only danger to life 'suspends' the Sabbath prohibitions and nothing else." (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

As a closing comment to this lesson, I add the experience of Jews and Arabs getting to know each other. The amount of mistrust reduces in direct proportion to the amount of interest we have in each other. In more than twenty-nine years of living in Israel I see more Arabs and Jews getting along with each other than the ones who don't. The most important and successful projects are those that include listening to each other and focusing our resources to help the needy. It is a basic tenant of Judaism and Islam. It is a commandment from heaven. Assisting each other brings us a step closer to God. It transforms us to be in His hands rather than our own.

Lesson
20

“My Soul is Pained No More”

Mosiah 25–28; Alma 36

Scripture Summary: *The people (the Mulekites) of Zarahemla become Nephites—They learn of the people of Alma and of Zeniff—Alma baptizes Limbi and all his people—Mosiah authorizes Alma to organize the Church of God. [About 120 B.C.]*

Many members of the Church are led into sin by unbelievers—Alma is promised eternal life—Those who repent and are baptized gain forgiveness—Church members in sin who repent and confess to Alma and to the Lord shall be forgiven; otherwise they shall be excommunicated. [Probably between 120 and 100 B.C.]

Mosiah forbids persecution and enjoins equality—Alma the younger and the four sons of Mosiah seek to destroy the Church—An angel appears and commands them to cease their evil course—Alma is struck dumb—All mankind must be born again to gain salvation—Alma and the sons of Mosiah declare glad tidings. [Probably between 100 and 92 B.C.]

The sons of Mosiah shall have eternal life—They go to preach to the Lamanites—Mosiah translates the Jaredite plates with the two seer stones. [About 92 B.C.]

Alma 36: Alma testifies to Helaman of his conversion by an angel—He suffered the pains of a damned soul; he called upon the name of Jesus, and was then born of God—Sweet joy filled his soul—He saw concourses of angels praising God—His converts have tasted and seen as he did. [About 73 B.C.]

**Supplemental
Holy Land
and Judaic
Insights:**

Alma going out to preach and gather the believing people to the Lord is a repeated theme throughout time. It is a characteristic of the House of Israel to be “gathered home.”

The word “Zionism” is usually connected with the “gathering” of Jews. Some consider coming to Israel as a return to their ancient roots. Some feel it is a religious experience while others gather in a secular sense. Some of the Jews in the diaspora take years to make up their minds to “gather” while others make up their minds quickly. The State of Israel, although not “religious,” sends emissaries throughout the world to gather assist Jews who wish to reestablish themselves in their ancient homeland. These are called a “Shaliach” and they are somewhat similar to the “Mission Presidents” who administer the work of “emissaries” who bring the blood of Israel “home.”

“The movement known as Zionism can be described as the national liberation movement of the Jews. As a formal, fully-organized movement, Zionism came into existence only in the last decades of the 19th century, at a time when nationalism had become the dominant political force throughout Europe, but the idea of Zionism --- reclaiming Erez Israel (Zion) as the national homeland of the Jews -- was then far from being new. Ever since the destruction of the sovereign Jewish state by the Romans in 70 C.E., the Jewish people hoped and prayed for its restoration. From that time onward, the return to Zion became a central theme of Jewish prayer, and even today the Jew, no matter where he is, turns towards the Land of Israel whenever he prays.”

“A very important aspect of Zionism was the education of Jews throughout the world towards immigration (*aliyah*) to Erez Israel. For this purpose every group in the Zionist Organization set up youth movements which were described as halutzic

(from the word *halutz*, which means a pioneer). These groups also provided practical training for life in Erez Israel. Many even set up training farms to teach the members agriculture.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Conversion to Judaism is also a literal adoption into the family of Israel. It involves a religious as well as a cultural change and subsequent involvement.

“A convert to Judaism is considered a newborn child, and, from the halakhic point of view, he has no father or mother. Thus, if a whole family converts, the children and the parents start their lives as Jews with no legal relationship. Because of this state of affairs, converts are always named as though they were the sons of Abraham, the first Jew. A husband and wife who convert must also have another wedding ceremony in order to be married under Jewish law.”

“One of the most frequently mentioned *mitzvot* in the Torah is to protect the widow, the convert (the Hebrew word *ger* also means stranger) and the orphan who, like the converts, has no parents. This is because these people are alone in the world they are entering and need help in adjusting to new ways of acting and thinking. This *mitzvah* also helps to counterbalance any possible prejudice against those who are not Jews by birth.”

“A potential convert (or proselyte) is first questioned by a court (*bet din*) of three rabbis. They usually begin by trying to persuade him to give up the idea of joining a nation which has been, and today still is, severely persecuted. If the candidate still affirms sincerely that he is ready to ‘accept the yoke of the commandments,’ he or she must undergo a period of instruction in Judaism, in its laws and practices. After thorough study, when he understands the *mitzvot* and is ready to begin his life as a Jew, the candidate is ready for the rituals of conversion.”

“For both males and females the *bet din* oversees their immersion in a ritual bath (*mikveh*). Males must undergo circumcision. If the man has already been circumcised a symbolic drop of blood is drawn, and the proper blessing said. In Temple times a convert was also obligated to sacrifice a burnt offering of cattle or two young pigeons.”

“. . . there have been instances of converts suffering persecution and death for their loyalty to Judaism, especially at the hands of Christians in Europe during the Middle Ages. The zeal with which the Church fought ‘Judaizing’ cannot be justified by the small but steady number of conversions that actually took place. There was no real threat to Christianity, but the Church could not accept the fact that any Christian could find value in a religion it claimed to have supplanted. Persecution by Church authorities caused converts to flee to places where their background was not known.”

“Most conversions in the United States today occur because of a planned marriage where one of the partners is not Jewish. While Orthodox and Conservative conversions require circumcision and immersion, Reform Rabbis insist only on

training in Judaism and a declaration of faith by the convert. They also allow children under confirmation age to be converted with their parents if they declare that they will raise the children as Jews.”

“Who is a Jew’ is a very controversial political issue in Israel. The Law of Return was amended in 1970 to extend citizenship to the partners, children, and grandchildren of mixed marriages who were not Jews according to *halakhab*. This was done mainly to allow the immigration of thousands who were fleeing persecution in the Soviet Union. Although considered citizens by the civil authorities, they are not regarded as Jews by the Rabbinate and therefore they and their children cannot be married and divorced in Israel. To help these people, the Ministry of Religious Affairs, in 1971, established two schools on Orthodox kibbutzim where prospective converts can undergo intensive courses in Judaism. (A famous proselyte is): Ruth, the Moabite, the great-grandmother of King David, whose descendent is prophesied to be the Messiah of the House of David . . .”
(Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

Throughout the Book of Mormon, various “Jewish” customs can be recognized such as the several gatherings or holy convocations in biblical precedents. From the Bible accounts, these include Passover in the spring, Sukkot in the fall, Shavuoth at the beginning of summer as well as Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. It is likely that the gatherings mentioned in the Book of Mormon may coincide with these holidays. The instruction given in those times are similar to those given in LDS conferences today. The history of forefathers is reviewed and lessons using contrasts are used for teaching effects. This is a typical Hebrew way of expression. As an example, Mosiah 24:8 speaks of joy and the next verse speaks of sorrow. Verse 10 speaks of giving thanks and the next one describes pain and anguish.

In verse 12 there is a parallel in taking on a new name and becoming “citizens.” Verse 15 shows similarity to the LDS area conferences in modern times. Verse 20 strikes a familiar chord to Moses dividing up responsibilities per Jethro’s counsel. Verse 23 tells us that the people took the name of the Lord upon them.

As a related item to taking the name of the Lord upon us, let me tell of some small metal plates discovered in a stone box in Jerusalem dating to 600 B.C. that had scripture verses on them. They are displayed in the Israel Museum and contain the words of a priestly blessing.

“Speak unto Aaron and unto his sons, saying, On this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them, The LORD bless thee, and keep thee: The LORD make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: The LORD lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace. And they shall put my name upon the children of Israel; and I will bless them.” *(Numbers 6:23-27)*

Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, is preceded by ten days of repentance and seeking forgiveness. This is in anticipation of being able to receive the “priestly blessing” of taking the Lord’s name upon oneself and being in tune with the mind of the Lord. The scriptural reading at this holy time is the book of Jonah. He was tormented in the belly of a great fish for three days and three nights. In the Book of Mormon, Alma was tormented for three

days and three nights until he recognized the atonement. He became tuned into the mind of the Lord and took the Lord's name upon himself.

The account of Mosiah 28:13 speaks of two rims of a bow with two stones, the Urim and Thummin, used to know the mind of the Lord. The Emeritus General Authority, Patriarch, Eldredge G. Smith once spoke of Joseph Smith describing the Urim and Thummin as two triangular stones connected by silver bows. Detractors of Joseph Smith spoke of them being "magic glasses."

The use of these special revelatory stones has been repeated throughout time. It is a characteristic of the House of Israel.

Lesson
21

“Alma . . . Did Judge Righteous Judgements”

Mosiah 29; Alma 1–4

Scripture Summary: *Mosiah proposes that judges be chosen in place of a king—Unrighteous kings lead their people into sin—Alma the younger is chosen chief judge by the voice of the people—He is also the high priest over the Church—Alma the elder and Mosiah die. [About 92–91 B.C.]*

Alma: Nehor teaches false doctrines, establishes a church, introduces priestcraft, and slays Gideon—He is executed for his crimes—Priestcrafts and persecutions spread among the people—The priests support themselves, the people care for the poor, and the Church prospers. [About 91—90 B.C.]

Amlici seeks to be king and is rejected by the voice of the people—His followers make him king—The Amlicites make war on the Nephites and are defeated—The Lamanites and Amlicites join forces and are defeated—Alma slays Amlici. [87 B.C.]

The Amlicites had marked themselves according to the prophetic word—The Lamanites had been cursed for their rebellion—Men bring their own curses upon themselves—The Nephites defeat another Lamanite army. [87 B.C.]

Alma baptizes thousands of converts—Iniquity enters the Church, and the Church’s progress is hindered—Nephibah is appointed chief judge—Alma, as high priest, devotes himself to the ministry. [Between 86 and 83 B.C.]

Supplemental

Holy Land and Judaic Insights:

The underlying message in these chapters is about government. The model of government in the Book of Mormon parallels the desired governmental system in modern times. In ancient times it seems that there is a pattern of the people of Israel going from Judges to Kings. This parallels a path of secularism that draws away from God (that is because they forgot that kings were to be models of The King of Kings). In this section of The Book of Mormon, the people went from Kings to Judges.

Jewish thought on government and a view of the efforts of the modern Jewish state to bring biblical theocracy together with democracy gives some supplemental information as comparison. Nowadays, the religious Jews, Bahais and Latter-day Saints anticipate an eventual theocracy. This is in stark contrast to the secularism and materialism so prevalent in modern society.

“In biblical times in the ancient Near East, the monarch was accepted as the sole ruler, with complete authority over his subjects. The status of kings varied from emperor to vassal as the kingdoms varied in size from a tribe like Midian to a vast empire such as Egypt. But the idea common to all was that the direct relationship between the king and the deity was part of the natural order.”

“Kingship in Israel was established later in the history of the nation and it developed with important differences from neighboring states. Early efforts to establish a monarchy were resisted as a contradiction of the direct rule of God over His people. This attitude existed even when Saul was made Israel's first king, but it did not last. The king came to replace the judge and the prophet as the national leader, yet he was

guided by them in his strong but not absolute rule in military, as well as political, matters.”

“The primary feature of the coronation was the anointing of the king's head with oil by a priest or prophet, the sign of the divine covenant --- that is, he had been chosen as God's anointed. From its inception, the monarchy was in principle hereditary. In the northern kingdom of Israel there were many rebellions and frequent changes of dynasty. In the southern kingdom of Judea the monarchy remained in the house of David. The ideal king was seen as a king of justice. Prophecies of the future declare that in the ‘end of days’ the kingdom of the Jews will be returned to a descendant of the House of David.”

“Within the non-Jewish world of the Diaspora, the Jews always constituted a distinct religious grouping, and as a consequence they were invariably treated by the non-Jewish rulers of the countries in which they lived in accordance with the rights and obligations deemed appropriate for their group status. It was this type of corporate structuring of society that made possible the expulsions, en masse, of whole communities of Jews from specific territories. But this same social structuring also had positive results in the preservation of Jewish life in the Diaspora, for it allowed the Jews an extraordinary measure of freedom to live within their own circles in accordance with their own laws and religious requirements.”

“Under this system, the Jews who lived in the culturally alien and politically sovereign countries of the Christian and Muslim worlds managed to conduct their lives for hundreds of years almost as if they were living in their own land. They attained an advanced degree of legal, cultural and social self-sufficiency, and they set up their own communal structures that resembled the institutions of a sovereign state. This type of legal and cultural autonomy attained by the Jewish communities of the Diaspora prior to modern times has been aptly named by historians ‘Jewish Autonomy’ or Jewish Self-government.”

“The extent of autonomy achieved by the Jewish communities (called *kehillot*) varied from place to place, but certain features were common to all.”

“**First**, they all enjoyed the rights of being ruled and judged in accordance with the *halakhab*. Any dispute among Jews was always settled within a Jewish court of law, and anyone who dared turn to a non-Jewish court for legal redress was regarded almost as a traitor. At times, even disputes between Jews and non-Jews were settled within Jewish courts of law, and in Spain in the 12th and 13th centuries, the power of Jewish internal policing reached its peak when Jewish courts of law were empowered to impose even capital punishment.”

“**Second**, all the *kehillot* established their own governing bodies to oversee and coordinate communal affairs. Such governing institutions generally combined a quasi-democratic form of popular representation with an effective aristocratic leadership comprising the scholars and the wealthier members of the community.”

“**Third**, the assessment and collection of taxes imposed by local and national rulers was almost always given to the Jewish communities themselves to determine and carry out. Taxes would be assessed against the community as a whole, and amongst themselves, the Jews would determine how to distribute the tax burden.”

“**Fourth**, *kehillot* were generally given legal status, particularly in Europe, by the awarding of a ‘charter of settlement’ or a *privilegium*,’ by the local ruler or king. The charters would enumerate the rights to be enjoyed by the Jews settled within the specified territory, and they would also generally include a listing of the taxes and other monetary obligations to be borne by the community. The charters also generally established the Jews of the territory as ‘the property’ of the dignitary granting the charter, and would thus define the legal status of the Jews in relationship to other, conflicting, bodies such as the Church, which also claimed ‘ownership’ of the Jewish Corporate grouping.”

“**Fifth**, Jewish self-government was generally limited to the smaller territorial units of towns and urban centers, and only in rare situations were trans-communal bodies set up to oversee the interests of several *kehillot* existing within a larger territorial unit. In Poland, in the 16th and 17th centuries, however, an effective trans-communal organization was set up, called the Council of Four Lands, which dealt with the Polish kings as a representative government of all the Jews of Poland.”

“All these features of Jewish Self-government eventually disappeared with the emergence of the modern nation-state and the Emancipation of European Jewry. The Jews began to be treated as equal citizens under the laws of the countries in which they lived, and in consequence they had to give up the institutional elements of the legal autonomy which they had enjoyed in the Middle Ages. However, many of the services previously performed by the *kehillot* continued to be carried out on a voluntary basis. Thus, even today, there are Jewish courts of law in the Diaspora to which one may turn for arbitration of disputes, although such courts no longer have the power to enforce their decisions legally, and there are numerous communal bodies and organizations that deal with matters of concern to the Jews living in their communities.” (*Encyclopædia Judaica Jr.*)

Both in the Bible and in The Book of Mormon the term “judge” has an ecclesiastical connection. They were the leading elders of the people. Latter-day Saints have “Elders” who are the “Judges of Israel.”

“Now the confessed offender is not left without hope, for he can obtain forgiveness by following the course outlined, and by forsaking sins comparable to that committed, as well as all other sin, and living before the Church and the Lord in such manner as to win approbation of both. The offender who has brought stigma and affront to the ward, the stake or the mission should seek the forgiveness of those he has thus offended. That may be had at times through the presiding authorities of the

various divisions of the Church. At other times it may be appropriate and quite necessary to make amends for public offenses and seek forgiveness before organizations of the people. The judges of Israel will determine this matter. (Conf. Rep., Apr., 1954, pp. 10-13.)” (*Bruce R. McConkie, Doctrinal New Testament Commentary, Vol.3, p.278*)

“Whenever God has called and authorized men to perform a work in any age or dispensation, it has been done by revelations, and not by mere impressions, or some undefinable, internal feelings, which leave the mind in uncertainty and doubt. Noah was called by the word of the Lord to be a preacher of righteousness, and to build an ark. Abraham, Lot, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph, were called by revelation to perform a great variety of duties. Moses and Aaron were called to the priest's office by the word of the great Jehovah. Seventy elders of Israel were called by revelation to assist Moses. Joshua was appointed by the word of the Lord through Moses to be his successor in leading Israel. The successors of Aaron were appointed to the priesthood by revelation. The Judges of Israel were called by visions, by angels and by the inspiration of the Spirit. Samuel was called by the voice of the Lord. And finally, all their officers, wise men and prophets, down to the days of Malachi, were called by new revelation.” (*Orson Pratt Divine Authenticity of BofM, No. 2 (1850), p.17*)

“Because of the experience of the aged, old age and wisdom are sometimes regarded as going together. Thus, throughout the Bible and Talmud, the word ‘elder’ means judge, leader, or sage. On the other hand, the Book of Job also stresses that there are young men who are wiser than old men.”

“The *shofet*, or judge, had to meet strict qualifications, besides just knowing the law. Among these qualifications were piety, wisdom, humility, gentility and human understanding. When Moses set up the first courts, he looked for ‘able men such as fear God, men of truth, hating unjust gain’ (Exodus 18:21) and ‘wise men, and understanding and full of knowledge’ (Deuteronomy 1:13). They were charged to ‘hear the causes between your brethren and judge righteously between a man and his brother and the stranger,’ not to be partial in judgment but to ‘hear the small and the great alike, fear no man, for judgment is God's’ (Deuteronomy 1:16--17). A judge was forbidden to accept any gift from a person being tried; no matter how disinterested he considered his own judgments, since ‘bribes blind the eyes of the righteous . . .’”

“Even though the court for trying monetary cases consisted of the simple (*bediyot*) judges, a single expert (*mumbeh*) judge, renowned for his judicial capability, was sufficient. In the Talmud there are regulations about mistakes made by the court; under which circumstances the judges are required to reimburse a person wrongly made liable. For monetary cases the judges were chosen by the parties involved; each side choosing one and those two together choosing the third. But judges were also appointed by the communities. In the State of Israel, the rabbinical court judges (*dayyanim*, the word *shofet* is used for secular court judges) are appointed by a special

committee presided over by the chief rabbis which includes representatives of the Ministry of Justice.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

The Latter-day Saints have an ecclesiastical legal system that includes “Judges in Israel.” They are the Branch Presidents, Bishops and the Stake Presidents. The modern Hebrew word for president is “nasi.”

“In biblical use, *nasi* refers to a person of importance, a leader, a tribal ruler or a king. Under the Roman occupation of Erez Israel toward the end of the period of the second Temple, when there was no independent Jewish leadership, the term *nasi* was used by Jewish rulers to show their authority while not claiming kingship.”

“The title is best known for its reference to the presiding judge of the Sanhedrin (high court) although some sources claim the term was first applied to Judah ha-Nasi who was head of the Sanhedrin toward the end of the second century. The *nasi* presided over court sessions . . .”

“Justice is the fair administration of the law. It means that a judge must not show special favor to a litigant or a defendant for any reason at all, and that nobody --- not even the king --- is above the rule of the law. This concept of even-handedness is, in the Jewish view, absolutely essential for the existence and progress of society. The Bible quite clearly states ‘Justice, justice shall you pursue, that you may thrive and occupy the land that the Lord your God is giving you’ (Deuteronomy 16:20). The prophets castigated Israelite society for its lack of justice and described most of the troubles the Jews suffered as divine punishment for the rampant injustice.”

(*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

The underlying considerations in establishing the modern State of Israel and its legal system go back to ancient times and the biblical system while embracing the principles of democracy. Israel is the only democracy in the Middle East. That probably justifies the government of the United States of America to be as protective and supportive of Israel as it is.

“The Hebrew word for court is *bet din* (plural: *battei din*), which literally means ‘house of judgment’; in rabbinic literature it is the term for a Jewish court of law. We find *battei din* which handle the legal problems of the Israelites from the times of Moses. The rule of the law is an important principle of Judaism. The Torah stresses that justice must not be meted out by the parties themselves but must be administered by impartial judges. Indeed, it was Moses who first organized courts on the advice of his father-in-law, Jethro. Upon Israel's entry into their land, they were obligated to establish courts in every town. According to the Talmud, towns with less than 120 inhabitants had to have courts consisting of three judges while larger towns had to have courts consisting of 23 judges. The court of three judges exercised jurisdiction over cases involving fines, divorce, conversion, and absolution from vows. The court of 23 judges exercised jurisdiction over cases including those involving capital punishment.”

“Democracy is a way of resolving differences of opinion according to the principles of direct representation and majority rule. Whether or not this is the best method of reaching decisions, has traditionally been a difficult issue for Jews. On the one hand, Jewish life is based on *halakhab* (law) and much of this law is explicit and not subject to the manipulation of the majority. On the other hand, the law has been given to man, and often requires his interpretation. Since interpretations often vary, Jews have had to find a way of resolving these differences of opinion.”

“Jewish scholars have traditionally argued in favor of majority rule as the best method for resolving these conflicts. In the Talmud, the biblical phrase *aharei rabbim lehattot* (‘to follow a multitude’) was converted into a decisive rule: ‘Where there is a controversy between an individual and the many, the *halakhab* follows the many.’ The halakhic opinion that has prevailed is that the law is decided in accordance with the view expressed by a majority of the scholars, and this is so even if in a particular matter a heavenly voice should declare that the law is according to the minority opinion. The individual holding the minority view may continue to express his opinion, but it is not binding on the community.”

“Many Jewish authorities have, however, argued that a minority opinion is to be preferred over a majority opinion if the scholars holding the minority view possess the greater wisdom. These authorities have argued that often a single individual of outstanding scholarship might better understand an issue of law than a whole group of less learned people. But this principle would then create the problem of how to decide which scholars are more learned than others, and Judaism has generally rejected this point of view. For example, the *Shulban Arukh*, the authoritative code of Jewish law, states that the determination of *halakhab* is generally made by application of the principle of majority rule.”

“As regards the election of public office holders, most scholars have argued for majority rule as well, and have rejected the idea that only the wealthy or learned members of a community be allowed to participate in voting, thus ‘it makes no difference whether this majority is composed of rich or poor, of scholars or the common people.’ In recent times, halakhic scholars continue to believe that every vote carries equal weight. Throughout history, Jewish community and religious leaders were elected by a vote of the community.”

“From the political point of view, the people of Israel have more often been ruled by monarchies than by democratic forms of government. The Book of Deuteronomy makes provision for the people of Israel to have a king, but insists that the king must rule by law and ‘that his heart be not lifted up above his brethren.’ In biblical times, the Israelites believed that their government had to derive from God. Thus, when Moses accepted the advice of his father-in-law Jethro to appoint leaders, he first obtained God's permission and then, with God's authority, appointed judges. Later, the people rejected the advice of the prophet Samuel and insisted on having a king -- this led to the reign of Saul, followed by that of David. In spite of this, Jewish law

still states that decisions are to be made and conflicts to be resolved according to the principle of majority rule.”

“Israel is a democratic country. Its governing legislative body is the Knesset (parliament), whose 120 members are elected by a system of direct proportional representation. The right to vote is extended to all Israelis of 18 or older.”

(Encyclopædia Judaica Jr.)

For the religious Jews, the varied opinions of the Jewish society, as noted above, lead to one conclusion. Eventually, the Lord, the King of Kings must rule. The conflicts posed by enemies, usually driven by dictatorial mentalities, challenge the prophetic future of modern Israel just as Amlici, the Lamanites and others challenged the people of Nephi and their prophets, judges and leaders. The Book of Mormon presents an account of success over enemies based on following the Lord’s counsel through his appointed leaders. Their rule gives us a model for our anticipated rule by the King of Kings.

It will be a rule of love with equality, justice and mercy. The will of the people will be tied to their will to obey the higher laws of heaven, a theocracy.

“Have Ye Received His Image in Your Countenances?”

Lesson
22

Alma 5–7

Scripture Summary: *To gain salvation, men must repent and keep the commandments, be born again, cleanse their garments through the blood of Christ, be humble and strip themselves from pride and envy, and do the works of righteousness—The Good Shepherd calleth his people—Those who do evil works are children of the devil—Alma testifies of the truth of his doctrine and commands men to repent—Names of the righteous shall be written in the book of life.*

The Church in Zarahemla is cleansed and set in order—Alma goes to Gideon to preach.

Christ shall be born of Mary—He shall loose the bands of death and bear the sins of his people—Those who repent, are baptized, and keep the commandments shall have eternal life—Filthiness cannot inherit the kingdom of God—Humility, faith, hope, and charity are required. [About 83 B.C.]

Supplemental

Holy Land and Judaic Insights: The mighty change that Alma speaks of comes from being chosen of God because of a person’s goodness, repentance and willingness to serve Him. That change is a result of individual effort as well as the “believing blood” that flows through generations.

“What then is believing blood? It is the blood that flows in the veins of those who are the literal seed of Abraham -- not that the blood itself believes, but that those born in that lineage have both the right and a special spiritual capacity to recognize, receive, and believe the truth. The term is simply a beautiful, a poetic, and a symbolic way of referring to the seed of Abraham to whom the promises were made. It identifies those who developed in pre-existence the talent to recognize the truth and to desire righteousness.” *(Bruce R. McConkie, A New Witness for the Articles of Faith, p.38 - p.39)*

“Israel the chosen seed; Israel the Lord's people; Israel the only nation since Abraham that had worshiped Jehovah; Israel the children of the prophets; Israel who had been cursed and scattered for her sins; Israel in whose veins believing blood flows -- the Israel of God shall be gathered, and fed, and nurtured, and saved, in the last days! Let there be no misunderstanding about this; salvation is of the Jews, and if there are believing Gentiles, they will be adopted into the believing family and inherit with the chosen seed. ‘And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.’ (Rom. 11:26-27.) But sadly: ‘They are not all Israel, which are of Israel’ (Rom. 9:6), and only those who turn to their God and accept him as the Promised Messiah shall inherit with the chosen seed either in time or in eternity.” *(Bruce R. McConkie, The Mortal Messiah, Vol.4, p.332)*

What physical attribute would a mighty change have on a person, then? That might have been explained by the discovery that certain men among Jewish families have a genetic imprint that identifies them not only as part of the original people of Israel, but specifically

those who once carried priesthood responsibilities. The following article appeared in the Jerusalem Post as well as the New York Times.

“In an unusual marriage of science and religion, researchers have found biological evidence in support of an ancient belief: certain Jewish men, thought to be descendants of the first high priest, Aaron, the older brother of Moses, share distinctive genetic traits, suggesting that they indeed members of a single lineage that has endured for thousands of years.

The men are known as Jewish priests, a designation that since the time of Aaron 3,300 years ago has been passed down through the generations, exclusively from fathers to sons. The only way to become a priest is to be born the son of one. They differ from rabbis, though a priest may choose to become a rabbi. Historically, certain blessings and rituals could be performed only by priests, and some congregations today still follow that tradition.

Many priests have the surname Cohen or Kohen, which in Hebrew means priest, or related names like Kahn or Kahane. Those with other surnames generally have the words ‘ha’kohen,’ for ‘the priest’ inscribed on their gravestones, sometimes with an image of hands raised in a characteristic gesture of blessing. Even in families where priests no longer perform the traditional religious duties, knowledge of the heritage is often preserved.

It was the patrilineal nature of Jewish priesthood that piqued the curiosity of a research team from Israel, England, Canada and the United States. Knowing that another bit of a man's identity is also passed strictly from father to son -- namely, the Y chromosome, which carries the gene for maleness -- they set out to determine whether that chromosome might carry special features that would link the priests to each other and set them apart from other men, confirming the priests' unique paternal lineage.

‘I think anybody who knows the biblical story about Aaron and this tradition of the priesthood going from father to son, and is aware that the Y chromosome is inherited in the same way, would think of this question,’ said Dr. Michael Hammer, a geneticist at the University of Arizona in Tucson, and an author of a report about the priests in the current issue of the journal Nature.

A unique aspect of the Y chromosome that lends itself to this sort of research is that the Y does not swap stretches of DNA with other chromosomes. Changes that occur in the Y tend to persist in a lineage over time, and, Dr. Hammer said, ‘We can use that to interpret historical events.’ In a study published in 1995, he and his colleagues used segments of the chromosome to suggest that all men living today can be traced back to a common ancestor 188,000 years ago.

The subjects of the current study were 188 Jewish men from Israel, North America and England. The researchers did not rely on surnames to identify priests, but

instead asked the men if they had been told they were priests. Sixty-eight had, and the rest identified themselves as 'Israelites,' a term used to describe laymen. (Men who said they were Levites, members of a different priesthood, were omitted from the study.)

The researchers obtained Y chromosomes by extracting them from cell samples scraped from the men's mouths. They studied two sites, or markers -- known variable regions of DNA -- to find out whether the priests and Israelites differed.

They did. Only 1.5 percent of the priests, as opposed to 18.4 percent of the laymen, had the first marker. The other marker, which could appear in five different forms, tended to occur most often in one version in the priests. Fifty-four percent of the priests had this version and 33 percent of the others had it.

'The simplest, most straightforward explanation is that these men have the Y chromosome of Aaron,' said Dr. Karl Skorecki, a coauthor of the report who conducts genetic research at the Technion-Israel Institute of Technology, in Haifa. 'The study suggests that a 3,000-year-old oral tradition was correct, or had a biological counterpart.' There are at least 350,000 priests around the world today with that same chromosome, he and his colleagues estimate, about 5 percent of the Jewish male population. They are all related, Dr. Hammer said, and could be considered distant cousins on their fathers' side. 'It's a beautiful example of how father-to-son transmission of two things, one genetic and one cultural, gives you the same picture,' Dr. Hammer said.

The study also supports the idea that the priesthood was established before the world Jewish population split into two major groups 1,000 years ago, as a result of migrations. The marker findings in the priests were similar in Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jews, indicating that the priesthood antedated the division.

Asked to comment on the study, Dr. James Lupski, a medical geneticist at the Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, said: 'It's amazing to think how you can use these technologies to investigate history and evolution. They took a very interesting approach that will certainly be useful for studying the Y chromosome. And a report like this is going to stimulate interest, stimulate other groups around the world to confirm it in a different way.'

Dr. Hammer said he did not know whether the chromosome testing used in the study would be of interest to anyone other than scientists. But, he said, 'I do know someone named Cohen who said he'd be interested, in having the test, just to find out if he was really a priest.' At this point, the test could suggest that a man was a priest, but not prove it. It could, however, rule out the possibility with a high degree of certainty.

'It could say your DNA is not consistent with patrilineal descent from a common ancestor, Aaron,' Dr. Skorecki said. 'Whether the religious community would accept that as grounds for exclusion is not an issue I'd want to get into. It's for the rabbis to debate.' Rabbi Aaron Panken, of the Hebrew Union College Jewish Institute of Religion in Manhattan, said: 'There's a lot of danger in this for religious fanatics to go off in different directions. It could become a tool for fundamentalists to try to weed out who is not a Cohen, and that would be troublesome.' In addition, Rabbi Panken said, because priests were traditionally banned from marrying divorced women, he could imagine fundamentalist groups demanding DNA testing before permitting any man to marry a divorced woman, to make sure the man was not a priest. 'It would also concern me if we began to look backwards,' he said, 'romanticizing the hereditary model of priestly leadership. Do we want a hereditary leadership pattern in the Jewish community? We haven't had that in 2,000 years.'" *(Denise Grady, The New York Times, Tuesday, January 7, 1997)*

Now, combine the ability to make a genetic identification with the mighty spiritual change that Alma speaks of and wonder how mighty it is. Does it change you completely, "wholistically?" How exciting it would be for the same genetic study to be made on Latter-day Saints who have been given the priesthood. Mormons claim a blood descendancy from the biblical tribes of Israel and function in restored priestly Temple rites.

"We are the chosen people, the elect of God, those in whose veins flows believing blood. Abraham is our father. We are the children of the prophets and have been born in the house of Israel. Isaac and Jacob are our forebears. We are the children of the covenant God made with Abraham, that Abraham's seed should have the right to the gospel and the priesthood and eternal life. There is no blessing ever offered to the ancients that is not ours to obtain. 'If God be for us who can be against us! Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?' (Romans 8:31, 33.)" *(Bruce R. McConkie, A New Witness for the Articles of Faith, p.40)*

The latter-day Temples hold the sacred secrets of what was, what is and what will be. Could part of the secret of the mighty change be seen in LDS genetics, in that our blood would be changed - cleansed?

"Our work is to . . . to build more temples; to free ourselves from the blood and sins of this generation; to keep the commandments; to stand in holy places; to remain on the highway the Lord has cast up whereon gathered Israel may march to their Millennial Zion. Our work is to prepare a people for the Second Coming. Temples must be built in Old Jerusalem and in the New Jerusalem. And when all things are accomplished, the Great Jehovah will say the work is done. Until then we have no choice but to use our means, talents, and time in the building up of the Lord's work on earth and the establishment of Zion." *(Bruce R. McConkie, A New Witness for the Articles of Faith, p.577)*

“More Than One Witness”

Lesson 23

Alma 8–12

Scripture Summary: *Alma preaches and baptizes in Melek—He is rejected in Ammonihab and leaves—An angel commands him to return and cry repentance unto the people—He is received by Amulek, and the two of them preach in Ammonihab. [About 82 B.C.]*

Alma commands the people of Ammonihab to repent—The Lord will be merciful to the Lamanites in the last days—If the Nephites forsake the light, they shall be destroyed by the Lamanites—The Son of God soon cometh—He shall redeem those who repent and are baptized and have faith in his name.

Lehi descended from Manasseh—Amulek recounts the angelic command that he care for Alma—The prayers of the righteous cause the people to be spared—Unrighteous lawyers and judges lay the foundation of the destruction of the people.

Nephite coinage set forth—Amulek contends with Zeezrom—Christ will not save people in their sins—Only those who inherit the kingdom of heaven are saved—All men shall rise in immortality—There is no death after the resurrection.

Alma contends with Zeezrom—The mysteries of God can be given only to the faithful—Men are judged by their thoughts, beliefs, words, and works—The wicked shall suffer a spiritual death—This mortal life is a probationary state—The plan of redemption brings to pass the resurrection and, through faith, a remission of sins—The repentant have a claim on mercy through the Only Begotten Son. [About 82 B.C.]

Supplemental

Holy Land and Judaic Insights:

The opening statement of Alma, chapter eight, refers to the “order of the Church.” The Lord always had an order of governing the affairs of his dealings with his children. Modern Judaism struggles with a lack of religious order. There are many disputations among Jews themselves about the interpretations of Jewish law, yet the State of Israel provides a framework that is supposed to allow religious freedom.

“Israel's Declaration of Independence guarantees religious freedom and the safeguarding of holy places for all peoples ‘without distinction of creed, race or sex.’ And, in fact, communities from all the major religions of the world live side by side in Israel, attending their own centers of worship and maintaining their own traditions. The Ministry of Religious Affairs works closely with religious leaders of all denominations to ensure religious equality. Each religious community has its own courts with jurisdiction over personal matters, and their own community schools, should parents opt for a religious education.”

“Nevertheless, the problem of maintaining a balance between the religious and the secular has caused problems in Israel and has been the subject of many political disputes. For example, the Orthodox wing believes that all traffic and public works should stop on the Sabbath. The non-religious, however, feel that this is tantamount to forcing religious observance on others. This results in a certain amount of inconsistency in national policy. In Jerusalem, no buses run on Sabbath while in Haifa there is public transport on that day. In the cities, some cafes and places of entertainment, such as movie houses, are open on the Sabbath. Yet, there are certain Orthodox neighborhoods completely blocked off to all vehicles, both public and private.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

The State of Israel has established a legal system based on Biblical law yet it is greatly influenced by the British system of Law established during the Mandate period prior to Israel becoming a state. Some modern/biblical considerations of legal terms follow. The first includes information about witnesses. That is followed by some insight about lawyers and “pleaders.”

“The laws involving witness are many. Not all people are qualified to testify before the court. Among those not admissible are slaves, minors (before bar mitzvah), lunatics, the deaf and dumb, the blind, criminals who have not repented their crime, relatives of any party involved in the case or the judges, one who stands to gain from his testimony, and, in certain cases, women.”

“Any person who has seen the event but does not testify is liable to punishment which will be meted out to him by God. In criminal cases the witness is under obligation to testify of his own accord; in civil cases the duty to testify arises only when the man is summoned to do so.”

“The court warns the witnesses that bearing false witness is a serious crime and each witness is investigated and interrogated separately in order to make sure that he is not lying. If it is established that the witnesses have testified falsely, they are disqualified from ever bearing witness again and, under certain circumstances . . . the same punishment the accused would have received had he been convicted. If one witness should contradict another, or say something contradicted by fact --- the testimony is rejected. The Bible declares that in order to convict, the evidence must be given by at least two witnesses. However, in certain cases such as those requiring an oath, a single witness is valid. A testimony must be given by the witness himself and not by another who says that he heard such a testimony. Acceptable witnesses who sign a document render it valid.”

“Halakhic requirements of the marriage ceremony include: the *huppah* (canopy); the giving of the ring by the groom to the bride in the presence of two valid witnesses.”

“Today in courts in most countries, it is common practice to ‘swear in’ all witnesses. Jewish law never adopted this custom, preferring to accept testimony without the administration of an oath, as long as there were at least two witnesses who corroborated each other's testimony, as well as other supportive evidence. Testimony given under oath was, in fact, considered to be a particularly weak form of evidence, and it was only accepted when there was a complete lack of some thing better. When the judicial oath was administered, it was only used in civil cases and then not to the witnesses but to the defendant, or less often, to the plaintiff. In capital cases, a judicial oath was never administered, since it was assumed that no one charged with a capital crime could be believed, even under oath.”

“In Jewish law, perjury can only be proven by the evidence of two other witnesses who both testify that the perjurer could not have been present at the time and place he claims. These second witnesses must give their evidence in the presence of the

first witness. Only in this way can the charge of perjury be leveled: if the second witnesses simply disagree with the first but cannot break his alibi, or if the second witnesses do not offer their refutation in front of the first, this constitutes not perjury, but contradiction in which case all the evidence is disregarded.”

“The punishment for perjury is laid down in Deuteronomy 19:19--21: ‘You shall do to him as he schemed to do to his fellow (i.e., the accused).’ There was considerable discussion on the death sentence for perjurers, complicated by a debate on whether a perjurer who had intended to kill by his false testimony, but had not in fact succeeded in doing so, was himself liable for execution. The law was interpreted to mean that a perjurer should suffer what he had schemed to do, not what had occurred, but in practice the death sentence was rarely carried out for any offense . . . perjurers were usually fined or flogged . . . never allowed to act as witnesses again . . . convictions for perjury were widely publicized.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

The term “Rabbi” used to mean one trained in the law, or in other words, a lawyer. The higher degrees of Rabbi would have been the judges and court leaders.

“During the 19th century, the functions of the rabbi began to change and many communities demanded that their leaders be versed not only in Talmud and Jewish law but also in secular studies. To meet these new conditions, rabbinical seminaries were organized, issuing a variety of ‘rabbinical degrees.’”

“The Hebrew word for court is *bet din* (plural: *battei din*), which literally means ‘house of judgment’; in rabbinic literature it is the term for a Jewish court of law. We find *battei din* which handle the legal problems of the Israelites from the times of Moses. The rule of the law is an important principle of Judaism. The Torah stresses that justice must not be meted out by the parties themselves but must be administered by impartial judges.”

“The courts would deal with criminal law as well as all cases between two parties such as for damages and inheritance, decide on the status of individuals and objects as far as purity and *kashrut* were concerned, besides clarifying such laws as those regarding the Sabbath and festivals.”

“Rabbinic courts continued to be established even when the Jews went into exile. In those countries of exile where the Jews enjoyed judicial autonomy the rabbinical courts dealt with all matters and also imposed the special regulations made by the community. In some countries, cases involving both Christians and Jews could be heard by the *bet din* as long as an equal number of Christian and Jewish witnesses, or an equal number of judges were involved. The *bet din* followed Jewish Law, except in such matters as taxes or pledges of loans, which were often disposed of according to the law of the land. In some countries the Jewish legal system was under the jurisdiction of an officially appointed chief rabbi. In the modern period when such autonomy has disappeared, the function of the *bet din* has been limited to purely

religious matters. Nevertheless, throughout the ages Jews have been encouraged to bring their disputes before a *bet din* rather than a secular court, and in the Middle Ages any Jew turning to a secular court to decide a dispute with another Jew was considered a traitor to the Jewish people.”

“In Israel today, where an elaborate network of *battei din* has been established under the Supreme Rabbinical Court of Israel, the term *bet din* has come to mean the rabbinic court which has, by act of the Knesset, jurisdiction in matters of personal status in addition to its normal religious function.”

“In a *bet din* there were no lawyers either for the defense or the prosecution. The judges themselves questioned the witnesses and the parties involved and arrived at their own conclusions. In the State of Israel, however, there are men who are known as ‘pleaders’ who represent people appearing before the *bet din*.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

The history of disputations or polemics is common in Judaism, both biblically and in more recent times. The arguments, proving and disproving, appeared both positively and negatively, for and against, the Jews. It is human nature, yet more so, a characteristic of Jewish culture to have two-sided debates.

“Throughout history Jews have often been called on to defend their faith against non-believers in public debates known as disputations or polemics. Often these disputations were conducted in friendly atmospheres of mutual respect, but all too often these debates took on aspects of bitterness.”

“The developing rift between Christianity and Judaism and the animosity after their final split in the second century C.E. produced many great disputations. A crucial one occurred about the time of the Bar Kokhba revolt (c. 135 C.E.) between the Christian Justin Martyr and the Jew Tryphon. While the two adversaries expressed friendship toward each other, the argument became bitter.”

“Christian-Jewish disputation continued and Muslim-Jewish debates, which began in the 10th century, developed as well. Questions concerning the text of the Bible and Jewish way of life were discussed. The Jews questioned the Koran's value and attacked Muhammad in the process.”

“Nahmanides defended Judaism at the famous Disputation of Barcelona in 1263. Fearlessly questioning the nature of Christian authority and teaching, Nahmanides asked why, if the Messiah had come, the world was still torn by war. He was declared the victor and given a monetary prize for his efforts.”

“Disputations still occurred in the 20th century. Franz Rosenzweig corresponded with the Christian philosopher Eugene Rosenstock Huessy, and Martin Buber was in disputation with Karl Ludwig Schmidt as the anti-Jewish laws were being implemented in Germany in 1933. In the face of Nazi Germany, Buber declared: ‘We also know, as we know that there exists air that we take into our lungs, that

there exists the plane on which we move; nay, deeper, more truly we know that world history has not yet been probed to its roots, that the world is not yet redeemed.' These disputations have traditionally seen some of history's most elegant and powerful defenses of the Jewish faith."

"Within Judaism the polemics, or scholarly arguments, have been almost as bitter. From the Talmudic period when the Sadducees and Samaritans were in dispute with traditional Judaism, disputes have been frequent. Purely halakhic and rabbinic disputes were usually dealt within question-and-answer and other literary forms. However, battles over Kabbalah, ordination of rabbis and Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed* were more substantial. The fiercest controversies in Jewish history were those arising over Shabbateanism." (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Shabbetai Zvi, (1626-1676), was one who claimed to be the Messiah and eventually led a failing Aliyah (immigration) to the land of Israel.

"Shabbateanism, the movement which arose around him, was one of the largest of the messianic movements. The extreme zeal of his supporters as well as his detractors nearly tore Judaism apart and the movement continued to be influential for over two centuries." (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Another noteworthy disputation came from the "Satmar Rabbi." He argued that the Aliyah to the Land of Israel was an evil trick and thus against God's will. He felt that the establishment of Israel as a modern nation was wrong.

"Satmar (is the) name of a small, contemporary Hasidic sect, distinguished by its fanatical opposition to Zionism and the State of Israel. It takes its name from the hometown of its leader, Joel Teitelbaum of Satmar (1888--1979), and most of its adherents reside in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn, New York."

"Teitelbaum was an exceedingly sharp polemicist who combined extreme fanaticism with a forceful personality . . . he regarded the Holocaust of European Jews as a direct punishment for secular Zionism . . . Teitelbaum opposed the use of Hebrew as a spoken language, since he believed that it secularized and profaned the holy tongue. He forbade the Hasidim living in his community to cooperate with State institutions and he ordered those living in Israel not to take the oath of loyalty to the State, not to take part in elections, and not to make use of its law courts or legal system." (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

These kinds of disputations have drawn Jews away from dialogues with believers in Jesus, the Messiah. Disputations require some learning of the other's point of view. Jews know very little about Jesus' restoration of the original order that Father in Heaven gave Adam and his children. However, in the last days, more and more Jews are becoming aware that religious order was restored from time to time throughout history and that there may need for a final restoration that has to happen in these latter-days. These restorations consistently review the "beginning to the end," the plan of salvation, the true order of God.

Lesson
24

“Give Us Strength According to Our Faith”

Alma 13–16

Scripture Summary: *Men are called as high priests because of their exceeding faith and good works—They are to teach the commandments—Through righteousness they are sanctified and enter into the rest of the Lord—Melchizedek was one of these—Angels are declaring glad tidings throughout the land—They will reveal the actual coming of Christ. [About 82 B.C.]*

Alma and Amulek are imprisoned and smitten—The believers and their holy scriptures are burned by fire—These martyrs are received by the Lord in glory—The prison walls are rent and fall—Alma and Amulek are delivered and their persecutors are slain. [About 82—81 B.C.]

Alma and Amulek go to Sidom and establish a church—Alma heals Zeezrom, who joins the Church—Many are baptized and the Church prospers—Alma and Amulek go to Zarahemla. [About 81 B.C.]

The Lamanites destroy the people of Ammonihab—Zoram leads the Nephites to victory over the Lamanites—Alma and Amulek and many others preach the word—They teach that after his resurrection Christ will appear to the Nephites. [About 81—78 B.C.]

Supplemental Holy Land and Judaic Insights:

Alma teaches, as prophets taught in the past and as they teach today, to look forward to the past! In other words, our memory must be “before” us so that we can learn from the past. At the same time, our future is before us as well. In that way we have the advantage of a “wide screen” view of life.

“ . . . again, my brethren, I would cite your minds forward to the time when the Lord God gave these commandments unto his children; and I would that ye should remember . . .” (*Alma 13:1*)

In the last lesson we looked at the “Order of the Church.” Alma also speaks of it as the “Order of the Son.” He teaches us to look forward to the redemption. As we are using the past to define our forward progress, it stands to reason that our earth life was preceded by a past, or in other words, a pre-earth life. Today, this is a doctrine quite unique to Latter-day Saints, yet it is scriptural. The concept of pre-earth life can be found in Jewish writing before Maimonides (about eight hundred years ago) and among the Dead Sea Scrolls (about two thousand years ago).

I think that the term “foundation of the world” presupposes “before now,” even a pre-earth-as-we-know-it existence.

“Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands.” (*Psalms 102:25*)

“Mine hand also hath laid the foundation of the earth . . .” (*Isaiah 48:13*)

“ . . . the LORD, which stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him.” (*Zechariah 12:1*)

“Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.”
(Jeremiah 1:5)

“. . . for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.” *(John 17:24)*

God’s time has a differentiation to man’s time. God is without beginning or ending of days (man’s days).

“And thou art after the order of him who was without beginning of days or end of years, from all eternity to all eternity.” *(JST Genesis 6:70)*

“Therefore, unto this parable I will liken all these kingdoms, and the inhabitants thereof--every kingdom in its hour, and in its time, and in its season, even according to the decree which God hath made.” *(Doctrine & Covenants 88:61)*

Another consideration is that God’s math has a differentiation to man’s math. Man will think that 100% goes further than 90%. Yet God’s instruction is to bring the tithes, 10%, to him and that the remaining 90% will go further than the 100% could. Alma reminds the people that Melchizedek paid tithes. Those tithes were part of the true order of things. The Jewish view of tithing still has some biblical meaning even though Jews do not have an order or organized way of collecting and distributing tithes. The Hebrew words used for tithes are: *terumat*, “heave offerings,” and *ma’aserot*, “tithes.”

“During Temple times Israelites would set aside a portion of their agricultural products as tithes which were given to the priests, Levites, and alternately to the poor or were to be taken to Jerusalem and eaten there. The Bible only prescribes tithes for grain, wine and oil, but the rabbis extended this obligation to cover all agricultural and horticultural produce.”

“Before the produce was considered fit for consumption, a small amount was first set aside for the priest: this was called *terumah gedolah* (‘major heave offering’). The Bible itself does not stipulate a fixed amount but the rabbis said, ‘A generous person will give a fortieth, an average man a fiftieth, and a mean person a sixtieth.’ From what remained, a tenth was set aside for the Levite: this was known as *ma’aser rishon* (‘first tithe’); from this, the Levite himself would separate a tenth for the priest, called *terumat ma’aser* (‘heave offering from the tithe’). During the third and sixth years of the seven-year sabbatical cycle, a special tithe was given to the poor, consisting of one-tenth of what remained, and called *ma’aser ani* (‘tithe for the poor’). In the other years of the cycle, the poor man’s tithe was not separated, but instead a second tithe (*ma’aser sheni*) was taken and either set aside to be eaten later in Jerusalem or redeemed for a sum of money which would be used to buy food in Jerusalem, to be consumed there.”

“The tithes served the purpose of supporting the priest and Levite who did not have any ancestral holdings of land and were occupied with the Temple service and other ritual duties, of supporting the poor, and of strengthening the position of Jerusalem

in the consciousness of all the people of Israel. Basing themselves on the close similarity in sound between the words *te'aser* (give tithes) and *til'asher* (become rich), Rabbi Johanan said: 'Give tithes so that you will become rich,' and Rabbi Akiva added that, 'tithes are a fence which guards one's riches.' After the exile from Erez Israel, pious people became accustomed to give one-tenth of their earnings to charity, although this 'tithe' is of comparatively modern origin."

"It is still customary among Orthodox Jews to set aside tithes from all produce of the Land of Israel, and the produce marketed by Tnuva, the large agricultural collective, is tithed at source before it is sold. The *terumah* part is either destroyed or used as fodder for animals owned by priests; because they are ritually unclean, the *kohanim* themselves cannot eat it. The other tithes are distributed to the poor and needy."

"Included in the commandments of tithing was the obligation to set aside a tithe of dough for baking, called *hallah*, to be given to the priest. Nowadays it is customary to set aside an olive's bulk from the dough and burn it."

"The priests were allowed no share in the land; in compensation certain benefits were assigned to them and these originally formed their sole source of income. 48 towns in various parts of Erez Israel were allocated for their residence. Those who found no employment in the Temple earned their livelihood through teaching as they traveled throughout the country. For the maintenance of the Levites, a tenth (tithe) of all the early produce was set aside for them. The Levites in turn contributed to the priests a tenth part of that which they had received from the people (*ma'aser min ha-ma'aser*)."
(Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

In ancient days, the Levites carried the responsibility of the priesthood. There may have been exceptions such as Nazirites who may have had priestly duties (in that they were not allowed to be by or touch the dead) yet were not from the tribe of Levi. Today, for the Jews, the priesthood is still not an acquired, but a hereditary, right.

"All priests (*kohanim*) and Levites (*levi'im*) are descendants of the tribe of Levi, but priests are a distinct sub-group, the heirs of Aaron, the first High Priest. The distinction given to the tribe of Levi to serve as Levites is explained in the Bible as having been based on their zealotry toward God after the sin of the Golden Calf. Aaron's special distinction as priest was based upon his being Moses' brother and his role as Moses' mouthpiece before Pharaoh. The importance of maintaining the hereditary integrity of the priesthood can be seen from the fact that when the Jews returned from the Babylonian captivity after the destruction of the First Temple, all those who claimed priestly rank but were unable to produce documentary evidence of their descent from Aaron were disqualified (Ezra 2:62)."

"The principal duties of the priests were those connected with performing the sacrificial service. They would also serve as teachers and instructors in the laws of

the Torah. In the course of time, the number of priests increased to such an extent that it was necessary to divide them into twenty-four groups. Each group (*mishmar*) served in the Temple in rotation, one for each week. In addition, each group was subdivided into several families who each served one day. This arrangement gave every priest an opportunity of discharging his duty. However, at the three main annual festivals, Passover, Shavuot and Sukkot, all the twenty-four divisions officiated simultaneously.”

“Levites were entitled to serve at the sanctuary as assistants to the priests. Their duties included serving as custodians of the sanctuary, as musicians, judges, scribes and teachers.”

“In the course of time, the real control of priestly pedigrees has been replaced by family tradition. The duties and privileges of priests are now limited to pronouncing the priestly benediction on festivals (and Sabbaths in Israel), the symbolic redemption of the firstborn males on the 31st day after birth (*pidyon ha-ben*) and the precedence of a *kohen* at functions such as the Torah reading.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

The idea of calling for a “Kohen” when the Torah reading is done implies the special spiritual nature that the priests had to understand the word of God. In Alma’s day, the lawyers and judges of the land rejected the priestly teachings and those who accepted them. Their persecution and ultimate death was a martyrdom that resulted in their heavenly reward.

“Jewish history is replete with examples of those willing to die for their faith from Shadrach, Meshach and Abednigo, who in the Book of Daniel refused to worship an idol and thus endangered their lives, up to the present generation of Soviet Jews who suffer indescribable hardships rather than give up their Jewishness. Under Antiochus Epiphanes, Hellenizers applied violent methods toward the Jews. The Fourth Book of Maccabees is almost entirely a sermon on the meaning and glory of self-sacrifice. Whereas in Christian and Muslim thought martyrdom is chiefly regarded as the act of individuals warranting canonization as saints, in Judaism it remains a task for each and every Jew to fulfill if the appropriate moment should come.”

“Rabbinic tradition teaches that Rabbi Akiva (second century C.E.), just before he was tortured to death by the Romans, recited the *Shema*, explaining to his pupils that he now understood what it meant to love God with all one's heart, soul and might. Ever since, many who have sacrificed their lives because of their religious beliefs, have done so with the *Shema* on their lips.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

There is a wall sculpture at Yad Vashem, the Holocaust memorial in Jerusalem, that carries a similar message. Naphtali Bezem’s sculpture includes a panel depicting the Jews being brought into the slave/extermination camps. Underneath is a “broken woman” representing

the broken Jewish family line. Next to her is a broken fish with wings. A fish is sometimes used as an art metaphor for the spirit. Its wings seem to represent an ascension to heaven, a reward for martyrdom. It reminds me of Alma's response to Amulek's plea to have Alma use his prophetic priestly power to stop the carnage.

“But Alma said unto him: The Spirit constraineth me that I must not stretch forth mine hand; for behold the Lord receiveth them up unto himself, in glory; and he doth suffer that they may do this thing, or that the people may do this thing unto them, according to the hardness of their hearts, that the judgments which he shall exercise upon them in his wrath may be just; and the blood of the innocent shall stand as a witness against them, yea, and cry mightily against them at the last day.”
(Alma 14:11)

Not a thing will escape our memories. Yet, for those who turn to Him, The Lord stands by every harrowing recollection with peace, power, comfort and salvation.

“The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound;” *(Isaiah 61:1)*

“They Taught with Power and Authority of God”

Alma 17–22

Scripture Summary: *The sons of Mosiah have the spirit of prophecy and of revelation—They go their several ways to declare the word to the Lamanites—Ammon goes to the land of Ishmael and becomes the servant of King Lamoni—Ammon saves the king’s flocks and slays his enemies at the waters of Sebus. [From about 91 to 77 B.C.]*

King Lamoni supposes that Ammon is the Great Spirit—Ammon teaches the king of the creation, of God’s dealings with men, and of the redemption that comes through Christ—Lamoni believes and falls to the earth as if dead. [About 90 B.C.]

Lamoni receives the light of everlasting life and sees the Redeemer—His household fall into a trance, and some see angels—Ammon is preserved miraculously—He baptizes many and establishes a church among them. [About 90 B.C.]

The Lord sends Ammon to Middoni to deliver his imprisoned brethren—Ammon and Lamoni meet Lamoni’s father, who is king over all the land—Ammon compels the old king to approve the release of his brethren. [About 90 B.C.]

Aaron teaches the Amalekites about Christ and his atonement—Aaron and his brethren are imprisoned in Middoni—After their deliverance they teach in the synagogues and make many converts—Lamoni grants religious freedom to the people in the land of Ishmael. [Between 90 and 77 B.C.]

Aaron teaches Lamoni’s father about the creation, the fall of Adam, and the plan of redemption through Christ—The king and all his household are converted—How the land was divided between the Nephites and the Lamanites. [Between 90 and 77 B.C.]

Supplemental

Holy Land and Judaic Insights:

The chapters being considered in this lesson deal with proselytizing in a very genuine way. Proselytizing is an anathema to Jews and that is why proselytizing to Jews is considered part of “antisemitism.” Yet, one of the Hasidic groups of the Jews, the Habad, makes quite a “propaganda” effort to convert Jews (and others) to become more orthodox or actually convert to Judaism.

“The uniqueness of Habad lies in the fact that it tries to reach other Jews and, if not to make ‘Habadniks’ out of them, at least to draw them a little closer to Orthodoxy. Habad representatives make regular visits to college campuses and military camps. They conduct a once-a-month kindergarten for a small number of Jewish children who live miles away from the nearest synagogue or Jewish school, and they will even send a *mobel* to circumcise a child on a remote Caribbean island.”

“Habad has developed a widespread network of schools, and it was the first Hasidic group to open yeshivot for the study of Torah and other religious subjects. They are also very active in attempting to help Russian Jews to emigrate to Israel. They run a strong ‘propaganda’ campaign and, in Jerusalem, the tourist visiting the Western Wall is likely to be approached by a Habad Hasid with a pair of *tefillin* in his hand, suggesting that he put them on then and there.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Outside the realm of proselytizing, Israel as a nation, seeks opportunities to be of service to surrounding nations. Recent earthquakes in nearby Turkey and fires in neighboring Cyprus brought scores of Israelis with equipment to their rescue operations. Recent history also includes accounts of Israelis protecting the late King Hussein in neighboring Jordan from assassination attempts.

In the Book of Mormon's accounts of rescues and unusual service, Ammon takes the opportunity afforded him because of his service to the king, to take the King back to the thing he believed (the great spirit) and then bring him forward to an understanding of who the "great spirit" was. We learn something of Ammon's teaching skills, power and authority as he follows the spirit and takes the king back to the creation then forward to prophecies already fulfilled and still anticipated.

I would like to think that Ammon's experience might be a parallel to what may eventually happen to the Jews in Israel. I also see the foundation of the kind of faith described in Ammon's account in some of the people in Israel. I sense that, given a chance to stop and start again, many have the character to follow the Lord's spirit and be part of miraculous experiences. Just look what they've already done without the gifts of spirit and priesthood in building a nation and restoring the land. Modern religious Jews are anticipating the return of prophets (Elijah, Moses, Joseph, and David - just to mention a few) to come with power and authority to restore the ancient kingdom, temple and covenant with God.

The challenges lie in the conflict of ideologies and ethnic misunderstandings of some that are widely echoed in media reports. The father of Lamoni was gripped with the rhetoric and even the "pack of lies" of his days. It created the animosity he felt. That kind of animosity exists in Israel, both with Arabs and Jews, fed by untruths that a few continue to propagate. In some instances, force needs to be used to stop the hatred that develops.

At times, Ammon chose to show his beliefs through force, a force that had righteous intent. In each case, the force was necessary to protect property or to save someone. A look at modern Israel might be compared to these accounts. This could help in determining the length that Israel had to go to, or is going or might yet have to go to in fulfilling its God-given destiny.

"Thou, O Lord, did once move the heart of Cyrus to show favor unto Jerusalem and her children. Do Thou now also be pleased to inspire the hearts of kings and the powers of the earth to look with a friendly eye towards this place, and with a desire to see Thy righteous purposes executed in relation thereto. Let them know that it is Thy good pleasure to restore the kingdom unto Israel raise up Jerusalem as its capital, and constitute her people a distinct nation and government, with David Thy servant, even a descendant from the loins of ancient David to be their king."

"Let that nation or that people who shall take an active part in behalf of Abraham's children, and in the raising up of Jerusalem, find favor in Thy sight. Let not their enemies prevail against them, neither let pestilence or famine overcome them, but let the glory of Israel overshadow them, and the power of the Highest protect them; while that nation or kingdom that will not serve Thee in this glorious work must perish, according to Thy word -- Yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted." (*History of the Church, vol. 4, pp. 456-57.*)

The connection to the past and its recall can often take us beyond our present narrow focus and get beyond our present concerns. Even in their fallen state and distant from their forefather's connection to their homeland, they called a new city, Jerusalem, City of Shalom, City of Peace. Every time peace prevailed, it was as a result of righteous "power and authority." Those that have it . . . want to share it!

“Converted unto the Lord”

Lesson 26

Alma 23–29

Scripture Summary: *Religious freedom is proclaimed—The Lamanites in seven lands and cities are converted—They call themselves Anti-Nephi-Lehies and are freed from the curse—The Amalekites and the Amulonites reject the truth.*

The Lamanites come against the people of God—The Anti-Nephi-Lehies rejoice in Christ and are visited by angels—They choose to suffer death rather than to defend themselves—More Lamanites are converted.

Lamanite aggressions spread—The seed of the priests of Noah perish as Abinadi prophesied—Many Lamanites are converted and join the people of Anti-Nephi-Lehi—They believe in Christ and keep the law of Moses.

Ammon glories in the Lord—The faithful are strengthened by the Lord and are given knowledge—By faith men may bring thousands of souls unto repentance—God has all power and comprehendeth all things.

The Lord commands Ammon to lead the people of Anti-Nephi-Lehi to safety—Upon meeting Alma, Ammon’s joy exhausts his strength—The Nephites give them the land of Jershon—They are called the people of Ammon. [Between 90 and 77 B.C.]

The Lamanites are defeated in a tremendous battle—Tens of thousands are slain—The wicked are consigned to a state of endless woe; the righteous attain a never-ending happiness. [About 76 B.C.]

Alma desires to cry repentance with angelic zeal—The Lord grants teachers for all nations—Alma glories in the Lord’s work and in the success of Ammon and his brethren. [About 76 B.C.]

Supplemental

Holy Land and Judaic Insights:

The proclamation we read about in these chapters of the Book of Mormon, reminds me of a few other outstanding proclamations (among many) that affect Israel as a people.

“Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath the LORD God of heaven given me; and he hath charged me to build him an house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? The LORD his God be with him, and let him go up.”
(2 Chronicles 36:22-23)

The Apostle, Orson Hyde, went to Europe with a proclamation for the Christians and the Jews to heed the restoration and recognize that the keys of the gathering of Israel had been restored to earth as they were given to the Prophet Joseph Smith. Orson Hyde's Credentials to Palestine included the following.

“To all people unto whom these presents shall come, Greeting - Be it known that we, the constituted authorities of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, assembled in Conference at Nauvoo, Hancock county, and state of Illinois, on the sixth day of April, in the year of our Lord, one thousand eight hundred and forty, considering an important event at hand, an event involving the interest and fate of the Gentile nations throughout the world – from the signs of the times and from declarations contained in the oracles of God, we are forced to come to this

conclusion. The Jewish nations have been scattered abroad among the Gentiles for a long period; and in our estimation, the time of the commencement of their return to the Holy Land has already arrived. As this scattered and persecuted people are set among the Gentiles as a sign unto them of the second coming of the Messiah, and also of the overthrow of the present kingdoms and governments of the earth, by the potency of His Almighty arm in scattering famine and pestilence like the frosts and snows of winter, and sending the sword with nation against nation to bathe it in each other's blood; it is highly important, in our opinion, that the present views and movements of the Jewish people be sought after and laid before the American people, for their consideration, their profit and their learning.”

“And feeling it to be our duty to employ the most efficient means in our power to save the children of men from ‘the abomination that maketh desolate,’ we have, by the counsel of the Holy Spirit, appointed Elder Orson Hyde, the bearer of these presents, a faithful and worthy minister of Jesus Christ, to be our Agent and Representative in foreign lands, to visit the cities of London, Amsterdam, Constantinople, and Jerusalem; and also other places that he may deem expedient; and converse with the priests, rulers, and elders of the Jews, and obtain from them all the information possible, and communicate the same to some principal paper for publication, that it may have a general circulation throughout the United States.”

“Given under our hands at the time and place before mentioned. JOSEPH SMITH, Jun., Chairman. ROBERT B. THOMPSON, Clerk” (*History of the Church, Vol.4, Ch.6, p.112-113*)

Joseph Fielding Smith reminds us of a more recent proclamation, prompted by the spirit spreading after the keys of the gathering of Israel were restored.

“The Balfour proclamation thus endorsed by the United States government brought great joy to thousands of downtrodden and persecuted Jews, and under the protection of Great Britain they commenced to gather in Palestine in great numbers, fulfilling partially the words of Isaiah . . .” (*Joseph Fielding Smith, The Restoration of All Things, p.151*)

The Apostle, Orson Hyde also pronounced blessings and “cursings” on those who would help the people of Israel or, on the other hand, who would not help them.

“Let that nation or that people who shall take an active part in behalf of Abraham's children, and in the raising up of Jerusalem, find favor in Thy sight. Let not their enemies prevail against them, neither let pestilence or famine overcome them, but let the glory of Israel overshadow them, and the power of the Highest protect them; while that nation or kingdom that will not serve Thee in this glorious work must perish, according to Thy word---Yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted.” (*History of the Church, Vol.4, Ch.26, p.457*)

Another blessing and curse were discovered in an archaeological excavation along the Dead Sea. Usually curses are not defined, but are mentioned often in Biblical and other Jewish writings.

“Excavations in 1970 brought to light the remains of a Jewish community in the Byzantine period. Their synagogue had a beautiful mosaic floor depicting peacocks eating grapes, and the words ‘Peace on Israel,’ as well as a unique inscription consisting of 18 lines, part of which calls down a curse on ‘anyone causing a controversy between a man and his fellows or who slanders his friends before the gentiles or steals the property of his friends . . .’” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Some Israelis joke that Israel’s curse is its constant source of controversies. One growing controversy is about military involvement. As effective as Israel has been in the past in its military stewardship in maintaining its identity, there is a small but growing number of youth who object to serving in the military. Some of that may be laziness or inconvenience. However, there are some “conscientious objectors.” There may be a growing feeling to get to the turning of “swords to plowshares.”

“And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD’S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.” (*Isaiah 2:2-4*)

Historically, in almost every part of the earth, for those who are angry and have a constant history of fighting, winning or losing made little difference. Once a battle or war would end, they would simply continue to fight someone else. They thrived on the “fighting” more than the “conquering” a particular enemy. Obviously, Alma saw the contrast between sorrow and peace. His wish that he could be an angel to bring more people to peace is poetic. Yet, in Jewish thought, man has more power than an angel!

“. . . angels are assigned to countries, and thus there are angels who must not leave Erez Israel; angels walk upright and speak Hebrew; and they have no needs or free will. Man, because he does have free will and must conquer his evil inclination, is considered more important than the angels.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Alma’s gratitude for the blessings of peace is almost like boasting; however, he acknowledges the power of God and not his own. He gives us a model to follow.

“For although a man may have many revelations, and have power to do many mighty works, yet if he boasts in his own strength, and sets at naught the counsels of

God, and follows after the dictates of his own will and carnal desires, he must fall and incur the vengeance of a just God upon him.” (*Doctrine & Covenants 3:4*)

The opposite is a humility that opens the soul to the mysteries of God. A synonym for “mysteries” is the “subtle understanding” of God’s word. This is available through the “Gift of the Holy Ghost.”

“For he that diligently seeketh shall find; and the mysteries of God shall be unfolded unto them, by the power of the Holy Ghost, as well in these times as in times of old, and as well in times of old as in times to come; wherefore, the course of the Lord is one eternal round.” (*1 Nephi 10:19*)

As the Book of Mormon experiences relate, people with a history of conflict can and did become brothers and sisters. Unfortunately, today Israel is thought of as a nation of conflicting people. Yet, living in Israel, I can say that most Jews and Arabs get along with each other. There are Arabs and Jews that truly love each other. My own home teaching companion was Mohammed AlShiabet from Bethlehem/BetSahour – an Arab and a Jew working for the Lord, in seeking the well being of his children! It is so similar to the Lamanite and Nephite account in the chapters we are studying.

There is an interesting model for today in that a portion of land was given by the Nephites to the “Anti-Nephi-Lehites,” former Lamanites. Protection was also provided for them. The difference in Israel right now is that the Arabs who call themselves Palestinians have not converted nor have they committed to bury their weapons. Many Arabs and Jews in Israel are anxiously awaiting “proclamations” of peace, substantive proclamations that include a departure from fighting and using weapons to express their opinions.

“All Things Denote There Is a God”

Lesson
27

Alma 30–31

Scripture Summary: *Koribor, the antichrist, ridicules Christ, the atonement, and the spirit of prophecy—He teaches that there is no God, no fall of man, no penalty for sin, and no Christ—Alma testifies that Christ shall come and that all things denote there is a God—Koribor demands a sign and is struck dumb—The devil had appeared to Koribor as an angel and taught him what to say—He is trodden down and dies. [About 74 B.C.]*

Alma heads a mission to reclaim the apostate Zoramites—The Zoramites deny Christ, believe in a false concept of election, and worship with set prayers—The missionaries are filled with the Holy Spirit—Their afflictions are swallowed up in the joy of Christ. [About 74 B.C.]

Supplemental

Holy Land and Judaic Insights:

The lesson material begins with a brief description of death, mourning and burial. In Judaism, there has always been a great deal of procedure surrounding death. There is an immediate preparation of the body which includes washing, completely immersing and anointing of the dead. There are periods of mourning. The immediate mourning after death is called Shiva. It is derived from the word for seven and Shiva continues for seven days. Another period of mourning continues on for a month. There is also an annual remembrance of death called Yarzeit.

“When a person dies, the body is covered with a sheet and a lighted candle placed at the head. There is an ancient custom to cover all the mirrors in the house and to pour out any water that was in containers or vessels at the time of death. This latter practice may be the result of superstitious beliefs but it has been suggested that it was a way to tell the neighbors that a death had occurred without having to say the actual words. In strictly Orthodox circles it is customary for men to stay with the body from the time of death until the funeral and recite the Book of Psalms. This is a sign of respect to the deceased.”

There is a certain symbolism to covering the dead with a white sheet. The emblems of the sacrament are covered with a white sheet in remembrance of His death and resurrection. The pouring out of water can also be seen as symbolic of “living water” being removed. It should be noted that mourning is suspended on the Sabbath. To continue the symbolism, it seems that mourning is suspended on Sabbaths so we can reflect on His death and resurrection.

“Shivah . . . is the Hebrew for ‘seven’ and refers to the seven-day period of mourning which starts immediately after the funeral. All those required to mourn stay indoors (normally at the house of the deceased) for the week. They sit on low stools or on the floor and may not wear shoes made of leather. At the funeral, the relatives perform the rite of *keri'ah*, which is making a tear in the lapel of their outer garments. During the week of *shivah* they wear the torn clothes. A very ancient custom is for neighbors and friends to prepare the first meal for the mourners on their return from the funeral.”

“The mourning is suspended for the Sabbath and should a major festival occur during the week, it stops the *shivah* altogether.”

“After the *shivah*, a modified period of mourning continues till the thirtieth (Hebrew: *sheloshim*) day after death. During this period the mourner should not attend places of entertainment or participate in social gatherings. A mourner may not marry during the *sheloshim*. When mourning for parents many of these laws apply for the whole year after death, and a son recites the *Kaddish* at the daily services for the whole year.”

“Yahrzeit . . . is a Yiddish word which comes from the German meaning ‘year-time’ or anniversary. Among Ashkenazi Jews it has come to refer exclusively to the anniversary of the death of a relative for whom one was required to mourn. The anniversary is according to the Hebrew date of death, and so in the secular calendar it will be on different dates each year. Very pious people observe a fast on the *yahrzeit* of parents and it is the general custom that a candle or light is kindled for the whole day, and that a mourner who is able to, leads the daily services on that day. Sons recite the *Kaddish* prayer on the *yahrzeit* of parents.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

There are other occasions of mourning that include remembrance of the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem as well as experiencing blasphemy.

“Tish’ah be-av [is] (the ninth day of the Hebrew month of Av, usually falling within the first week of August) is the traditional day of mourning for the destruction of the Temples in Jerusalem. It is the culmination of the three weeks of mourning that start on the 17th of Tammuz. On Tish'ah be-Av in the year 586 B.C.E., the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar stormed the great Temple built by Solomon, turned its marbled columns and gilded rooms into a useless pile of rubble and exiled Jerusalem's inhabitants.”

“. . . the code of Jewish law, tells us that whoever hears blasphemy in any language from a Jew must tear his garment as if he were in mourning.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

To many Jews, Christian missionary work among the Jews is considered blasphemy and even anti Semitic. There is a certain Rabbi Goldstein in Jerusalem who counteracts this activity by conducting seminars and lectures to refute missionaries and Christian polemics.

“Throughout history Jews have often been called on to defend their faith against non believers in public debates known as disputations or polemics. Often these disputations were conducted in friendly atmospheres of mutual respect, but all too often these debates took on aspects of bitterness.”

“In the Greco-Roman era, pagan polytheism challenged Jewish monotheism. The Mishnah records that pagans asked the Jewish elders in Rome: if God does not desire idolatry, why does He not destroy it? The Jews answered: If men had

worshiped objects unnecessary for the cosmos He would have destroyed those objects, but they worship the sun and moon and the stars and the planets. Should He destroy His world because of fools?” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

There are, however, religious rights in Israel. There are two legal systems, secular and religious so that religious people of some major religions in Israel can take disputes or legal processes to their own judges. The British set up this system before the State of Israel was formed. There are several different religious courts throughout Israel. They include the Orthodox Jews, Moslems, Greek Orthodox, Armenians, Catholics, Syrian Orthodox and the Bahai’s. The Bahai religious courts are the only ones established after the State of Israel was recognized.

It is also important to know that there is NO law in Israel prohibiting proselytizing. An anti missionary society has tried to pass such an anti proselytizing law in Israel but has failed every attempt. The closest thing they managed to bring through the Israeli Knesset is a law prohibiting bribing people to change their religion. (Latter-day Saints don’t pay people to become members. They charge them!) On the other hand, although there are Christian missionaries in Israel, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints does not engage in any proselytizing in Israel. It is their choice. The agreement signed by President Howard W. Hunter and added as an addendum to the lease of property where the BYU Jerusalem Center stands, clearly states that the Church will not engage in missionary activity if it is against the laws of Israel.

The freedom of religion in the Book of Mormon account shows that Korihor became so wrapped up in his polemics that he believed the misinformation he was teaching. Much like the Pharisees in the days of Jesus, he wanted to be given a sign.

“Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas . . .” (*Matthew 12:38-39*)

The Zoramites were so wrapped up in their misinformation that they praised God that they were “better” than others. The Rameumtom they built means a high place. A high place in Hebrew can be called a ramah. Note the similarity of the word ramah and “rama-umptom.”

Alma and his companions praised God for the joy they experienced in a humble way. Their time of joy was filled with the spirit of the Holy Ghost.

Lesson
28

“The Word Is in Christ unto Salvation”

Alma 32–35

Scripture Summary: *Alma teaches the poor whose afflictions had humbled them—Faith is a hope in that which is not seen which is true—Alma testifies that angels minister to men, women, and children—Alma compares the word unto a seed—It must be planted and nourished—Then it grows into a tree from which the fruit of eternal life is picked.*

Zenos taught that men should pray and worship in all places, and that judgments are turned away because of the Son—Zenock taught that mercy is bestowed because of the Son—Moses had lifted up in the wilderness a type of the Son of God.

Amulek testifies that the word is in Christ unto salvation—Unless an atonement is made, all mankind must perish—The whole law of Moses points toward the sacrifice of the Son of God—The eternal plan of redemption is based on faith and repentance—Pray for temporal and spiritual blessings—This life is the time for men to prepare to meet God—Work out your salvation with fear and trembling.

The preaching of the word destroys the craft of the Zoramites—They expel the converts, who then join the people of Ammon in Jersbon—Alma sorrows because of the wickedness of the people. [About 74 B.C.]

Supplemental Holy Land and Judaic Insights:

Alma’s teaching in the streets, homes and synagogues mirrors an openness of religious instruction still typical in the homes, streets and synagogues of Israel. However, the ultimate worship site should be the home. That is where the *Kiddush* (wine and bread ritual) and the ritual of bringing in the Sabbath, *Kabbalat Shabbat* is done. The word Synagogue however, comes from the Greek language. In Hebrew it is called *Bet Knesset*, which means meeting house.

“Throughout the ages, the synagogue has played a major role in the survival of the Jewish nation. It is perhaps the most important institution in Jewish religious and social life. However, there is no exact information about the origins of the synagogue. Some scholars claim that it dates back to the very beginnings of Judaism. Others point to the fact that in the days of the Temple, all sacrifices were accompanied by prayer and so a place of prayer similar to a synagogue must have existed. The most reasonable explanation, however, is that the synagogue originated during the Babylonian exile (586 B.C.E.) when, deprived of the Temple in Jerusalem and feeling deserted in a strange land, the Jews would gather to read the Scriptures and pray for salvation. Upon return to Erez Israel, they brought this tradition back with them, and records from the Second Temple period show that there were then numerous synagogues in existence, including one on the Temple Mount itself.”

“In the first century C.E., the synagogue emerged as a firmly-established institution. It is mentioned in all literary sources of that period, from various parts of the world. When the Second Temple was destroyed in 70 C.E., many of the rituals formerly conducted there were transferred to the synagogue, and organized prayer became the substitute for sacrifice. The sages referred to the synagogue as *mikdash me'at* (‘little sanctuary’), viewing it as a miniature Temple where Jewish congregations all over the world could gather and, to some extent, fill the void left by the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem.

“The remains of numerous synagogues dating back to the first few centuries of the Common Era have been uncovered, attesting to the widespread acceptance of the institution at that time. One of the largest such finds is the synagogue in Capernaum in the Galilee, probably built in the fourth century C.E. It was constructed entirely of stone around a courtyard, with a women's gallery on three sides. The Dura Europos synagogue on the Euphrates river is one of the most famous discoveries of this period. Its decorative frescoes were found almost as clear as when first painted 1,700 years before. And the ruins of the synagogue in Ostia, Italy, constructed at the end of the first century and altered and enlarged during the next 300 years show that it was apparently a lavish edifice decorated in marble and mosaic.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

It should be noted that the ruins of Capernaum's synagogue have evidence going back to Jesus' time. It is evident that a major addition or “remodling” was done later which lasted into the fourth century C.E.

“During the Middle Ages, the social aspect of the synagogue became increasingly important. There was practically no activity in the daily life of the Jew which was not reflected in the life of the synagogue.”

“Any person having a complaint could interrupt the service and petition for redress. Mourners were officially comforted in the synagogue --- a custom which prevails to the present day and the appearance of bridegrooms on the Sabbaths preceding and following their weddings were occasions for congregational rejoicing.”

“In the 18th century, the rise of Hasidism had a definite effect on the synagogue. The Hasidim disapproved of the formality of the synagogue service and so introduced a much more informal atmosphere. They abolished ornate furnishings, salaried officials, and overly structured services.”

“With the Reform movement a century later, the synagogue took a turn in the opposite direction. The Reform synagogues were elaborate, impressive buildings. Many became known as ‘temples’ and included an organ and choir loft.”

“These innovations caused much controversy within Judaism, and were regarded by Orthodoxy as sacrilegious imitations of Christian places of worship. In actual fact, there are very few laws concerning the appearance of the synagogue. *Halakhab* stipulates only that the room must have windows and that the ark which holds the Torah scrolls must be on the wall, facing Jerusalem with the synagogue entrance directly opposite. The law recommends that the site of the synagogue be the highest spot in the city, but this has not always been feasible. Nevertheless, many traditions have arisen regarding the layout of the synagogue. The ark holding the Torah scrolls is usually covered with a decorative curtain called a *parokhet*. In front of the ark there is usually a light that is kept burning continuously (*ner tamid*) which serves as a symbolic reminder of the Temple *Menorah*. The honored members of the community sit along the eastern wall beside the ark. In Orthodox circles, the cantor's desk is usually in front of the ark, and the Torah is read from an elevated

platform called a *bimah* in the center of the synagogue. The women are separated from the men by a *mehizah* (partition) or else they are seated in a balcony above the main prayer area.”

“The Reform synagogues changed much of this traditional pattern. They moved the *bimah* to the front of the synagogue and allowed women and men to be seated together. These practices were also taken up by some Conservative congregations. The Sephardi synagogues also differ in some details from Ashkenazi ones. For example, Sephardim have no cantor's desk and the entire service is conducted from the *bimah*.”

“In modern times, a change has taken place, not only in the appearance of the synagogue but also in its functions. Mordecai Kaplan of the United States formulated the concept of the ‘synagogue center’ where the Jew would spend most of his leisure time. Its primary purpose would be not just prayer and study but cultural and social activities as well. Many Jewish centers today have, in addition to the synagogue, libraries, club rooms, classrooms, gymnasias and other facilities.”

“Despite external differences, synagogues the world over are treated with the same dignity and respect. The rabbis have ascribed to the synagogue a holiness patterned after that of the Temple. Frivolity, gossiping, eating, drinking, sleeping and transacting business (other than charity and the redemption of captives) are all forbidden in the synagogue. One may run when going to a synagogue, but on leaving, one must walk in order to indicate reluctance to part with the sanctity of the house of prayer.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Travelers to Israel and densely Jewish populated areas immediately notice the stark black clothing of the very Orthodox Jews. The style of their black clothing is often a geographic indicator of their recent forefathers. The type of clothing usually indicates what sect of Orthodoxy they belong to. There is some explanation of the common black clothing that extends back hundreds of years. In an effort to remove castes and cliques, the simple black clothing served as a common denominator. Today, the material used, the cut and design seems to denote the opposite. The modern clothing practices stem from Europe and the Diaspora.

“Wherever Christianity spread through Europe, laws were passed discriminating against the Jews, who were forced to wear distinctive clothing and were often forced to live in separate areas.”

“Fine clothing was worn on Sabbath and holidays, simple clothing on weekdays. In many countries medieval rulers ordered Jews to wear certain colors, or special hats, or a Jewish badge. Although Jews wished to appear different from gentiles in dress and hairstyle, these orders were often made hatefully, and the Jew wearing his black pointed hat or red badge felt very bitter.”

“Jews in North Africa, Yemen, Meshed and Persia were forcibly converted to Islam. They were obliged to wear specially distinctive clothing, often black, and to bear a ‘badge of shame,’ and sometimes a wooden calf’s head as a sign of their idolatry in Sinai.”

“From the 13th century the Jews of Bohemia were humiliated, herded into ghettos and forced to wear special clothing.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Jewish worship practices include reading the Torah (the Law) and Haftorah (the Prophets). Anciently, this was done once a week on the Sabbath. In modern times there are three readings each week; Monday, Thursday and Saturdays (Sabbaths). The entire Bible text (Old Testament) is covered in one year.

“The custom of reading the Torah publicly is very, very ancient --- originating with Ezra in the fifth-fourth centuries B.C.E. At some later date a reading from the *Nevi'im* was added; this corresponding passage from the Prophets is known as the *Haftorah*.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

By the way, when Jesus lived, apparently the Jews read the “Law and the Prophets” just once a week .

“And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up for to read.”
(*Luke 4:16*)

It is a probability that the reason Jesus’ ministry was three years long was so that he could read, review and instruct the Disciples through the entire Law and the Prophets once during those training years. His instruction brought back the spirit, reopening the purpose of the law. The spirit was replacing the wall of do’s and don’ts. The obsession with the “letter of the law” had drawn the Jews away from an understanding of and looking forward to the redemption.

Throughout the years, Jews have weaned themselves away from spiritual experiences. One orthodox religious man stopped and listened to me while I was touring a group through the Old City, Jewish Quarter. Presumptuously, he yanked at my microphone and said, “You don’t understand the Jews, it’s the commandments that count, not the faith.” He continued, “Faith is made of feelings and feeling can be changed, but the commandments are fixed.” It is simply do’s and don’ts.” In a recent meeting of Jewish and non Jewish scholars discussing the “Bible Code,” one prominent rabbi said, “There is no Holy Spirit in Judaism anymore!” Other comments that apply with “faith and works” show the posture of Jewish faith, today.

“The developing rift between Christianity and Judaism and the animosity after their final split in the second century C.E. produced many great disputations. A crucial one occurred about the time of the Bar Kokhba revolt (c. 135 C.E.) between the

Christian Justin Martyr and the Jew Tryphon. While the two adversaries expressed friendship toward each other, the argument became bitter. Justin challenged the Jewish concept of being the chosen people by pointing out their low position in the world, and argued that the Jews were made to follow laws as punishment by God. Tryphon countered by charging Justin with selecting his quotes from the Bible, and proclaiming that true salvation comes from strictly following the law, not from faith in man. He argued, ‘. . . when you forsook God, and placed your hope in a man, what kind of salvation yet remains for you?’” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Shem Tov Ben Joseph Falaquera (c. 1225- 1295 C.E.), was a philosophical author and translator. He made a philosophical statement that echoes Jewish thinking.

“Although he was a prolific writer, little is known about his life. He was born in Spain and probably lived in border provinces of Spain and France. His writings are representative of the scientific and philosophic thought of the Jews of his time, and are permeated with the striving for enlightenment. He endorsed the study of secular philosophy, arguing in his *Sefer ha-Ma'alot* that ‘. . . the truth is to be accepted from every man.’ He subscribed to the view, widespread in the Middle Ages, that the Greek philosophers had derived their teachings from ancient Jewish sources. Like Maimonides, Falaquera maintained that it is the development of the intellect which leads to salvation.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Jewish thought that is found more in the reform and Conservative Jewish movements than the Orthodox includes a diminished sense of life after death. Thus, salvation is an earthly endeavor.

“This sociological interpretation of Judaism is accompanied in Reconstructionism by a theology which proposes that Judaism should not emphasize life after death, or salvation in the next world. It should place its belief in salvation in this world, and thus improve the human personality and establish a free, just and cooperative society. It does not consider the Jews a chosen people, or the Torah divine revelation to Moses.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Even in modern times, prayer and worship for the Jews is usually pre written. It includes a mannerism of moving and chanting that shows the worshiper is praying and using language different from that used in daily chatter.

“In recent times, many attempts have been made to adapt the traditional prayer texts to the sensibilities of modern readers. The Reform Movement began in fact with the adoption of fundamental changes in the liturgy so as to harmonize the content of the prayers with Reform theology. For example, all references to sacrifices or to the desire for a return to Zion were completely excised from the prayer book. In addition, free translations into the vernacular of many of the prayers were produced, and these were used in place of the traditional Hebrew texts. During the last 100 years, following the changes which developed within Reform ideology, several ‘authoritative’ prayer books were issued by the Reform movement, the most recent and most radically revamped version having appeared in 1974. In similar fashion, the

Conservative and Reconstructionist movements have produced prayer books (with full translations into the vernacular) to suit the needs of their prayer rituals.”

“In general, biblical prayer was spontaneous and personal; the more formal aspect of worship probably consisted of bringing sacrifices at set times and with a fixed ritual. It seems, however, that even during the period of the First Temple there were already some prayers whose wording was set and which were always recited on certain specific occasions. Some scholars, basing themselves on Psalms 55:18 and Daniel 6:11, believe that the practice of worshiping at least three times a day may be traced back to the biblical period.” *(Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)*

“Even though there is no specific biblical verse which commands daily prayer services (for exceptions see Grace after Meals and *Shema*), the rabbis of the Mishnah (c. 200 C.E.) and the Talmud assumed that Jews pray at least three times a day, once in the morning (*Shaharit*), once in the afternoon (*Minbah*) and once in the evening (*Ma'ariv*, sometimes called *Arvit*).”

“Because the times of the services and even the words which were to be recited, were fixed, there was a danger that prayer would lose its vitality and become mere routine. In order to overcome this danger, the rabbis urged the worshiper to meditate before he began to worship, to think of ‘before Whom he was standing’ in prayer, and to create a new prayer every time he worshiped. They placed great emphasis on the emotional aspect of prayer, calling it ‘service of the heart’ and stressing that God appreciates most the pure intentions of the worshiper. Later authorities sought to embellish the fixed prayers with original poems (*piyyutim*,) or with short introductions (*kavvanot*) whose purpose was to direct the heart and mind of the worshiper. Melodic chanting was used as a means of increasing *kavvanah* and worshipers were taught to sway as they prayed, thus throwing their entire body into the worship.” *(Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)*

The prophets taught a form of worship and prayer that focuses on the Lord instead of concentrating on personal mannerisms.

“And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.” *(Matthew 6:5-8)*

Our place of meeting with our God is personal. It is private. Alma’s concept of planting a seed and observing its growth and fruit is personal and done in solitude with God. It is a natural characteristic of our humanity that most religions do not teach. The purpose of this

manner of seeking, meeting and praying with God is so that we can see, hear and feel the words of the Lord unto our salvation.

Lesson
29

Give Ear to My Words”

Alma 36–39

Scripture Summary: *Alma testifies to Helaman of his conversion by an angel—He suffered the pains of a damned soul; he called upon the name of Jesus, and was then born of God—Sweet joy filled his soul—He saw concourses of angels praising God—His converts have tasted and seen as he did.*

The plates of brass and other scriptures are preserved to bring souls to salvation—The Jaredites were destroyed because of their wickedness—Their secret oaths and covenants must be kept from the people—Counsel with the Lord in all thy doings—As the Libona guided the Nephites, so the word of Christ leads men to eternal life.

Siblon was persecuted for righteousness’ sake—Salvation is in Christ, who is the life and the light of the world—Bridle all your passions.

Sexual sin is an abomination—Corianton’s sins kept the Zoramites from receiving the word—Christ’s redemption is retroactive in saving the faithful who preceded it. [About 73 B.C.]

Supplemental

Holy Land and Judaic Insights:

The greatest deliverance of the Children of Israel was from Egypt. Yet, the great exodus was a learning experience. A complete generation had to die and only the next generation was willing to keep the commandments enough to be saved and able to enter the promised land to prosper there. Alma witnesses of a similar pattern through his languishing experience of three days and three nights as dead and then coming alive again being lifted up and saved.

You will find that most of the scriptural references with a time factor of three days and three nights have something to do with being lifted up and being saved. Often this is a “center” of a chiasmus, a focal point of redemption, a testimony of the Savior.

A number of times throughout scriptural history, people and the land they live in are lifted up and begin to prosper. In 1841, the Apostle Orson Hyde dedicated the Holy Land for another return of its heirs. Among many prophetic statements, some repeated from previous prophets, he spoke about the land and the people.

“Grant, therefore, O Lord, in the name of Thy well-beloved Son, Jesus Christ, to remove the barrenness and sterility of this land, and let springs of living water break forth to water its thirsty soil. Let the vine and olive produce in their strength and the fig-tree bloom and flourish. Let the land become abundantly fruitful when possessed by its rightful heirs; let it again flow with plenty to feed the returning prodigals who come home with a spirit of grace and supplication; upon it let the clouds distill virtue and richness, and let the fields smile with plenty. Let the flocks and the herds greatly increase and multiply upon the mountains and the hills . . .” (*History of the Church, Vol.4, Ch.26, p.457*)

The return of Jews to their land is a righteous thing and those who oppose it are opposing the will of the Lord. Their future may hold an opposite of “prospering.”

“Let that nation or that people who shall take an active part in behalf of Abraham's children, and in the raising up of Jerusalem, find favor in Thy sight. Let not their enemies prevail against them, neither let pestilence or famine overcome them, but let the glory of Israel overshadow them, and the power of the Highest protect them; while that nation or kingdom that will not serve Thee in this glorious work must perish, according to Thy word---Yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted.” (*History of the Church, Vol.4, Ch.26, p.457*)

Alma's advice to his son continues to echo the past as it becomes an advice to all sons and daughters in the present. It echoes a strong doctrinal point of teaching our youth.

“O, remember, my son, and learn wisdom in thy youth; yea, learn in thy youth to keep the commandments of God.” (*Alma 37:35*)

“As I was in the days of my youth, when the secret of God was upon my tabernacle;” (*Job 29:4*)

“O God, thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works.” (*Psalms 71:17*)

“Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.” (*1 Timothy 4:12*)

The advice Alma gives his son transcends parental responsibility. It is an instruction to the next prophet. At all times, there was a worthy prophet-in-waiting, much like Elder Thomas S. Monson is today.

“Counsel with the Lord in all thy doings, and he will direct thee for good; yea, when thou liest down at night lie down unto the Lord, that he may watch over you in your sleep; and when thou risest in the morning let thy heart be full of thanks unto God; and if ye do these things, ye shall be lifted up at the last day.” (*Alma 37:37*)

“Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.” (*Amos 3:7*)

As Alma taught Heleman to counsel with the Lord in all his doings, so does God counsel with his prophets in all the doings that pertain to mankind.

Throughout time there have been symbolic and functional artifacts that brought to our minds or reinforced God's counsel to his children. To this day, Jews are counseled to place a “Mezuzah” on their door posts and on their gates so that in all their comings and goings and in all their “doings” they may remember the Lord.

“Mezuzah is the name of the parchment scroll attached to the doorposts of a Jewish home. The word itself actually means ‘doorpost’ but has come to refer to the scroll. On it are written verses from Deuteronomy (6 : 4--9 and 11 : 13--21) in square Assyrian letters, traditionally arranged in 22 lines. The Torah commands of these

verses that ‘you shall write them on the doorposts (*mezuzot*) of your house and in your gates.’ The 12th century rabbinic authority, Maimonides, stresses that this commandment is to be observed purely from love of God, and that the *mezuzah* is not a good luck charm with power to ward off evil spirits. Many people, however, are accustomed to kiss the *mezuzah* or to touch it and then kiss the fingers when entering or leaving.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

In the Book of Mormon, the functional Liahona led the righteous descendants of Lehi. Its presence was a reminder that the Lord would lead his people. In the Bible, the cloud and pillar (as well as the raised serpent) was a reminder that God would lead Israel through the wilderness.

“The Tabernacle stood in the center of the Israelite camp and a cloud rested over it. When the cloud lifted, it was considered a divine signal to move the camp. A silver trumpet was sounded, the Levites dismantled the Tabernacle and transported it to its next resting place.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

“To typify Christ and point attention to the salvation which would come because he would be lifted up on the cross, Moses (as commanded by the Lord) made a brazen serpent and lifted it up on a pole. Then those of the children of Israel who were bitten by poisonous serpents were healed by looking upon the serpent, while those who refused to look died of the poisonous bites. (Num. 21:4-9.) This performance was a ceremony in Israel which was intended to show the people that by looking to Christ they would be saved with eternal life, but by refusing to look to him they would die spiritually (John 3:14-15; Alma 33:19-22; Hela. 8:14-15) The brazen serpent was kept as a symbol in Israel until the time of Hezekiah, who broke it in pieces to keep apostate Israel of his day from burning incense to it. (2 Kings 18:4.)” (**Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p.104**)

The pattern of directional tools is a metaphor to have us “look up” in order to be “lifted up.”

“The Great Plan of Happiness”

Lesson
30

Alma 40–42

Scripture Summary: *Christ bringeth to pass the resurrection of all men—The righteous dead go to paradise and the wicked to outer darkness to await the day of their resurrection—All things shall be restored to their proper and perfect frame in the resurrection.*

In the resurrection men come forth to a state of endless happiness or endless misery—Wickedness never was happiness—Carnal men are without God in the world—Every person receives again in the restoration the characteristics and attributes acquired in mortality.

Mortality is a probationary time to enable man to repent and serve God—The fall brought temporal and spiritual death upon all mankind—Redemption comes through repentance—God himself atoneth for the sins of the world—Mercy is for those who repent—All others are subject to God’s justice—Mercy cometh because of the atonement—Only the truly penitent are saved. [About 73 B.C.]

Supplemental

Holy Land and Judaic Insights:

Alma teaches that there is no resurrection until after the coming of the Messiah. Judaism, nowadays, has virtually no belief in resurrection or life as such after death. To the Jews, the Messiah has not come; consequently, it is understandable that they do not have an active belief in the resurrection. There are, however, benedictions and other statements with words that seem to connect to a former belief in Resurrection.

“. . . *Barukh mehayyeh ha-metim* (‘Blessed be . . . He Who revives the dead’) is therefore also known as *Tehiyyat ha-Metim* (‘Resurrection of the Dead’) . . .”

“. . . the righteous of all generations will be reunited at the time of the resurrection of the dead during the messianic period.”

“. . . They (Essenes) believed in reward and punishment; in immortality of the soul; but not in physical resurrection.”

“Some rabbis believed in resurrection. That is that at a certain point in time God will bring everybody back to life and then the world will be a perfect place and physical life will go on indefinitely. This doctrine poses some obvious difficulties: the body actually decomposes after burial so how can it be reconstituted; furthermore what about overpopulation of the world? Those who believe in resurrection claim that anyway the whole process will be miraculous and the miracle will solve all the problems. Other rabbis however denied physical resurrection entirely and understood the afterlife to be a completely spiritual experience.”

“The argument about resurrection lasted well into the Middle Ages, and was one of the reasons for the sharp attacks against Maimonides. Many believed that he denied the doctrine and his views started a controversy that lasted for hundreds of years. In modern times most Jewish theologians do not subscribe to the doctrine of physical resurrection and movements such as Reform Judaism do not consider it to be a necessary belief for the Jew.”

“The whole subject of (an) afterlife is not explicitly stated in the Bible and many scholars are of the opinion that belief in (an) afterlife was adopted by Jews during the Babylonian exile after the destruction of the First Temple when they came into contact with eastern religions such as Zoroastrianism.”

“The Sadducees also rejected the Pharisaic belief in the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the body, claiming that there is no basis for these beliefs in the Torah.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

There are numerous incidents in the scriptures that relate to the concepts of justice and mercy. Jews and Latter-day Saints have similar thoughts on these.

“The word *zedakah* literally means ‘righteousness’ or ‘justice’; by their very choice of word the rabbis reveal a great deal of their attitude to the subject, for they see charity not as a favor to the poor but something to which they have a right, and the donor, an obligation.”

“The Hebrew word for justice is *zedek*, and indicative of Judaism's attitude is the fact that another form of the same root *zedakah*, means ‘charity.’ For justice must be tempered with mercy and indeed the main attribute of God is His integration of justice and mercy. Yet another Hebrew word derived from the same root is *zaddik*, which means ‘righteous.’ The righteous man is one who is both just and merciful.”

“A unique aspect of the Jewish faith is that although God rules the world with absolute justice, He is also merciful and forgives sins against Him. The doctrine of repentance is based on this belief.”

“. . . God, as depicted by the rabbis, embodies a combination of justice and mercy, of strict judgment and lenient compassion. This combination of justice and mercy in God is represented by the two names of God --- Elohim and YHWH. The former stands for justice and the latter for mercy. Though they may seem contradictory, one actually complements the other and, when there is a conflict between the two, God usually favors mercy.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Since there is mention of Cherubim in the chapters being studied, I want to suggest a possible physical parallel with justice and mercy.

“The Ark of the Covenant stood inside the Holy of Holies and contained the tablets of the Ten Commandments which were given to Moses on Mount Sinai. Hovering over the Ark were two cherubim, each 16-foot high, made of olive wood. Archaeologists believe that each of the cherubim was formed with a lion-like body, a man-shaped head, and two wings. The cherubim were believed to be servants of God whose main task was to guard the Ark.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

The possibility exists that the “law” was guarded by the two cherubim, one representing justice and the other mercy. In other words, to me the law has a balance of justice and mercy.

“Firm in the Faith of Christ”

Alma 43–52

Scripture Summary: *Alma and his sons preach the word—The Zoramites and other Nephite dissenters become Lamanites—The Lamanites come against the Nephites in war—Moroni arms the Nephites with defensive armor—The Lord reveals to Alma the strategy of the Lamanites—The Nephites defend their homes, liberties, families, and religion—The armies of Moroni and Lehi surround the Lamanites. [About 74 B.C.]*

Moroni commands the Lamanites to make a covenant of peace or be destroyed—Zerabemnah rejects the offer, and the battle resumes—Moroni’s armies defeat the Lamanites. [About 74—73 B.C.]

Helaman believes the words of Alma—Alma prophesies the destruction of the Nephites—He blesses and curses the land—Alma is taken up by the Spirit, even as Moses—Dissension grows in the Church. [73 B.C.]

Amalickiah conspires to be king—Moroni raises the title of liberty—He rallies the people to defend their religion—True believers are called Christians—A remnant of Joseph shall be preserved—Amalickiah and the dissenters flee to the land of Nephi—Those who will not support the cause of freedom are put to death. [Between 73 and 72 B.C.]

Amalickiah uses treachery, murder, and intrigue to become king of the Lamanites—The Nephite dissenters are more wicked and ferocious than the Lamanites.

Amalickiah incites the Lamanites against the Nephites—Moroni prepares his people to defend the cause of the Christians—He rejoiced in liberty and freedom and was a mighty man of God.

The invading Lamanites are unable to take the fortified cities of Ammonihab and Noah—Amalickiah curses God and swears to drink the blood of Moroni—Helaman and his brethren continue to strengthen the Church. [72 B.C.]

Moroni fortifies the lands of the Nephites—They build many new cities—Wars and destructions befell the Nephites in the days of their wickedness and abominations—Morianton and his dissenters are defeated by Teancum—Nephibah dies and his son Paboran fills the judgment-seat. [About 72—67 B.C.]

The king-men seek to change the law and set up a king—Paboran and the freemen are supported by the voice of the people—Moroni compels the king-men to defend their liberty or be put to death—Amalickiah and the Lamanites capture many fortified cities—Teancum repels the Lamanite invasion and slays Amalickiah in his tent. [About 67 B.C.]

Ammoron succeeds Amalickiah as king of the Lamanites—Moroni, Teancum, and Lehi lead the Nephites in a victorious war against the Lamanites—The city of Mulek is retaken, and Jacob the Lamanite is slain. [About 66—64 B.C.]

Supplemental

Holy Land and Judaic Insights:

The politics and wars that follow in the chapters being studied show the use and abuse of both the justice and mercy examined in the last lesson. There are parallels to Israel’s modern history as rights and obligations must be balanced with ideologies and political aspirations. Israel is not seeking for monarchy or power over one ethnic group or another.

“Nevertheless, the Nephites were inspired by a better cause, for they were not fighting for monarchy nor power but they were fighting for their homes and their liberties, their wives and their children, and their all, yea, for their rites of worship and their church.” (*Alma 43:45*)

Zerahemna denied the reason for the Moroni’s success which was rooted in faith and in God-given destiny. He claimed that the Nephite’s weaponry and state-of-the-art military skills gave them an advantage over the Lamanites. A parallel to that can be seen in Israel’s

modern history. Those who choose to fight against Israel deny Israel's claim rooted in faith and in a God-given destiny. They also complain that the USA is giving state-of-the-art military aid to Israel, an unfair advantage over "Palestinians." It must be noted, however, that most of the Arabs under (and not under) "Palestinian Authority" do not wish to fight. Polls done in the area of the Palestinian Authority, repeatedly show that the popular vote for the Palestinian leader seems to be considerably less than a majority of the entire population.

For years I wondered what the reason was that Zarahemna's life was spared . . . even when he attacked Moroni at the "Peace Conference." Anyone traveling to Mayan ruins in Central America soon learns that in some "ball games" the winner gets decapitated as the audience witnesses this "exciting" event. If Zarahemna would have been decapitated instead of receiving a "hair cut" – he would have been the "winner!" At least, his people, with such a lust for blood, would have interpreted it that way.

The ultimate resolution to conflict is following the instruction and counsel of the Messiah in accepting his eventual arrival and rule. Then the rights and obligations and the ideologies and political aspirations will be righteously balanced. Powers usurped by monarchies or dictatorships will disappear as the Savior appears and leads with justice and mercy.

“They Did Obey . . . Every Word of Command with Exactness”

Lesson 32

Alma 53–63

Scripture Summary: *The Lamanite prisoners are used to fortify the city Bountiful—Dissensions among the Nephites give rise to Lamanite victories—Helaman takes command of the two thousand stripling sons of the people of Ammon. [About 64 B.C.]*

Ammoron and Moroni negotiate for the exchange of prisoners—Moroni demands that the Lamanites withdraw and cease their murderous attacks—Ammoron demands that the Nephites lay down their arms and become subject to the Lamanites. [About 63 B.C.]

Moroni refuses to exchange prisoners—The Lamanite guards are enticed to become drunk, and the Nephite prisoners are freed—The city of Gid is taken without bloodshed. [About 63 B.C.]

Helaman sends an epistle to Moroni recounting the state of the war with the Lamanites—Antipus and Helaman gain a great victory over the Lamanites—Helaman’s two thousand stripling sons fight with miraculous power and none of them are slain. [About 66—62 B.C.]

Helaman recounts the taking of Antiparah and the surrender and later the defense of Cumeni—His Ammonite striplings fight valiantly and all are wounded, but none are slain—Gid reports the slaying and the escape of the Lamanite prisoners. [About 64—63 B.C.]

Helaman, Gid, and Teomner take the city of Manti by a stratagem—The Lamanites withdraw—The sons of the people of Ammon are preserved as they stand fast in defense of their liberty and faith. [About 63 B.C.]

Moroni asks Paboran to strengthen the forces of Helaman—The Lamanites take the city of Nephibab—Moroni is angry with the government.

Moroni complains to Paboran of the government’s neglect of the armies—The Lord suffers the righteous to be slain—The Nephites must use all of their power and means to deliver themselves from their enemies—Moroni threatens to fight against the government unless help is supplied to his armies.

Paboran tells Moroni of the insurrection and rebellion against the government—The king-men take Zarahemla and are in league with the Lamanites—Paboran asks for military aid against the rebels. [About 62 B.C.]

Moroni marches to the aid of Paboran in the land of Gideon—The king-men who refuse to defend their country are put to death—Paboran and Moroni retake Nephibab—Many Lamanites join the people of Ammon—Teancum slays Ammoron and is in turn slain—The Lamanites are driven from the land, and peace is established—Helaman returns to the ministry and builds up the Church. [About 62—57 B.C.]

Shiblon and later Helaman take possession of the sacred records—Many Nephites travel to the land northward—Hagoth builds ships, which sail forth in the west sea—Moronihab defeats the Lamanites in battle. [Between 56 and 53 B.C.]

Supplemental

Holy Land and Judaic Insights:

The fortification that Moroni had the captive Lamanites build sound very familiar to a “Tel” in the Land of Israel. Both fortifications had sloping walls that were difficult to climb and exposed the enemy who had to fight “uphill” while the defense of the city was from the top downward. The spiritual connection to this physical description is to always stay on the high ground, a natural defense from below.

One thing that comes through the various battle accounts is the Nephite humanitarian concern of their captive enemies. On the subject of treating our enemies, let us review a section from **Lesson #8 - “Living Righteously in a Wicked World”** from the Old Testament Gospel Doctrine Supplements of 1998.

Through the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls we find the motivation of those many call the Essenes, was to move away from wickedness and establish a singular community of righteousness. Their organization had a shadow of biblical organization. Their leader was called the “Teacher of Righteousness” and he had two assistants. There was also a council

of “Twelve Overseers.” They had an order following the ‘righteous king’ which is said in Hebrew, “Melech Zedek.” The Dead Sea sect shunned others, and probably evoked one of the Savior’s comments in the Sermon on the Mount.

“Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?” (*Matthew 5:43-46*)

“The earliest ethical teachings are commandments in the Bible: to do justice, to avoid bribery, gossip, robbery, oppression, to protect the weak --- the widow, the orphan, the slave, the stranger; to be kind to animals. Man is obliged to overcome his normal feelings and to obey these commands --- even with respect to his enemy.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

The covenant made by the fathers of the “two-thousand stripling warriors” was so binding and sacred that, even in peril, Moroni did not let them assist in defense of their people. The concept of oaths and covenants reaches back to the Land of Israel and even before that to our very pre-existence.

“Our very presence in this world is the result of a covenant we have made and a promise of and the result of faithfulness. Our baptism is a covenant in which the Lord promises us celestial life if we live celestial laws. To fail to do so we are cheating both him and us, but more especially ourselves. This is true also of other ordinances. We receive the higher priesthood with an oath and a covenant with the Father, which covenant ‘He cannot break neither can it be moved,’ but we may break it and fail, and in so doing we break a vow and are dishonest with ourselves and him. Our free agency permits our doing what we wish to do, but it does not immunize us from the results of our failures.” (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball, p.504*)

“In Jewish law, ‘oaths’ and ‘vows’ serve as distinct terms, each representing a different class of ‘sworn statement.’ The oath, which in Hebrew is called *shevuah*, is limited to sworn statements made during the course of judicial proceedings, while the vow, called in Hebrew *neder*, has a much broader application and refers to all types of sworn statements made outside the courtroom. Both are treated at great length in the Talmud, in separate tractates entitled, respectively, *Shevuot* and *Nedarim*.”

“Today in courts in most countries, it is common practice to ‘swear in’ all witnesses. Jewish law never adopted this custom, preferring to accept testimony without the administration of an oath, as long as there were at least two witnesses who corroborated each other’s testimony, as well as other supportive evidence.

Testimony given under oath was, in fact, considered to be a particularly weak form of evidence, and it was only accepted when there was a complete lack of something better. When the judicial oath was administered, it was only used in civil cases and then not to the witnesses but to the defendant, or less often, to the plaintiff. In capital cases, a judicial oath was never administered, since it was assumed that no one charged with a capital crime could be believed, even under oath.”

In contrast to the judicial oath, the ‘vow’ has very wide application. It consists of a fully verbalized statement made by an adult (not a minor) that he (or she) takes upon himself a specified obligation (such as giving a definite sum of money to charity) or that he denies to himself the enjoyment of a given object, person or experience (such as eating a particular type of food). If the vow is made voluntarily, without any compulsion from anyone else, it is fully binding, and only with great difficulty can it be declared void.”

“Vows were regarded by the rabbis with great seriousness. They attempted to discourage indiscriminate making of vows, for they realized that most people made them without fully realizing the consequences. It is reported in the Talmud that the sage Samuel even declared that ‘he who makes a vow, even though he fulfills it, commits a sin.’ The rabbis tolerated vows only when they were taken in order to get rid of bad habits and encourage one to do good; otherwise they emphasized that one should strive for the desired ends without the aid of vows.”

“Because of the strict binding nature of vows, and the great difficulties involved in having them annulled, even today many people have the habit of saying *beli neder* (‘without it being a vow’) whenever they make statements about acts which they plan to undertake in the future.” (*Encyclopedia Juaica Jr.*)

As I read about the negotiations Moroni had with other Nephite and Lamanite leaders, I am struck with questions. When it comes time for negotiations, how much do we compromise? Where do we draw the line? Again, recent Israeli negotiations have drawn an entire nation (as well as other nations) into the same debate. It is clear to see that Moroni had the powerful gift of God, a prophetic gift that was used in righteousness to lead the people.

The brief mention of Hagoth leading an entourage to another land brings a memory of my visit to a conference of ethnic Hawaiian Latter-day Saints in Hawaii. I had the opportunity of presenting a bridge between Judah and Joseph as I showed Jewish culture and tradition with Mormon similarities. The meeting was emotional and spiritually fired as the Hawaiians connected their traditional heritage to Hagoth. They showed their culture and tradition which reflected similarities to Jewish marriage, burial practices, greetings and dietary customs. The line seemed to connect to Hagoth, his Nephite and Lamanite connection and the history reaching back to the land of Israel.

“The belief that Polynesian ancestry includes Book of Mormon people can be traced back at least to 1851, when George Q. Cannon taught it as a missionary in Hawaii

(he was later a counselor in the First Presidency). President Brigham Young detailed the belief in a letter to King Kamehameha V in 1865. Other Church leaders have since affirmed the belief, some indicating that among Polynesian ancestors were the people of Hagoth, who set sail from Nephite lands in approximately 54 B.C. (cf. Alma 63:5-8). In a statement to the Maoris of New Zealand, for instance, President Joseph F. Smith said, 'I would like to say to you brethren and sisters . . . you are some of Hagoth's people, and there is NO PERHAPS about it!' (Cole and Jensen, p. 388.) In the prayer offered at the dedication of the Hawaii Temple, President Heber J. Grant referred to the 'descendants of Lehi' in Hawaii (IE 23 [Feb. 1920]:283)."
(Encyclopedia of Mormonism, Vol.3, POLYNESIANS)

“A Sure Foundation”

Lesson 33

Helaman 1–5

Scripture Summary: *Paboran the second becomes chief judge and is murdered by Kishkumen—Pacumeni fills the judgment-seat—Coriantumr leads the Lamanite armies, takes Zarahemla, and slays Pacumeni—Moronihah defeats the Lamanites and retakes Zarahemla, and Coriantumr is slain. [Between 52 and 51 B.C.]*

Helaman the second becomes chief judge—Gadianton leads the band of Kishkumen—Helaman’s servant slays Kishkumen, and the Gadianton band flees into the wilderness. [50 B.C.]

Many Nephites migrate to the land northward—They build houses of cement and keep many records—Tens of thousands are converted and baptized—The word of God leads men to salvation—Nephi the son of Helaman fills the judgment seat. [Between 49 and 39 B.C.]

Nephite dissenters and the Lamanites join forces and take the land of Zarahemla—The Nephites’ defeats come because of their wickedness—The Church dwindles and the people become weak like the Lamanites. [Between 38 and 30 B.C.]

Nephi and Lehi devote themselves to preaching—Their names invite them to pattern their lives after their forebears—Christ redeems those who repent—Nephi and Lehi make many converts and are imprisoned, and fire encircles them—A cloud of darkness overshadows three hundred people—The earth shakes and a voice commands men to repent—Nephi and Lehi converse with angels, and the multitude are encircled by fire. [About 30 B.C.]

Supplemental

Holy Land and Judaic Insights:

The title of the lesson, “A Sure Foundation” infers that the Lord’s names of “stone” or “rock” is the best foundation. The Nephites and Lamanites had a background of stone and cement work which they brought from Israel. The geology of both lands shows an abundance of limestone. It is usable for both building blocks and making cement.

“Modern archaeology has unearthed a wealth of information concerning Jewish architecture in Israel in the past. In ancient Palestine, the forerunner to Israelite architecture was local Canaanite style. Walled towns with two-story stone, brick or wood houses usually built around a courtyard were most typical. Archaeological finds from the age of the Judges (c. 1200-c.1000 B.C.E.) reveal that Israelite towns were homogeneous in layout, reflecting a democratic social structure with few extremes of poverty or wealth. Later centuries witnessed palaces and spacious homes built above and away from the masses.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

At the same time, trees represented an abundant life. Trees affected the weather and the health of animals and people. A tree of life was a powerful image even in the creation of the earth.

“Just as Adam is placed in the Garden, in the midst of which stands the Tree of Life, so man is placed in the world in order to observe the commandments of the Torah.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

“And Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig tree, from Dan even to Beersheba, all the days of Solomon.” (*1 Kings 4:25*)

“The flora of Israel is among the richest and most varied of any country in the world. On both sides of the Jordan river there are close to 2,300 species of plants. Various forms of pine, oak and terebrinth trees can be found in Israel's forests, and numerous types of shrubs and vines flourish on the rocky slopes of the Judean mountains.” *(Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)*

“In biblical times, Jerusalem was surrounded by thick, green forests of almond, olive and pine trees. But in the course of numerous wars and settlements, much of this lush greenery was destroyed and the soil left to dry out in the summer sun and wash away in the heavy winter rains. From earliest times, farmers have therefore been forced to terrace the ground and build stone fences along the slopes to hold back the soil. This stone terracing is still in evidence all along the Jerusalem landscape. A deliberate attempt has been made in modern times to replant the trees and the approach to Jerusalem is once again flanked by heavily forested areas.”

“Israel's afforestation and land reclamation agency, JNF, by 1990, had reclaimed a total of 400,000 acres by draining swamps, clearing and leveling land. It planted 200 million trees on 200,000 acres; built over 4,000 miles of forest and access roads to outlying areas; established some 30 hilltop outposts in Galilee and over 400 picnic and recreation areas.”

“Trees played a very special role in the lives of the ancient Jews. It was considered to be a sin to cut down a fruit tree which could have ultimately benefitted the land and the people. A Jewish custom developed of planting a tree at the birth of a child (a cedar for a boy and a pine for a girl) and then cutting the trees down when the children married, to be used in the construction of the bridal canopy. The custom was meant to stress the everlasting bond between the nation and the land of Israel, but fell into disuse when the Jews were separated from their homeland.”

(Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

The Book of Mormon people, Israelites, kept up the process of planting trees in their new homeland. Another Israelite practice that seemed to continue was the choice of names given to their posterity. I am adding a considerable amount of information about Jewish names in order to emphasize the influence of culture in a name. There seems to be that kind of importance to the Nephites. Having visited descendants of Nephites and Lamanites in Meso-America, years ago, I found them following the same ancient culture and traditions. I have dear friends, LDS guides in Mexico, named Helaman, Mosiah, Moroni, Limhi, Lemuel, Alma and Ruth. Their base headquarter is at Tulum in the Yucatan, a delightful Mayan center built around a pattern of a “descending God.” There are a number of names for him, Quetzelcoatl, KuKulKan and ItsamNa . . . and with LDS insight, Jesus, who descended in the “Americas.”

“Behold, my sons, I desire that ye should remember to keep the commandments of God; and I would that ye should declare unto the people these words. Behold, I have given unto you the names of our first parents who came out

of the land of Jerusalem; and this I have done that when you remember your names ye may remember them; and when ye remember them ye may remember their works; and when ye remember their works ye may know how that it is said, and also written, that they were good.” (*Helaman 5:6*)

“A boy is named when he is eight days old at his circumcision ceremony, an event of great religious importance and happy celebrating. A girl is named in the synagogue on the first day following her birth on which the Torah is read.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Although the following is a repetition of material in **Lesson 16 – “Ye Shall Be Called the Children of Christ,”** it is appropriate to consider the value of a name after all, the Lord has more than a hundred different names in the scriptures.

“Names are more than just arbitrary labels for people. Each Jewish name tells a story of its own and very often reflects the nature of the time, place and atmosphere in which it was chosen. The most important source for Hebrew proper names is the Bible, and biblical names were usually descriptive and meaningful, often incorporating the name of God in praise or gratitude; thus, Nathaniel (God has given), Eleazar (God has helped), Joshua (God the Savior). Other biblical names describe the circumstances surrounding the birth. Thus Abraham called his son Yizhak [Isaac] from the Hebrew word for laughter, because Sarah had laughed at the idea of bearing a child in her old age. And Yizhak named one of his sons Ya'akov [Jacob], a play on the Hebrew word *akev* (‘heel’), because he was born grasping the heel of his twin brother Esau.”

“The Talmud attaches great importance to the preservation of Hebrew names, viewing foreign names as a sign of assimilation. According to the Talmud, one reason for the deliverance of the Children of Israel from Egyptian bondage was the fact that they did not change their names. Yet, despite this subtle warning, Jews have tended to adapt their Hebrew names to the language of their neighbors or to take on purely non-Jewish names. This tendency, first noticeable during the Middle Ages, accelerated during the late 18th and 19th centuries. Some governments encouraged the process by passing laws which forced Jews to adopt European names. Napoleon issued such a decree, hoping to assimilate the Jews.”

“It was during the Middle Ages that Jews began taking on surnames to add to their Jewish forenames. These second names, which have since evolved into family names, were at first used as descriptions to identify the individual. The most traditional method was to add the name of the father to the forename, e.g. Ibn Ezra (son of Ezra), or Jacobson (son of Jacob). The surnames Cohen and Levy were usually used to show direct descent from the priests and Levites who served in the Temple. Other sources of surnames were the occupation (Miller, Goldsmith), birthplace (Berliner, Moscovitz), or physical characteristics (Alt= old, Klein= small, Schwartz= swarthy) of the individual. Some well-known surnames are really

abbreviations whose original meanings reflect the history of the family. For instance, Katz is short for *Kohen Zedek* (Righteous priest), and Zachs is an abbreviation of *Zer'a Kadoshei Speyer* (descendants of the martyrs of Speyer --- a city in Germany whose Jewish population was almost wiped out during the Crusades).”

“Like most peoples of the world, the Jews have evolved certain traditions regarding the use of names. For example, Ashkenazi Jews consider it wrong to name a child after a living father or grandfather, whereas Sephardim consider it an honor to do so for a grandparent. According to the Hasidei Ashkenaz, it is wrong to marry a woman with the same name as the husband's mother. The reason for this seems to be because of respect; the man might tell his wife to do something and the mother might think he meant her.”

“Jewish boys are officially named at the circumcision ceremony eight days after birth, and a girl's Jewish name is publicly announced when the father is first called to the Torah after her birth. Converts are also given new names --- usually ben Abraham or bat Abraham (son or daughter of Abraham) because conversion is equated with rebirth.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

As mentioned, our Lord's many names emphasize His role as our foundation, his appropriate name is the “Rock of our redemption.” To connect two items discussed in this lesson, wood and stone, let us consider that Nephi and Lehi were encircled by fire. Fire is usually fueled by wood. However, they were encircled by fire in a stone prison. This is similar to the account in the Book of Daniel and later in the Book of Mormon as the Lord visited the Nephites.

“Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, [and] spake, and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king. He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.” (*Daniel 3:24-25*)

“And as they looked to behold they cast their eyes towards heaven, and they saw the heavens open, and they saw angels descending out of heaven as it were in the midst of fire; and they came down and encircled those little ones about, and they were encircled about with fire; and the angels did minister unto them.” (*3 Nephi 17:24*)

“How Could You Have Forgotten Your God”

Helaman 6–12

Scripture Summary: *The righteous Lamanites preach to the wicked Nephites—Both peoples prosper during an era of peace and plenty—Lucifer, the author of sin, guides the Gadianton robbers in their murders and wickedness—They take over the Nephite government. [Between 29 and 24 B.C.]*

Nephi is rejected in the north and returns to Zarahemla—He prays upon his garden tower and then calls upon the people to repent or perish.

Corrupt judges seek to incite the people against Nephi—Abraham, Moses, Zenos, Zenock, Ezias, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lehi, and Nephi all testified of Christ—By inspiration Nephi announces the murder of the chief judge.

Messengers find the chief judge dead at the judgment seat—They are imprisoned and later released—By inspiration Nephi identifies Seantum as the murderer—Nephi is accepted by some as a prophet.

The Lord gives Nephi the sealing power—He is empowered to bind and loose on earth and in heaven—He commands the people to repent or perish—The Spirit carries him from congregation to congregation. [Between 23 and 20 B.C.]

Nephi persuades the Lord to replace their war with a famine—Many people perish—They repent, and Nephi importunes the Lord for rain—Nephi and Lehi receive many revelations—The Gadianton robbers entrench themselves in the land. [Between 20 and 7 B.C.]

Men are unstable and foolish and quick to do evil—The Lord chastens his people—The nothingness of men compared with the power of God—In the day of judgment men shall gain everlasting life or everlasting damnation. [About 7 B.C.]

Supplemental

Holy Land and Judaic Insights:

The Children of Israel had a habit of being blessed and then forgetting God. The term “hardened” appears several times in the Stick of Judah (Bible) and the Stick of Joseph (The Book of Mormon). Spiritual hardening is a result of pride or of being proud.

“Yet the LORD testified against Israel, and against Judah, by all the prophets, and by all the seers, saying, Turn ye from your evil ways, and keep my commandments and my statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by my servants the prophets. Notwithstanding they would not hear, but hardened their necks, like to the neck of their fathers, that did not believe in the LORD their God.” (2 Kings 17:13-14)

“And gavest them bread from heaven for their hunger, and broughtest forth water for them out of the rock for their thirst, and promisedst them that they should go in to possess the land which thou hadst sworn to give them. But they and our fathers dealt proudly, and hardened their necks, and hearkened not to thy commandments,” (Nehemiah 9:15-16)

“Wherefore then do ye harden your hearts, as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? When he had wrought wonderfully among them, did they not let the people go, and they departed?” (1 Samuel 6:6)

“And it came to pass that I, Nephi, did speak much unto my brethren, because they had hardened their hearts again, even unto complaining against the Lord their God.” (1 Nephi 16:22)

“And notwithstanding they being led, the Lord their God, their Redeemer, going before them, leading them by day and giving light unto them by night, and doing all things for them which were expedient for man to receive, they hardened their hearts and blinded their minds, and reviled against Moses and against the true and living God.” (*1 Nephi 17:30*)

We are reminded in our own times of the debilitating use of the word “proud” or “pride.” In 1989, President and Prophet, Ezra Taft Benson, clearly instructed the saints to discontinue the use of the word pride or proud. He said “Pride is ugly.” A better way of expressing ourselves would be to follow Heavenly Father’s example.

“And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” (*Matthew 3:17*)

It appears that people get lifted up in their pride. Some even want to be or claim to be “above” others. That prompted the Zoramites to build a tower, called a “Rameumptom” in the Book of Mormon.

“For they had a place built up in the center of their synagogue, a place for standing, which was high above the head; and the top thereof would only admit one person.” (*Alma 31:13*)

Now the place was called by them Rameumptom, which, being interpreted, is the holy stand.” (*Alma 31:21*)

The word Rama in Hebrew refers to a high place. The Lord did instruct Temples to be built in high places. The synagogue has three meeting areas. The congregants sit in an outer area, then there is a raised or elevated area called the *bimah* in the center of the synagogue. That is where the Torah is read. The Ark, where the Torah scrolls are kept, is higher than the Bimah and always in the part of the hall closest to Jerusalem. That is a reminder to the congregants that the “word” comes from Zion.

The three meeting areas are in a temple style. The ancient Jerusalem Temple had an outer courtyard, inner courtyard and a Holy of Holies or as Latter-day Saints call it, Telestial, Terrestrial and Celestial. The styling of the synagogue probably represents the Temple where authority came from.

Another significance is how this prophet Nephi, testified of his calling and authority. All true prophets did and still do testify of their authority. Additionally, a repeated manner of identifying a true prophet is by recognizing how God has named and authorized him.

“Behold, thou art Nephi, and I am God. Behold, I give unto you power, that whatsoever ye shall seal on earth shall be sealed in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven; and thus shall ye have power among this people.” (*Helaman 10:6-7*)

“And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” *(Matthew 16:18-19)*

God gives keys, signs, symbols and ritual procedures so that we may have physical as well as spiritual reminders of Him and His teachings.

Lesson
35

“Repent and Return unto the Lord”

Helaman 13–16

Scripture Summary: *Samuel the Lamanite prophesies the destruction of the Nephites unless they repent—They and their riches are cursed—They reject and stone the prophets, are encircled about by demons, and seek for happiness in doing iniquity.*

Samuel predicts light during the night and a new star at Christ’s birth—Christ redeems men from temporal and spiritual death—The signs of his death include three days of darkness, the rending of the rocks, and great upheavals of nature.

The Lord chastened the Nephites because he loved them—Converted Lamanites are firm and steadfast in the faith—The Lord will be merciful unto the Lamanites in the latter days. [About 6 B.C.]

The Nephites who believe Samuel are baptized by Nephi—Samuel cannot be slain with their arrows and stones—Some harden their hearts, and others see angels—The unbelievers say it is not reasonable to believe in Christ and his coming in Jerusalem. [Between 5 and 1 B.C.]

Supplemental

Holy Land and Judaic Insights:

The lesson precedes the coming of the Lord. It is timely because the second coming of the Lord is imminent. Once again, looking for parallels to today is very valuable. There is a sect of Orthodox Jews that posts banners all over Israel and in some sections of New York where the Hassidic group once led by Rabbi Lubavitch live. The banners read, “Prepare For The Imminent Arrival of The Messiah!” The previous campaign read, “We Want The Messiah, Now!”

In anticipation of the coming of the Messiah, Samuel the Lamanite came from the group of people not usually considered religious. He was an anomaly among the Nephites as well as the Lamanites. Genetically he was one of them, a common descendant from the tribes of Israel. Today, the living prophet is a descendant from the tribes of Israel. He is something of an anomaly among the non-Jews as well as the Jews. The modern prophet comes from the “Gentiles” which causes a reaction among some of the Jews. They look at him with about the same unbelief as the Nephites who looked on Samuel the Lamanite. In both instances, the air is crisp with anticipation of the coming of the Messiah.

The thought or question that occurred to me as I read about Zarahemla was, can it be compared to the great city of Jerusalem? How many similar experiences have they or will they experience in common? As we read of the last days, not only will Israel experience a holocaust in which a third of the population will perish. However, two third of Jerusalem’s population will die at the same time.

The sign of three days and three nights has been used numerous times throughout scriptural history. Most of the three days and three nights have something to do with being saved .

A few examples include the following.

“And Moses stretched forth his hand toward heaven; and there was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days: They saw not one another, neither rose

any from his place for three days: but all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings.” *(Exodus 10:22)*

“And she said unto them, Get you to the mountain, lest the pursuers meet you; and hide yourselves there three days, until the pursuers be returned: and afterward may ye go your way.” *(Joshua 2:16)*

“Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.” *(Jonah 1:17)*

“For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” *(Matthew 12:40)*

“And said, This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days.” *(Matthew 26:61)*

“And the God of our fathers, who were led out of Egypt, out of bondage, and also were preserved in the wilderness by him, yea, the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, yieldeth himself, according to the words of the angel, as a man, into the hands of wicked men, to be lifted up, according to the words of Zenock, and to be crucified, according to the words of Neum, and to be buried in a sepulchre, according to the words of Zenos, which he spake concerning the three days of darkness, which should be a sign given of his death unto those who should inhabit the isles of the sea, more especially given unto those who are of the house of Israel.” *(1 Nephi 19:10)*

“And now, for three days and for three nights was I racked, even with the pains of a damned soul.” *(Alma 36:16)*

“And it came to pass that I was three days and three nights in the most bitter pain and anguish of soul; and never, until I did cry out unto the Lord Jesus Christ for mercy, did I receive a remission of my sins. But behold, I did cry unto him and I did find peace to my soul.” *(Alma 38:8)*

Although I have mentioned it before, let me repeat the reaction of one of my instructors at the Hebrew University. When Dr. David Pflueser was asked if he believed in Jesus as the Messiah, he said with a smile, “When he comes, I will ask him, Sir, is this your first or second visit to Israel?” That might be a little late in terms of preparation, yet it showed some sort of an open heart.

Lesson
36

“On the Morrow Come I into the World”

3 Nephi 1–7

Scripture Summary: *Nephi, son of Helaman, departs out of the land, and his son Nephi keeps the records—Though signs and wonders abound, the wicked plan to slay the righteous—The night of Christ’s birth arrives—The sign is given and a new star arises—Lying and deceivings increase, and the Gadianton robbers slaughter many. [Between A.D. 1 and 4]*

Wickedness and abominations increase among the people—The Nephites and Lamanites unite to defend themselves against the Gadianton robbers—Converted Lamanites become white and are called Nephites. [Between A.D. 5 and 15]

Giddianhi, the Gadianton leader, demands that Lachoneus and the Nephites surrender themselves and their lands—Lachoneus appoints Gidgiddoni as chief captain of the armies—The Nephites assemble in Zarahemla and Bountiful to defend themselves. [Between A.D. 16 and 17]

The Nephite armies defeat the Gadianton robbers—Giddianhi is slain, and his successor, Zemnarihah, is hanged—The Nephites praise the Lord for their victories. [Between A.D. 18 and 22]

The Nephites repent and forsake their sins—Mormon writes the history of his people and declares the everlasting word to them—Israel shall be gathered in from her long dispersion. [Between A.D. 21 and 26]

The Nephites prosper—Pride, wealth, and class distinctions arise—The Church is rent with dissensions—Satan leads the people in open rebellion—Many prophets cry repentance and are slain—Their murderers conspire to take over the government. [Between A.D. 26 and 30]

The chief judge is murdered, the government is overthrown, and the people divide into tribes—Jacob, an antichrist, becomes king of a league of tribes—Nephi preaches repentance and faith in Christ—Angels minister to him daily, and he raises his brother from the dead—Many repent and are baptized. [Between A.D. 30 and 33]

**Supplemental
Holy Land
and Judaic
Insights:**

All prophets testify of the Lord. There are three prophets in this particular time frame of the Book of Mormon who prophesied about the Lord’s rather imminent coming. These three also seemed to “disappear,” or in other words, were not heard of again. Each one, as prophets, exercised the redemptive power that God had given them. This “disappearance” into obscurity refers to an Alma, Samuel the Lamanite and a Nephi. Alma and Nephi were Nephites with a light skin and Samuel the Lamanite likely had a darker skin.

“And when Alma had done this he departed out of the land of Zarahemla, as if to go into the land of Melek. And it came to pass that he was never heard of more; as to his death or burial we know not of.” (*Alma 45:18*)

“And as they went forth to lay their hands on him, behold, he did cast himself down from the wall, and did flee out of their lands, yea, even unto his own country, and began to preach and to prophesy among his own people. And behold, he was never heard of more among the Nephites; . . .” (*Helaman 16:7-8*)

“Then he departed out of the land, and whither he went, no man knoweth; and his son Nephi did keep the records in his stead, yea, the record of this people.” (*3 Nephi 1:3*)

“And Nephi, who was the father of Nephi, who had the charge of the records, did not return to the land of Zarahemla, and could nowhere be found in all the land.” (*3 Nephi 2:9*)

In the middle East, Christians have a tradition of three wise men or Magi that come from the East bearing gifts for a newborn King. Obviously, the scriptures give us an account of Herod the Great receiving visitors and requesting that they return with news of “King of The Jews” whereabouts. When they did not return, Herod ordered all the children killed in the Bethlehem area who were two-years old and under, (Matthew 2:1-16). Somehow, many nativity sets carved from olive wood have the wise men appearing at the birth even though the scriptures indicate a time frame of about two years later.

Additionally, the Christian tradition depicts the wise men as two light-skinned men accompanying another dark-skinned person. For the Middle Easterners, it has a pleasant symbolism about it in any case, dark skinned and light skinned - worshipping the Messiah of all mankind.

“Matthew's account of ‘wise men from the east’ coming to Jerusalem and Bethlehem in search of the Christ Child is sometimes recited as a visit of three Magi. (Matt. 2.) Actually there is no historical basis for the prevailing legend that they were from the apostate Persian cult or that they were three in number. It is much more probable that they were devout men who knew of our Lord's coming advent, including the promise that a new star would arise, and that they came as prophets of any age would have done to worship their King. It is clear that they were in tune with the Lord and were receiving revelation from him, for they were ‘warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod.’ (Matt. 2:12.)” *(Bruce R. McConkie, Mormon Doctrine, p.462)*

“Our Lord's birth into mortality was accompanied by the appearance of a new star in the heavens. One of Samuel the Lamanite's Messianic prophecies foretold this heavenly sign (Hela. 14:5), and the Nephites knew of the promised birth because they saw the new star that arose according to Samuel's word. (3 Ne. 1:21.)” *(Bruce R. McConkie, Mormon Doctrine, p.765)*

“In contrast to the lowly shepherds and to the devout Simeon and Anna, who had become witnesses of our Lord, divine providence now provided witnesses from the great and mighty of the earth, witnesses who could bring gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh, witnesses who could command audience with kings and who could boldly inquire: ‘Where is he that is born King of the Jews?’ So there came from unnamed eastern lands -- perhaps, Persia, Arabia, Mesopotamia, perhaps elsewhere -- an unspecified number of wise men. Whether they were two, three, or twenty in number is a matter of pure speculation.” *(Bruce R. McConkie, Doctrinal New Testament Commentary, Vol.1, p.102 - p.103)*

In Jewish custom, there prevails an expectation of “wise men” coming from obscurity before the coming of the Messiah. As touched on in previous lesson materials, many Jews anticipate a Joseph of latter-days as well as a David of latter-days. To the Jews, these individuals will appear out of obscurity with redemptive powers. One or the other will become either the Messiah or they will be forebearers of the Messiah in the last days.

Lesson
37

“Whosoever Will Come, Him Will I Receive”

3 Nephi 8–11

Scripture Summary: *Tempests, earthquakes, fires, whirlwinds, and physical upheavals attest the crucifixion of Christ—Many people are destroyed—Darkness covers the land for three days—Those who remain bemoan their fate. [A.D. 34]*

In the darkness the voice of Christ proclaims the destruction of many people and cities for their wickedness—He also proclaims his divinity, announces that the law of Moses is fulfilled, and invites men to come unto him and be saved. [A.D. 34]

There is silence in the land for many hours—The voice of Christ promises to gather his people as a hen gathereth her chickens—The more righteous part of the people had been preserved. [A.D. 34]

The Father testifies of his Beloved Son—Christ appears and proclaims his atonement—The people feel the wound marks in his hands and feet and side—They cry Hosanna—He sets forth the mode and manner of baptism—The spirit of contention is of the devil—Christ’s doctrine is that men should believe and be baptized and receive the Holy Ghost. [A.D. 34]

**Supplemental
Holy Land
and Judaic
Insights:**

On both sides of the earth, eastern and western, the signs given of the Savior’s death and atonement agony had already been foreshadowed in ancient Israel. In the Book of Mormon, terrible storms and an unusual darkness fulfilled their prophets’ predictions. Examples of similar signs are contained in the plagues of Egypt when the Children of Israel sought deliverance from the cruel Pharaoh. The plagues included storms and darkness. These were signs to assist in recognizing the Messiah, The Deliverer, one who would provide salvation in the future.

“And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch forth thine hand toward heaven, that there may be hail in all the land of Egypt, upon man, and upon beast, and upon every herb of the field, throughout the land of Egypt. And Moses stretched forth his rod toward heaven: and the LORD sent thunder and hail, and the fire ran along upon the ground; and the LORD rained hail upon the land of Egypt. So there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail, very grievous, such as there was none like it in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation. And the hail smote throughout all the land of Egypt all that was in the field, both man and beast; and the hail smote every herb of the field, and brake every tree of the field.” (*Exodus 9:22-25*)

“But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, so that he would not let the children of Israel go. And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand toward heaven, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, even darkness which may be felt. And Moses stretched forth his hand toward heaven; and there was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days: They saw not one another, neither rose any from his place for three days: but all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings.” (*Exodus 10:20-23*)

In the Land of Israel, physical phenomena also occurred that parallels signs given to ancient Israel as well as what occurred in the Book of Mormon lands.

“Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Some of them that stood there, when they heard that, said, This man calleth for Elias. And straightway one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink. The rest said, Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him. Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent;” *(Matthew 27:45-51)*

The number of times that the number “three” is used is also a powerful metaphor. As mentioned in previous lesson supplements, the term “three days and three nights” is used often as a lesson of salvation. Most of the ninety-one scriptural references Latter-day Saints use are a type or sign of being saved. In Judaism, the holiest day of the year is Yom Kippur. It is preceded by ten days of repenting which are followed by a day of fasting. The entire country shuts down. This includes radio and television. All shops are closed. All private and public transportation is discontinued. Most significantly, the Book of Jonah is read. He is told to go north (up) to Nineveh, instead he goes south (down) to Jaffa where his boat journey ends in a terrible storm. He is thrown overboard, goes down and spends three days and three nights in the belly of a great fish before he comes up and is delivered. Hundreds of years later, Jesus used that experience as the only sign he would give the Pharisees of his Messianic role.

“. . . he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” *(Matthew 12:39-40)*

Jonah knew that “Salvation is of the Lord,” (Jonah 2:9). A Hebrew way of saying that would be “Jeho” (shortened version of Jehovah - The Lord) and “Shua” (shortened version of salvation). Together they make “Jehoshua.” That name has been derived into Greek and Latin and eventually into English as “Jesus.” He identified himself to the Nephites.

“And it came to pass, as they understood they cast their eyes up again towards heaven; and behold, they saw a Man descending out of heaven; and he was clothed in a white robe; and he came down and stood in the midst of them; and the eyes of the whole multitude were turned upon him, and they durst not open their mouths, even one to another, and wist not what it meant, for they thought it was an angel that had appeared unto them. And it came to pass that he stretched forth his hand and spake unto the people, saying: Behold, I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified shall come into the world. And behold, I am the light and the life of the world; and I have drunk out of that bitter cup which the Father hath given me, and have glorified the Father in taking upon me the sins of the world, in the which I have suffered the will of the Father in all things from the beginning. And it came to pass that when Jesus had spoken these words the whole multitude fell to the earth; for

they remembered that it had been prophesied among them that Christ should show himself unto them after his ascension into heaven.” (*Nephi 11:8-12*)

Those who had already made the “leap of faith” before the signs were saved. They experienced the fulfillment of signs that they did not seek but recognized through their faith and repentance . . . and they were received unto Him.

“Old Things Are Done Away, and All Things Have Become New”

Lesson 38

3 Nephi 12–15

Scripture Summary: *Jesus calls and commissions the Twelve—He delivers to the Nephites a discourse similar to the Sermon on the Mount—He speaks the Beatitudes—His teachings transcend and take precedence over the law of Moses—Men are commanded to be perfect even as he and his Father are perfect—Compare Matthew 5.*

Jesus teaches the Nephites the Lord's Prayer—They are to lay up treasures in heaven—The Twelve in their ministry are commanded to take no thought for temporal things—Compare Matthew 6.

Jesus commands: Judge not; ask of God; beware of false prophets—He promises salvation to those who do the will of the Father—Compare Matthew 7.

Jesus announces that the law of Moses is fulfilled in him—The Nephites are the other sheep of whom he spake in Jerusalem—Because of iniquity the Lord's people in Jerusalem do not know of the scattered sheep of Israel. [A.D. 34]

Supplemental

Holy Land and Judaic Insights:

There is a powerful advantage in comparing the Sermon on the Mount given in Israel with the same instructions given in the Book of Mormon lands. In the Galilee, Jesus spoke to the Twelve. In the Book of Mormon lands he spoke to the multitude and the Twelve he choose from them.

In Israel, a shepherd has “lead sheep” with bells around their necks to assist in leading the flock. These are older sheep from the previous year. They have more experience and know their shepherd better than the flock. In a possible shepherd’s model, Jesus, the Good Shepherd, gave the Sermon on the Mount, apparently to the twelve disciples. In turn, their mission was to teach the multitudes.

“And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him.” (*Matthew 5:1*)

Among the Nephites, the Twelve and the multitude knew the Savior well. He was able to teach the Twelve with the multitude.

“And it was the more righteous part of the people who were saved, and it was they who received the prophets and stoned them not; and it was they who had not shed the blood of the saints, who were spared . . .” (*3 Nephi 10:12*)

“ . . . it came to pass that when Jesus had spoken these words unto Nephi, and to those who had been called, (now the number of them who had been called, and received power and authority to baptize, was twelve) and behold, he stretched forth his hand unto the multitude, and cried unto them, saying: Blessed are ye if ye shall give heed unto the words of these twelve whom I have chosen from among you to minister unto you, and to be your servants; and unto them I have given power that they may baptize you with water; and after that ye are baptized with water, behold, I will baptize you with fire and with the Holy Ghost; therefore blessed are ye if ye shall

believe in me and be baptized, after that ye have seen me and know that I am.”
(*3 Nephi 12:1*)

What the Savior taught in this particular sermon is often interpreted as being a Christian guideline by those who only have the New Testament account. It seems that many attempt to interpret human characteristics listed in the Beatitudes.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit . . . mournful . . . meek . . . hunger and thirst after righteousness . . . merciful . . . pure in heart . . . peacemakers . . . persecuted for righteousness’ sake.” (*Matthew 5:3-11*) (emphasis added)

However, we may learn more of the Lord’s intention as the Book of Mormon account is considered. There are only a few additional words, yet they turn the direction of the Beatitudes to the Savior instead of to the people. Note the extra words in the Nephite rendition of this same sermon.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit who come unto me . . .” (*3 Nephi 12:3*) (emphasis added)

In that sense, the Sermon on the Mount is inviting all people, whether rich or poor in spirit, happy or mourning, popular or persecuted, to come unto him. He also promised a specific blessing for “coming unto him.” Note the comparison of both accounts.

“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.” (*Matthew 5:6*)

Again, more insight can be gained through another rendition of that verse which states that those hungering and thirsting after righteousness would be filled.

“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled with the Holy Ghost.” (*3 Nephi 12:6*)

In this remarkable sermon, Jesus also indicated that the Law of Moses was fulfilled in him, that he was restoring a higher law, one that was governed and dictated more by the spirit and intent than by the letter of the law, which was given at Mount Sinai. An even deeper understanding of the Sermon on the Mount comes when comparing it to the “sermon” and the commandments given on Mount Sinai. For example,

“For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven. Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother . . . shall be in danger of the judgment.”
(*Matthew 5:20-22*) (*3 Nephi 12:22*)

A closer look at the Beatitudes reveals that Jesus gave additional commandments. They were based on the original Law of Moses but had deeper spiritual implications, implying that

the reason behind keeping the commandments was more the spiritual guideline than the letter of the law. Another example follows.

“Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh . . . to lust . . . hath committed adultery . . . already in his heart.” (*Matthew 5:27-28*)

The Book of Mormon rendition gives the counsel with clearer meaning.

“Behold, I give unto you a commandment, that ye suffer [allow] none of these things to enter into your heart. (*3 Nephi 12:29*)

The old and new laws are again like a chiasmus, with the Savior’s ministry and subsequent atonement as the center. His atonement is the turning point that pivots the lesser law to the higher law. The following poem illustrates the principle of “do’s and don’ts” as a lesser law and the principle of “following the spirit” as the higher law .

SERMONS ON THE MOUNTS

(Daniel Rona, 1976)

The law was given, the standard set. But, best was not accepted yet.
We compromised with Heaven's voice, Just ten commandments was our choice.
Tooth for tooth and eye for eye, retribution was the cry.

- LESSER
LAW**
1. No other God -
 2. Or image graven -
 3. Not in vain, the name of Heaven -
 4. Remember Sabbath,
 5. Father, Mother -
 6. Thou shalt not kill -
 7. Nor defile another -
 8. Do not steal -
 9. Or false word belabor -
 10. Do not covet the wealth of neighbor -

But then was promised a covenant new; inwardly, God would speak to you.
With sins forgiven and God revealed, a higher law on us was sealed.

- HIGHER
LAW**
10. Bless your neighbor -
 9. Share a kindly word -
 8. Give to others -
 7. And clean thoughts preferred -
 6. No need for anger to hide your smile -
 5. Parents, children, walk the second mile -
 4. Use the Sabbath, blessings to bestow -
 3. The name of God in your good deeds show -
 2. Your life will God's true image mirror,
 1. As you and He become much nearer.

The secret of God's law is known—when action by intent is shown.
In Heaven's highest throne to stay, Use thought and reason to guide the way.
The highest law is now defined—in thought, in spirit and in the mind.

As stated before, the two sets of law form a chiasmus around the ministry and atonement of Jesus – the lesser law that would lead to him and the higher law to live like him. Fifty days after Jesus' crucifixion at Passover, the Holy Ghost came upon the congregation in Jerusalem. The Jewish holiday commemorating the giving of the lesser law at Mount Sinai is also celebrated fifty days after Passover. Apparently, the same day was also used in giving the gift of the Holy Ghost, the higher law. The day is called Pentecost.

“And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.” *(Acts 2:1-4)*

“Behold My Joy Is Full”

Lesson 39

3 Nephi 17–19

Scripture Summary: *Jesus directs the people to ponder his words and pray for understanding—He heals their sick—He prays for the people, using language that cannot be written—Angels minister to and fire encircles their little ones.*

Jesus institutes the sacrament among the Nephites—They are commanded to pray always in his name—Those who eat his flesh and drink his blood unworthily are damned—The disciples are given power to confer the Holy Ghost.

The Twelve Disciples minister unto the people and pray for the Holy Ghost—They are baptized and receive the Holy Ghost and the ministering of angels—Jesus prays using words that cannot be written—He attests to the exceedingly great faith of these Nephites. [A.D. 34]

Supplemental

Holy Land and Judaic Insights:

A short account that includes little children may serve to awaken in us the realization of the joy the Savior feels when the children are brought to him and the joy we may feel when we come to him as little children.

A number of years ago, I was in the Galilee with tourists on the day when the headline news rang out, “The King is coming!” The media was set to record and broadcast the event. The Israeli Prime Minister and officials were to meet the Jordanian King Hussein Ibn Talal and his entourage at the center of a new bridge built in his honor and escort him officially into Israel. The Jordanians began their entrance, but no Israeli was to be seen. Was there a mistake? Who missed the cue? All of a sudden, Israeli children came running toward King Hussein to greet him with flowers. Some say the King wept. However, the media waited until the officials arrived and only then did the filming begin. Did someone miss the point?

Imbedded in the Jewish genetic memory was a protocol; the way to honor a King is to extend the tenderness and innocence of children. Two-thousand years earlier and close by, children gathered around the Savior. Some objected to the little ones “bothering” the Lord.

“. . . Jesus called them unto him, and said, Suffer (allow) little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein.” *(Luke 18:16-17)*

In 1951 Hussein was a child standing next to his grandfather, King Abdullah, as he was shot to death while in prayer at the Al Aksa Mosque in Jerusalem. The underlying reason for the assassination was that Grandfather Abdullah envisioned a peaceful coexistence with the Jews of Israel. Moslem fanatics apparently thought that killing the king would eliminate peace. It did not; peace was spared. Among the shots was a bullet that glanced off a medal on young Hussein’s chest. His life was spared. Somewhere tucked in the genetic code of his royal blood, Hussein was destined to become the king who would see the peace his grandfather yearned for. Although not the first peace treaty a Moslem nation would have with Israel, it is by far the warmest peace agreement Israel has with any Arab neighbor in the Holy Land.

The “Holy” of the land was Jesus of Nazareth. He was born in Bethlehem, moved to Egypt, returned to Galilee, visited beyond the Jordan River, and fulfilled his mission in Jerusalem, the Holy City. His influence reaches out from these places to all the world. Now, I ask you, are you ready to bring your children to him? The peace you will experience will warm your heart. His purpose was and is to bring peace.

“. . . Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” *(John 14:27)*

When the King of Kings appeared on the Western Continent, thousands who had survived the destruction at his mortal death were touched to the heart with the peace he brought as the resurrected Lord. He requested the children to be brought to him.

“And they arose from the earth, and he said unto them: Blessed are ye because of your faith. And now behold, my joy is full. And when he had said these words, he wept, and the multitude bare record of it, and he took their little children, one by one, and blessed them, and prayed unto the Father for them. And when he had done this he wept again; And he spake unto the multitude, and said unto them: Behold your little ones. And as they looked to behold they cast their eyes towards heaven, and they saw the heavens open, and they saw angels descending out of heaven as it were in the midst of fire; and they came down and encircled those little ones about, and they were encircled about with fire; and the angels did minister unto them.” *(3 Nephi 17:20-24)*

Imbedded in our genetic memory should be a desire to love, teach and lead our children. We can use the experiences of the past as guidelines. We can use the opportunities of the present to prove our devotion, to fill ourselves with his love. It will help prepare us in the near future greet the King, for soon the King of Kings will be coming! Our greeting as “His children” will fill a measure of true joy.

“Then I Will Gather Them In”

3 Nephi 16; 20–21

Scripture Summary: *Jesus will visit others of the lost sheep of Israel—In the latter days the gospel will go to the Gentiles and then to the house of Israel—The Lord’s people shall see eye to eye when he brings again Zion.*

Jesus provides bread and wine miraculously and again administers the sacrament unto them—The remnant of Jacob shall come to the knowledge of the Lord their God and shall inherit the Americas—Jesus is the prophet like unto Moses, and the Nephites are children of the prophets—Others of the Lord’s people shall be gathered to Jerusalem.

Israel shall be gathered when the Book of Mormon comes forth—The Gentiles shall be established as a free people in America—They shall be saved if they believe and obey; otherwise they shall be cut off and destroyed—Israel shall build the New Jerusalem, and the lost tribes shall return. [A.D. 34]

Supplemental

Holy Land and Judaic Insights:

An explanation of sheep and shepherding in Israel can help us understand the imagery in these chapters of the Book of Mormon.

Leading the Sheep Today: Nowadays, a farm house is here with more than a hundred sheep near by. The boy shepherd leads them out every morning and returns in the late afternoon. Leading sheep is typical in this country. Usually there are about a dozen lead sheep, older ones from last year’s flock. The shepherd usually has them marked with bells around their necks. It is common to hear the boy talk to his sheep. He calls them when it’s time to move on, and that’s when the lead sheep immediately respond, ringing their bells as they run toward their shepherd. The ringing noise alerts the other sheep, and then like a wave they begin to follow the others.

Ancient Temple Practice: The shepherd’s model is similar to an ancient biblical temple practice. For example, in the inner courtyard of the temple the chief priest would light a fire and burn incense to signal his readiness for a sacrifice. That would alert the twelve priests in the next courtyard to wash and ready themselves. Their signal to the congregation was the ringing of bells. The multitudes would then gather to follow the priests to participate in the ritual.

Additionally, I have noticed how the shepherds in Israel develop a language for their sheep. The grunts, whistles and sounds are recognized by the flock. I have also seen two shepherds meet on the hillsides as they lead their sheep. The shepherds stop, chat and typically make a small fire and prepare a hot drink. In the meantime their sheep begin to mingle. You could imagine the ownership confusion that might follow. Yet, when one shepherd departs, he simply begins talking and making his “sounds,” his sheep follow him.

“For he is our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. To day if ye will hear his voice . . .” (*Psalms 95:7*)

“And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice.” (*John 10:4*)

“And now I say unto you that the good shepherd doth call after you; and if you will hearken unto his voice he will bring you into his fold, and ye are his sheep; and he commandeth you that ye suffer no ravenous wolf to enter among you, that ye may not be destroyed.” (*Alma 5:60*)

“How are we to know the voice of the Good Shepherd from the voice of a stranger? Can any person answer this question? I can. It is very easy. To every philosopher upon the earth, I say, your eye can be deceived, so can mine; your ear can be deceived, so can mine; the touch of your hand can be deceived, so can mine; but the Spirit of God filling the creature with revelation and the light of eternity, cannot be mistaken--the revelation which comes from God is never mistaken. When an individual, filled with the Spirit of God, declares the truth of heaven, the sheep hear that, the Spirit of the Lord pierces their inmost souls and sinks deep into their hearts; by the testimony of the Holy Ghost light springs up within them, and they see and understand for themselves. This is the way the Gospel should be preached by every Elder in Israel . . .” (*Discourses of Brigham Young, Pg.431*)

One of my guests, Lorin Moench, a sheep rancher, while visiting Israel pointed out the significant difference between shepherds and sheep herders. Sheep herding is usually driving the flock. But, in Israel, the shepherd leads the flock.

Leading the gathering of Israel is the tribe of Joseph. Anciently, Joseph, the son of Israel, was to lead Israel spiritually as the birthright son. Instead, he was sold as a slave, yet he became a servant that saved. He saved the people of Egypt (Gentiles) and he saved his family (Israelites). In modern times, the keys of the gathering and leading of Israel were given to Joseph Smith. He is a descendant of ancient Joseph. His role is summarized in the parable in Doctrine and Covenants 101:44-62. After the destruction of the twelve olive trees and the scattering of the watchmen, the lord instructed a gathering.

“And the lord of the vineyard said unto one of his servants: Go and gather together the residue of my servants, and take all the strength of mine house, which are my warriors, my young men, and they that are of middle age also among all my servants, who are the strength of mine house, *save those only whom I have appointed to tarry . . .*” (*D&C 101:55*) (Italics added)

The verse can be viewed as an instruction of “gathering” activity by the young, the middle aged and the strength of older ones. In modern times, it includes Elders, Sisters, middle aged and older couples, (every member a missionary). The exception is that some, for the time being, are told not to do mission work – *like in Israel*. In the end, the Lord would gather those that we have not been able to find.

“. . . that by and by I may come with the residue of mine house and possess the land.” (*D&C 101:58*)

The imagery used in this parallel is still visible on the hillsides of Israel to this day. The unfinished watch towers, the hedges (terraces) and the olive trees are constant reminders of the Lord working to gather us home. The leadership of this gathering was always Joseph. In

a parable with almost the same imagery, Jesus told the self-appointed leaders, the Pharisees, that the kingdom would be taken from them (Judah) and given to another (Joseph).

“Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder. And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them. But when they sought to lay hands on him, they feared the multitude, because they took him for a prophet.” *(Matthew 21:43-46)*

The Book of Mormon prophecies in the chapters being reviewed this week have deep and powerful images. An important image of the future is given about Jerusalem, both old and new. The Holy Cities are the Lord’s Cities. Each will become a “Temple City.”

“For it is ordained that in Zion, and in her stakes, and in Jerusalem, those places which I have appointed for refuge, shall be the places for your baptisms for your dead.” *(D&C 124:36)*

“And then shall be brought to pass that which is written: Awake, awake again, and put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city, for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean.” *(3 Nephi 20:36)*

The Lamb of God will live in His cities. They will be His earthly homes. He will lead us (gather us) home, to His Father, in our heavenly home.

“He Did Expound All Things unto Them”

3 Nephi 22–26

Scripture Summary: *In the last days, Zion and her stakes shall be established, and Israel shall be gathered in mercy and tenderness—They shall triumph—Compare Isaiah 54.*

Jesus approves the words of Isaiah—He commands the people to search the prophets—The words of Samuel the Lamanite concerning the resurrection are added to their records.

The Lord’s messenger shall prepare the way for the Second Coming—Christ shall sit in judgment—Israel is commanded to pay tithes and offerings—A book of remembrance is kept—Compare Malachi 3.

At the Second Coming the proud and wicked shall be burned as stubble—Elijah shall return before that great and dreadful day—Compare Malachi 4.

Jesus expounds all things from the beginning to the end—Babes and children utter marvelous things which cannot be written—Those in the Church of Christ have all things in common among them. [A.D. 34]

Supplemental Holy Land and Judaic Insights:

Carrying on the theme of the “Cities of the Lord” in the previous lesson supplement, let us reflect that the original “Temple” was the camp of Israel. The stakes and curtains or banners identified the various tribes’ habitation. The eleven tribes surrounded the tribe of Levi who, in turn, surrounded the Lord’s habitation. In addition to the stakes identifying each tribal area, the stakes around the tabernacle had curtains creating a presence of sacred privacy, a habitation for the Lord.

“Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities: thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down; not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken.”
(*Isaiah 33:20*)

The sacredness and worthiness of the Camp of Israel were compromised and the Lord’s “presence” was taken to a special site of Shiloh which is north of what later became Jerusalem. The Prophet Joshua redistributed the “camp of Israel” by making Shiloh the House of the Lord and giving land assignments to the tribes of Israel for their houses.

“And the whole congregation of the children of Israel assembled together at Shiloh, and set up the tabernacle of the congregation there. And the land was subdued before them.” (*Joshua 18:1*)

“And Joshua cast lots for them in Shiloh before the LORD: and there Joshua divided the land unto the children of Israel according to their divisions.” (*Joshua 18:10*)

“And they spake unto them at Shiloh in the land of Canaan, saying, The LORD commanded by the hand of Moses to give us cities to dwell in, with the suburbs thereof for our cattle.” (*Joshua 21:2*)

Later, when the Jebusite city of Salem came into the hands of King David, it became the City of David, Jerusalem. He purchased the threshing floor of a Jebusite for the future House of the Lord.

“And Araunah said, Wherefore is my lord the king come to his servant? And David said, To buy the threshing floor of thee, to build an altar unto the LORD, that the plague may be stayed from the people.” *(2 Samuel 24:21)*

Later, through the modern-day restoration of the gospel, buildings were erected as Houses of the Lord.

“The Prophet Joseph Smith, and my father, Hyrum Smith, Brigham Young, John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, and other choice spirits who were reserved to come forth in the fulness of times to take part in laying the foundations of the great latter-day work, including the building of the temples and the performance of ordinances therein for the redemption of the dead, were also in the spirit world.” *(D&C 138:53-54)*

As mentioned in the previous chapter, in the future, the temples will return to the Stakes of Zion, and, in fact, some cities will become temples. So, in addition to the title “Houses of the Lord,” there will be “Cities of the Lord.”

In year 70 when Titus destroyed Jerusalem, the Jews lost their temple and the city of Jerusalem. Ever since, religious Jews have prayed three times daily at each meal and at other times for the rebuilding of the temple. That tradition continues into modern times. I have found three trends of thought about this. First, there are some who think the temple will come from heaven as the Messiah manifests himself. The second is a foreboding thought that few Jews espouse of destroying the present Moslem shrine, the Dome of the Rock, and the nearby Al Aksa mosque and build the temple as last remembered. The third has some truthful possibilities recently talked about by the late Rabbi Abraham HaKohen Kook as he referred to a tradition of rebuilding the temple. When asked if the Temple could be built soon, he deferred to a “latter-day Joseph” and purportedly quoted the twelfth century Rabbi Moses Maimonides, who said about a latter-day Joseph, “. . . to him will be given the keys of the gathering of Israel, he will restore Temple worship.”

Latter-day Saints claim to be descendants of ancient Joseph and testify that the keys of the gathering of Israel and temple work have been restored. They also have some information that the Jews will build the temple in Jerusalem. At the beginning of the century, when Latter-day Saint President John Taylor showing Baron Rothschild the Salt Lake Latter-day Saint Temple, Rothschild said,

“Elder Taylor, what do you mean by this temple? What is the object of it? Why are you building it?”

President Taylor answered,

"Your fathers had among them prophets, who revealed to them the mind and will of God; we have among us prophets who reveal to us the mind and will of God, as they did. One of your prophets said--The Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple, but who may abide the day of his coming? For he shall sit as a refiner's fire and a purifier of silver! . . . sir, will you point me out a place on the face of the earth where God has a temple?"

Rothschild said,

". . . Do you consider that this is that temple?"

President Taylor answered,

"No, sir, it is not. . . . The Lord has told us to build this temple so that we may administer therein [ordinances] for our dead and also to perform some of the sacred matrimonial alliances and covenants that we believe in, that are rejected by the world generally, but which are among the purest, most exalting and ennobling principles that God ever revealed to man."

Rothschild asked,

"Well, then, this is not our temple?"

And President Taylor responded

"No. . . . you will build a temple, for the Lord has shown us, among other things, that you Jews have quite a role to perform in the latter days, and that all the things spoken by your old prophets will be fulfilled, that you will be gathered to old Jerusalem, and that you will build a temple there; and when you build that temple, and the time has arrived, the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple." (*Gospel Kingdom, John Taylor, Page 293*)

It becomes obvious that both Jews and Latter-day Saints have "temple" and "gathering" perceptions. In order to fulfill our prophetic destinies we must learn more about each other. The Latter-day Saints can already lead out in learning more about Judah and his customs and ancient religious procedures. The gift of the spirit with the learning of the Jews will assist in expounding the very teachings given to our ancient forefathers so that we can understand them and apply them to our present and future lives.

“This Is My Gospel”

Lesson 42

3 Nephi 27–30; 4 Nephi

Scripture Summary: *Jesus commands them to call the Church in his name—His mission and atoning sacrifice constitute his gospel—Men are commanded to repent and be baptized that they may be sanctified by the Holy Ghost—They are to be even as Jesus is.*

Nine of the Twelve desire and are promised an inheritance in Christ’s kingdom when they die—The Three Nephites desire and are given power over death so as to remain on the earth until Jesus comes again—They are translated and see things not lawful to utter, and they are now ministering among men.

The coming forth of the Book of Mormon is a sign that the Lord has commenced to gather Israel and fulfill his covenants—Those who reject his latter-day revelations and gifts shall be cursed.

The latter-day Gentiles are commanded to repent and come unto Christ and be numbered with the house of Israel. [Between A.D. 34 and 35]

The Nephites and the Lamanites are all converted to the Church of Christ—They have all things in common, work miracles, and prosper in the land—After two centuries divisions, evils, false churches, and persecutions arise—After three hundred years both the Nephites and the Lamanites are wicked—Amarron hides up the sacred records. [Between A.D. 36 and 321]

Supplemental

Holy Land and Judaic Insights:

The Lord’s first message to the Disciples in the “Americas” was the same as to the Disciples in the Land of Israel, that of repentance. The word “repentance” in Hebrew literally means “to turn” or “return.”

“Although Judaism sees sin as a most serious matter, even the sinner is not without hope. One of the most important theological doctrines of both the Bible and the Talmud is that if a sinner repents his bad deeds, God will forgive him. Repentance consists of several stages --- firstly the sinner must reflect on his actions and realize that he has indeed done the wrong thing. He must then make up his mind never to do it again, and confess his sin. This confession is not made to any other human being but is made by the sinner directly to God. On this basis the two confessions *Ashamnu* and *Al-Het* were introduced into the prayers for the Day of Atonement which is a special occasion for repentance and forgiveness. However, even when a sinner has done all these things, his repentance is still not final until he has been exposed to the same temptation and withstood it. Of course he should not deliberately put himself on that spot again.”

“Repentance in Hebrew is known as *teshuvah*, which literally means ‘return,’ and signifies a return to God. A person who repents his sins is known as a *ba'al teshuvah*. Many rabbis of the Talmud believed that the real *ba'al teshuvah* is greater even than a person who has never sinned and they furthermore said that when a person repents out of love of God (and not just out of fear of divine punishment), all the sins he had committed are considered to be *mitzvot*. This is perhaps the most comforting doctrine that Judaism has given to the world.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

The special request of the Three Nephite Disciples to remain on the earth to serve mankind’s quest in returning to God is, of course, similar to the Lord’s beloved Disciple,

John, in Israel. The Jews have a tradition (aggadah) that has a somewhat similar idea of special “unknown” visitors. Some refer to them as “Zaddikim” or very righteous beings.

“According to an *aggadah* in the Babylonian Talmud, in each generation there are exactly 36 righteous men -- *Lamed Vav Zaddikim* -- who received the Divine Presence and whose righteousness sustains the world. In the folklore of the Kabbalah and later that of Hasidism, the idea of these *lamedvavniks*, as they were commonly called, assumed great significance. They were believed to be anonymous saints who remained unnoticed by other men because of their humble nature and vocations. However, in times of great peril it was believed that the *lamedvavnik* dramatically appeared and used his hidden powers to defeat the enemies of Israel. Then, as mysteriously as he came, he returned to his usual obscurity.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

The miracle of being unharmed of wild beasts is a reminder of a spiritual presence and worthiness that can prevail with man and beasts. One miracle is reflected in the ancient scriptures as Daniel was among lions and yet remained unharmed.

“My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt.” (*Daniel 6:22*)

“The international peace of the Messianic era is described in a beautiful passage in Isaiah (11:6--7): animals which are natural enemies will live together in harmony. ‘And the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.’” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Holding earthly things in common reflects a higher attitude and discipline that true disciples of the Lord can raise themselves to. The who that followed the Disciples of Jesus in Israel had that standard for a while. Jews have attempted to raise themselves to that level throughout the ages.

“And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all [men], as every man had need.” (*Acts 2:44-45*)

The modern Kibbutz system in Israel is a lesser derivation of the principle of holding things in common and working for the common good of the entire community.

“There is no private wealth whatever. Once a new member is accepted after a year's trial period, he gives everything he owns (apart from personal possessions) to the kibbutz. In addition, he is expected to put in his honest day's work in whatever field the kibbutz planning committee finds most useful for the kibbutz as a whole.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

The Hassidic sect of Judaism attempted to create a commonality as they formed their special society a few hundred years ago. They wore black clothing to identify their common connection. They may have decided to do so based on ancient Biblical Jewish tradition and, in some cases, being forced to identify themselves as Jews.

“Today, most Hasidim live in the United States and Israel. Among the main dynasties are such diverse groups as the Habad-Lubavich movement, which describes itself as ‘a mission to Jews by Jews;’ the violently anti-Zionist Satmar Hasidim; the ‘classical’ Hasidim of Belz and the scholarly followers of the Gur dynasty.”

“But though these groups have their philosophical differences, they maintain a very similar way of life which has changed little since the 18th century. The men dress in traditional *kapotes* (long black coats; silk for the Sabbath and holidays) and wide-brimmed black hats, which may be replaced by the fur-trimmed *shtreimel* on special occasions.”

“Imagine . . . wearing a tunic with purple stripes, as Jews once did in Persia; a long black gown as in medieval Spain; a yellow turban as in 16th-century Turkey; or a vest with 12 silver buttons as in 19th-century India. In many countries Jews have favored a distinctive style of dress, which has often helped them preserve their own identity in a foreign environment. Thus the Midrash gives three reasons by virtue of which our forefathers were redeemed from their slavery in Egypt. One of them is ‘that they did not change their style of dress.’”

“Our first fashion record is the Bible, which describes common, priestly, and royal dress. Monuments in Egypt and Mesopotamia clearly show the styles of that time, which indicated a man's wealth and status. A common garment consisted of a white cloth suspended from the waist to the knees.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Sometimes clothing or types of clothing are used to create an identity. The extremes of fashion often shout the departure from self discipline and godliness. The return to beautiful and yet modest clothing, turning our concern to the other's well being and turning to God in all ways is the Lord's call of repentance, which is “His Gospel.”

Lesson
43

“How Could Ye Have Departed from the Ways of the Lord?”

Mormon 1–6; Moroni

Scripture Summary: *Ammaron instructs Mormon concerning the sacred records—War commences between the Nephites and the Lamanites—The Three Nephites are taken away—Wickedness, unbelief, sorceries, and witchcraft prevail. [About A.D. 322—326]*

Mormon leads the Nephite armies—Blood and carnage sweep the land—The Nephites lament and mourn with the sorrowing of the damned—Their day of grace is passed—Mormon obtains the plates of Nephi—Wars continue. [Between A.D. 327 and 350]

Mormon cries repentance unto the Nephites—They gain a great victory and glory in their own strength—Mormon refuses to lead them, and his prayers for them are without faith—The Book of Mormon invites the twelve tribes of Israel to believe the gospel. [Between A.D. 350 and 362]

War and carnage continue—The wicked punish the wicked—Greater wickedness prevails than ever before in all Israel—Women and children are sacrificed to idols—The Lamanites begin to sweep the Nephites before them. [Between A.D. 363 and 375]

Mormon again leads the Nephite armies in battles of blood and carnage—The Book of Mormon shall come forth to convince all Israel that Jesus is the Christ—The Lamanites shall be a dark, filthy, and loathsome people—They shall receive the gospel from the Gentiles in the latter days. [Between A.D. 375 and 384]

The Nephites gather to the land of Cumorah for the final battles—Mormon hides the sacred records in the hill Cumorah—The Lamanites are victorious, and the Nephite nation is destroyed—Hundreds of thousands are slain with the sword. [A.D. 385]

The second epistle of Mormon to his son Moroni. - Both the Nephites and the Lamanites are depraved and degenerate—They torture and murder each other—Mormon prays that grace and goodness may rest upon Moroni forever. [Between A.D. 400 and 421]

Supplemental Holy Land and Judaic Insights:

The military encounters related in these chapters include the description of the young commander, Mormon. It reminds me of the young commanders in Israel. Young, because in its modern time, Israel itself is such a young nation. In ancient times, fortifications were built by Israelites as well as others who conquered the land. These fortifications are now called tels. They were raised areas or man-made mounds. Some covered upwards of 200 acres of area, such as Hazor that controlled the northern third of Israel. The mound or tel of Megiddo controlled the middle third of the country while Gezer controlled the southern third of Israel. Each time they were conquered, the city was destroyed, covered over and another was built upon it. That meant the tels became higher by each conquering.

“From the information given in the Bible as well as the archaeological finds, it has been possible to reconstruct the structure and layout of the typical ancient Palestinian city. Towering above the city, at its most easily defensible point, rose the inner fortified area, the acropolis, which was the center of government and the main military stronghold. The acropolis consisted of a complex of government buildings, including the palace of the ruler or king, the temple, the offices of the senior government officials, storehouses, and the like. This part was called the ‘tower’ or the ‘citadel.’” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Many of the Book of Mormon locations and cities had biblical names, so I am guessing that their fortifications were built in a similar fashion to and would look like biblical tels. My traveling experience in parts of Mexico and Guatemala has revealed many ruins that look like tels.

A recurring theme throughout the Book of Mormon is a reminder that the Lord always remembers his covenants with his covenant people. Sometimes the term “Jews” is meant as a separate entity and at other times it means the whole house of Israel (representing twelve tribes or families). The plan of salvation was first given to the House of Israel. Later, a major part of Israel was taken captive. The remainder, mostly Judah, became known as what was left of Israel, the Israelites or the Jews. These days, when referring to the Jews, most people usually think of the Jews as the people of Israel.

“And behold, they shall go unto the unbelieving of the Jews; and for this intent shall they go--that they may be persuaded that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God; that the Father may bring about, through his most Beloved, his great and eternal purpose, in restoring the Jews, or all the house of Israel, to the land of their inheritance, which the Lord their God hath given them, unto the fulfilling of his covenant;” *(Mormon 5:14)*

The constant reminders of “returning home” carry several messages that can guide the people of Israel, help them recognize true religion and the give Jews and Gentiles a pathfinder to a heavenly home with God.

“Therefore I write unto you, Gentiles, and also unto you, house of Israel, when the work shall commence, that ye shall be about to prepare to return to the land of your inheritance;” *(Mormon 3:17)*

The scattering and gathering of Israel as well as the gathering of their records is succinctly characterized in Ezekiel 37. Of the two sticks or scrolls that Ezekiel speaks of, one represents Judah and the skeleton of what would be left of the true religion – the Bible. The other stick or “scroll” represents Joseph and the record that some of his descendants gave us, the Book of Mormon. The scattering and gathering of people, the apostasy and restoration of true religion, and our sojourn in earthly life with a subsequent return to a heavenly life is reflected in the metaphors that Ezekiel uses. He teaches that the gathering of Israel and the full restoration of truth will occur when the scriptural records are “in our hands.” There is a pleasant connection to hands, ours and God’s.

“Say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, even with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in mine hand. And the sticks whereon thou writest shall be in thine hand before their eyes.” *(Ezekiel 37:19-20)*

“Know ye not that ye are in the hands of God? Know ye not that he hath all power, and at his great command the earth shall be rolled together as a scroll?”
(Mormon 5:23)

The hand is a powerful metaphor in Judaic tradition. Modern Judaism, however, attempts to pull away from recognizing the literal imagery of God’s hand as such.

“A pointer molded in the shape of a miniature hand (*yad*) is used to read (the Torah scroll) with, and crowns, usually with bells whose tinkling symbolizes the joy of the Torah, rest on the handles. In the synagogue, the Torah is placed in a specially built Ark covered by a decorated curtain (*parokhet*), in front of which the eternal light (ner tamid) burns continuously in a decorative lampshade.”

“In the Bible very often the acts of God are referred to figuratively using terms such as ‘the hand of God.’ Such metaphors are examples of how the Bible speaks in the language of man in order to help us understand concepts which would otherwise be beyond our grasp. Thus a metaphor like ‘The hand of God’ may be used to represent strength and protection such as in the verse, ‘Your right hand, O Lord, is glorious in power; Your right hand, O Lord, shatters the enemy’ (Exodus 15:6). At the same time, the image of God's hands has been used to show benevolence and loving-kindness, as in the verse, ‘You open Your hand and satisfy every living thing with favor’ (Psalms 145).”

“In addition to references to God's hands, biblical history contains instances of miracles performed by the symbolic acts of human hands carrying out the will of God. One such example is the war which Israel fought with Amalek. When Moses held up his hands, Israel prevailed in battle, when he lowered his hands, Amalek prevailed. When his hands felt heavy and tired, Aaron and Hur helped him to hold them up throughout the battle, so that Israel would be victorious.”

“In business transactions, the handshake has a significant meaning. According to halakhic authorities, the handshake is an act of acquisition and binding agreement, and some sources even ascribe to it the importance of an oath.”

“Another frequent instance of hands occurs in inscriptions on amulets, many of which were written in the shape of a hand --- a symbol believed to ward off the ‘evil eye.’” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

The tragic accounts of the destruction of a great people are reminders that when people do not keep the commandments of the Lord, they are not in his hands. Mormon's written admonition to his son reminds him to stay in the hand of the Lord.

“My son, be faithful in Christ; and may not the things which I have written grieve thee, to weigh thee down unto death; but may Christ lift thee up, and may his sufferings and death, and the showing his body unto our fathers, and his mercy and long-suffering, and the hope of his glory and of eternal life, rest in your mind forever. And may the grace of God the Father, whose throne is high in the heavens, and our Lord Jesus Christ, who sitteth on the right hand of his power, until all things shall become subject unto him, be, and abide with you forever. Amen.” (*Moroni 9:25-26*)

“I Speak unto You If Ye Were Present”

Mormon 7–9

Scripture Summary: *Mormon invites the Lamanites of the latter days to believe in Christ, accept his gospel, and be saved—All who believe the Bible will also believe the Book of Mormon. [About A.D. 385]*

The Lamanites seek out and destroy the Nephites—The Book of Mormon shall come forth by the power of God—Woes pronounced upon those who breathe out wrath and strife against the work of the Lord—The Nephite record shall come forth in a day of wickedness, degeneracy, and apostasy. [Between A.D. 400 and 421]

Moroni calls upon those who do not believe in Christ to repent—He proclaims a God of miracles, who gives revelations and pours out gifts and signs upon the faithful—Miracles cease because of unbelief—Signs follow those who believe—Men are exhorted to be wise and keep the commandments. [Between A.D. 400 and 421]

Supplemental

Holy Land and Judaic Insights:

One of the first things necessary to living a good life is to have an identity. Mormon reminds us to understand our identity as a part of the House of Israel. We are a chosen family who represents God to all others on this globe. In order to do so, we must constantly turn toward him. Again, the Hebrew word “to turn” also means to repent. Repentance brings us back to the presence of the Father in Heaven. His firstborn son has provided us a spiritual atonement - providing we repent. He has also provided a physical atonement, the resurrection - even if we don’t repent.

The heavenly closeness we achieve through true repentance will unlock memories of what we knew before our mortality. It brings us closer to our earthly forefathers in understanding their teachings and examples. Again, it brings us to a closer sense of identity and connection with our Heavenly Father. Moroni deposits the records of his father so that later generations can make a family connection that can inspire a closer bond with God. He also counsels us to read and search the words of the Israelite prophet, Isaiah.

“It should be remembered, too, in this connection, that the Book of Isaiah’s prophecies carried by the colony of Lehi into the Western hemisphere with them became a powerful influence among the Nephite writers. His book is quoted from more extensively than any other book of the Jewish scriptures possessed by the Nephites; and that because of the plainness with which Isaiah spoke of the coming and mission of Messiah. The first Nephi, commenting upon Isaiah and the esteem in which he held his writing, said:

“And now I, Nephi, write more of the words of Isaiah, for my soul delighteth in his words. For I will liken [apply] his words unto my people, and I will send them forth unto all my children, for he verily saw my Redeemer, even as I have seen him. And my brother Jacob also has seen him as I have seen him, wherefore I will send their words forth unto my children, to prove unto them that my words are true.” (2 Nephi 11:2-3)

“Small wonder then if a prophet held in such large esteem, as was Isaiah, and so extensively quoted, influenced prophetic Nephite literature, and led to the habit of writing prophecies referring to the Christ in the language of accomplished fact.” (*B. H. Roberts, New Witnesses for God, Vol.3, p.447*)

“Fully one-third of the writings of Isaiah are found in the Book of Mormon, making Isaiah the most frequently quoted biblical book there. Twenty-two of the sixty-six chapters of Isaiah are quoted in whole or in part in the Book of Mormon (a total of 433 of Isaiah's 1,292 verses). Book of Mormon prophets and writers typically selected those chapters highlighting God's covenant relationships and his promises to Israel, the role and calling of the messiah, and prophecies concerning the last days. These themes are prevalent in contemporary LDS theology as well (A of F 3, 4, 9, 10).” (*Encyclopedia of Mormonism, Vol.1, BIBLE*)

Notice the parallels that Mormon and Moroni make about their people to what Isaiah says of his people. A summary of the first chapter of Isaiah by the venerable Hugh Nibley is added for your convenience.

“The quickest way to get an overview of the immense book of Isaiah is simply to read the first chapter. Scholars have long held that this is not part of the original book but a summary by a disciple. If so, that makes it nonetheless valuable, and indeed it is remarkable that this, the most famous chapter of Isaiah, is never quoted in the Book of Mormon. Let's take it verse by verse.”

1:2. The people of Israel are God's children--he is their Father. This is the doctrine they have forgotten, and they will be in no condition to receive it again until they have undergone the moral regeneration that is the burden of Isaiah's preaching.

1:3. That doctrine they have rejected: they refuse to hear it.

1:4. Because they can't live with it in their sinful state, they have run away from it. This is inexcusable; God does not look upon it with forbearance. He knows that they are quite capable of understanding and living by the gospel. Accordingly, he is more than displeased; he is angry.

1:5. Yet it is not he who has been giving them a hard time. They decided to go their own way, openly revolting against him. And their system is simply not working. They are not able to cope with the situation mentally nor do they have the spirit to carry it through. Men on their own are a pitiful object.

1:6. The whole thing is sick, sick, sick. Every attempt to correct the situation fails miserably. Nothing works.

1:7. The result is internal depression and international disaster.

1:8. God's chosen people are holed up, trusting in their miserable defense, trapped by their own walls.

1:9. The reason they survive at all so far is that there are still a few righteous, a small remnant of honest people among them.

1:10. So it is time they were considering the alternative, which Isaiah herewith offers them.

1:11. You are not going to appease God by trying to buy him off, by going through the pious motions of religious observances, your meetings and temple sessions.

1:12. It is not for you to decide what to do to please God – it is for him to decide, and he has not required all this display of piety from you.

1:13. Your most dedicated observances, even following my ancient prescriptions, if done in the wrong spirit are actually iniquity – not to your credit but to your loss.

1:14. God is not impressed but disgusted by it.

1:15. Even when you pray I will not hear you. Why not? Answer: Because there is blood on your upraised hands.

1:16. The blood and sins of this generation are on you in the temple. What blood and sins? Your evil ways.

1:17. What evil ways? What should we be doing? Answer: Dealing justly, relieving those oppressed by debt instead of collecting from them, giving a fair deal to the orphans and assistance to the widow, in other words, showing some thought for people without money.

1:18. God is not being capricious or arbitrary. He is eminently reasonable. Is his way the only way? Let him tell you why, and then see if you do not agree: ‘Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord.’ Then a surprising statement: ‘Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.’ Plainly God does not take pleasure in these rebukes, he does not gloat as men would (for example, Thomas Aquinas) over the punishment in store for the wicked; he loves them all and holds forth the most wonderful promises for them. There is a way out, and that is why Isaiah is speaking, not because he is a puritanical scold.

1:19. Have they had enough? They need only to listen and to follow advice and all will be well.

1:20. But you cannot go on as you have been. You will be wiped out by war if you do. ‘For the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.’ The ‘consumption decreed’ (D&C 87) is another quotation from Isaiah.

1:21. You can do it – because you once did. And then you lost it all – went over to unbridled sex and murder.

1:22. And for what? Property and pleasure, for silver that is now as worthless as garbage and wine that is flat.

1:23. The leaders set the worst example. 'They work with crooks, everybody is on the take: 'Every one loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards,' while the poor don't get a break in court and a widow can't even get a hearing.

1:24. God wants nothing to do with such rascals; he is going to get rid of them. They have made themselves his enemies.

1:25. This calls for a thorough housecleaning. All that dross must be purged away.

1:26. To bring back the old order, 'restore thy judges as at the first' (as quoted in the well-known hymn). It is still possible, and God is going to bring it about. There will yet be "The city of righteousness, the faithful city."

1:27. There is going to be a Zion redeemed with many of these same sinful people living in it, along with a lot of converts from the outside.

1:28. All the rest will have to go, but not because God chooses to throw them out. They will walk away from safety right into destruction; with eyes wide open they will forsake the Lord and be consumed.

1:29-31. These verses are the only references to paganism – popular cults that will wither and be burned up – not be destroyed, however, because they follow pagan manners or forms, as the doctors, ministers, and commentators love to tell us, but because they were part of the cover-up for avaricious, hard, and immoral practices.”
(Collected Works of Hugh Nibley, Vol.1, Ch.8, p.218-221)

In our present age of wars, rumors of wars, earthquakes, and pollution we see an immense thievery of time, talent and temporal goods. In this season of robbers we find that wickedness and wars are greatly motivated by money. At an eternal cost as we lose our identity, our covenants evaporate in smoke.

“And he that shall breathe out wrath and strifes against the work of the Lord, and against the covenant people of the Lord who are the house of Israel, and shall say: We will destroy the work of the Lord, and the Lord will not remember his covenant which he hath made unto the house of Israel--the same is in danger to be hewn down and cast into the fire; *(Mormon 8:21)*

Yet, Moroni foresees miracles. There will be some who rise above the world and bring the miracles of heaven in their homes and their lives. The Jewish concept of miracles connects them with God. Yet, even they begin to “apologize” for the heavenly insinuation and

consider miracles a part of life. Moshe Dayan once was asked, “Do you believe in miracles?” He answered, “No, I just count on them!”

“Extraordinary phenomena that seem to fall outside the pattern of normal, explainable occurrences are frequently referred to in English as miracles. In the Bible, such events are termed *otot* or *moftim* (‘wondrous signs’), and in the talmudic literature as *nisim* (‘heralds’). The terms point to the fact that both for the Bible and for the rabbis, miraculous events were caused by God and served as clear indicators of His controlling power in the universe. When the Red Sea parted to enable the Israelites to flee from the Egyptian armies that were pursuing them, and when the ‘sun stood still’ at Gibeon to enable Joshua to be victorious in his battle with the Canaanites, miracles occurred; at a critical moment in human history, God altered the normal workings of physical phenomena (the sea, the sun), and by doing so, revealed His providential relationship to the people of Israel. Later thinkers, for whom ‘the natural order’ had an existence independent of God, were troubled by the question whether biblical miracles were ‘natural’ or ‘supernatural,’ but the Bible makes no such distinction and never questions God's ability to do anything, by any means.”

“The rabbis of the Talmud unquestionably accepted the biblical miracles as related, but they were troubled by the fact that they seemed to imply a lack of perfection in the very act of Creation. They solved this theological problem by postulating that miracles were, so to speak, provided for already at the time of creation. Thus, although they were ‘extraordinary’ they were still manifestations of the natural order. Many rabbis reversed this perspective and emphasized that the very regularity and harmony of the natural world were in fact ‘miraculous.’ It is this thought which is vocalized in the thanksgiving prayer which is part of the daily *Amidah*: ‘We thank You for Your miracles which are daily with us, and for Your wonders and benefits, which are wrought at all times, evening, morning and night.’”

“The rabbis rejected, however, the belief in ‘miracle performers’ as bearers of religious truth. Once the Torah had been revealed to man, it was no longer ‘in heaven.’ It could not be altered by extraordinary means, but only by a natural process of development which was purely in the hands of ordinary human beings. And although the rabbis emphasized the miraculous aspect of the story of Hanukkah, they generally believed that by their time the age of miracles had ceased, since only in biblical times were people ‘willing to sacrifice themselves for the sanctification of the Name of God.’”

“In the Middle Ages, the biblical miracles posed a great problem for Jewish philosophers. They could not be explained in terms of contemporary science and they flew in the face of the philosophers' strong belief in the existence of an unchanging order to the universe. As a solution, many of the medieval philosophers adopted the Talmudic position outlined above which attempted to ‘naturalize’ the miracles by seeing them as having been woven into the order of nature from the very

beginning; their miraculous nature stemmed from the fact that they were expressed at the key moment in history when they were most needed.”

“In modern times, some people have attempted to offer scientific explanations for several of the biblical miracles, such as the parting of the Red Sea. Others have ‘relativized’ them by viewing them as natural occurrences which were recorded as if extraordinary and supernatural, because of the crucial role they played at the particular time.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Moroni, Mormon’s son, concludes his testimony with a humble apology of his earthly limitations, yet that Man of God knows who he is, his identity is clear. He calls us to repent and accept the Miracle of the Son of God.

“Never Has Man Believed in Me As Thou Hast”

Ether 1–6

Scripture Summary: *Moroni abridges the writings of Ether—Ether’s genealogy set forth—The language of the Jaredites is not confounded at the Tower of Babel—The Lord promises to lead them to a choice land and make them a great nation.*

The Jaredites prepare for their journey to a promised land—It is a choice land whereon men must serve Christ or be swept off—The Lord talks to the brother of Jared for three hours—They build barges—The Lord asks the brother of Jared to propose how the barges shall be lighted.

The brother of Jared sees the finger of the Lord as he touches the sixteen stones—Christ shows his spirit body to the brother of Jared—Those who have a perfect knowledge cannot be kept from within the veil—Interpreters are provided to bring the Jaredite record to light.

Moroni is commanded to seal up the writings of the brother of Jared—They shall not be revealed until men have faith even as the brother of Jared—Christ commands men to believe his words and those of his disciples—Men are commanded to repent and believe the gospel and be saved.

Three witnesses and the work itself shall stand as a testimony of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon.

The Jaredite barges are driven by the winds to the promised land—The people praise the Lord for his goodness—Oribah is appointed king over them—Jared and his brother pass away in death.

Supplemental

Holy Land and Judaic Insights: In giving us the account of the Jaredites, Moroni once again points out the importance of identity. The genealogy of Jared is important as well as the fact that in coming from the Tower of Babel area, Jared’s humility resulted in his language not being confounded.

“According to some modern commentators, the building of the tower was an example of man’s extreme pride in his own ability. The building became such an obsession that, according to the Midrash, when a builder fell off the tower to his death, the other builders paid no attention, but when a brick fell, they would cry: ‘When shall another come in its place?’ According to this interpretation, every generation has its own Tower of Babel, when it begins to idolize its technology. The moral of the story is thus as applicable today as it was thousands of years ago.”

(Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

In spite of the confounding of languages, some patterns of familiarity remain in related languages such as Hebrew, the language of the scriptures.

“Hebrew belongs to the family of Semitic languages. Other members of this family are Arabic and Aramaic, and it is assumed that they all evolved from one language which is known as ‘proto-Semitic.’ Among other connected languages were Ugaritic and Akkadian which are extinct. The name ‘Semitic’ was given to the group in 1781 by the scholar A.L. Schloezer because all the languages in it are spoken by peoples included among the sons of Shem listed in Genesis 10:21--29. *(Encyclopedia*

Judaica Jr.)

One characteristic of Semitic people is their family ties. The brother of Jared listened to the Lord as he was told to gather seeds of every kind, gather animals and gather his family. As mentioned in several lessons previously, gathering is a strong metaphor of returning to

Heavenly Father's presence. I noticed that the gathering of this Jaredite family was to the "north" at Nimrod. I immediately thought of the north of Israel, close to the Syrian border, where an old Crusader fortress still stands. It is called Nimrod's castle. The name of Nimrod is known locally as a Syrian warlord and hunter. The name is used in the Bible.

"He was a mighty hunter before the LORD: wherefore it is said, Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the LORD." (*Genesis 10:9*)

There are some distinctive sea, ship and tempest stories in the Holy Scriptures. In the accounts of Noah, Jared, Nephi, Jesus and Paul, each has a lesson of salvation. Noah was led by the Lord to save righteous life on a barge or sea craft as the earth experienced a great tempest and flooding. The earth was cleansed or in effect, "baptized." A new life began.

"And Noah went forth, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him: Every beast, every creeping thing, and every fowl, and whatsoever creepeth upon the earth, after their kinds, went forth out of the ark. And Noah builded an altar unto the LORD; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar." (*Genesis 8:18-20*)

Jared's family experienced a tempest and was delivered and saved.

"And it came to pass that they were many times buried in the depths of the sea, because of the mountain waves which broke upon them, and also the great and terrible tempests which were caused by the fierceness of the wind. And it came to pass that when they were buried in the deep there was no water that could hurt them, their vessels being tight like unto a dish, and also they were tight like unto the ark of Noah; therefore when they were encompassed about by many waters they did cry unto the Lord, and he did bring them forth again upon the top of the waters." (*Ether 6:6-7*)

"And they did land upon the shore of the promised land. And when they had set their feet upon the shores of the promised land they bowed themselves down upon the face of the land, and did humble themselves before the Lord, and did shed tears of joy before the Lord, because of the multitude of his tender mercies over them." (*Ether 6:12*)

Jonah went down into the sea, only to come up, saved. Even those who cast him overboard were saved! The Lord used the experience of Jonah as a sign of the atonement.

"Then said they unto him, What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us? for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous. And he said unto them, Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you: for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you. Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring it to the land; but they could not: for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous against them. Wherefore they cried unto the LORD, and said, We beseech thee, O LORD, we beseech thee, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us

innocent blood: for thou, O LORD, hast done as it pleased thee. So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea: and the sea ceased from her raging. Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice unto the LORD, and made vows.” *(Jonah 1:11-16)*

Nephi’s family also experienced a terrible tempest brought on by their unbelief. Through repentance God also “turned the tide” and saved them.

“And there was nothing save it were the power of God, which threatened them with destruction, could soften their hearts; wherefore, when they saw that they were about to be swallowed up in the depths of the sea they repented of the thing which they had done, insomuch that they loosed me. And it came to pass after they had loosed me, behold, I took the compass, and it did work whither I desired it. And it came to pass that I prayed unto the Lord; and after I had prayed the winds did cease, and the storm did cease, and there was a great calm.” *(1 Nephi 18:20-21)*

Jesus saved the Disciples in a tempest. Jesus constantly taught salvation and told us to be of good cheer.

“And when he was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him. And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep. And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish. And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm.” *(Matthew 8:23-25)*

An Apostle of God, Paul saved the crew of his ship after a violent tempest.

“And we being exceedingly tossed with a tempest, the next day they lightened the ship; And the third day we cast out with our own hands the tackling of the ship. And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away. But after long abstinence Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss. And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship.” *(Acts 27:18-22)*

The unusual experience of the Brother of Jared in preparing “stones” for the Lord to touch for light during their ship journey also has some Biblical precedence. Glass was made in the Middle East and the Jews often had a role in its development.

“The use of glass for ornaments and practical vessels goes back to the third millenium B.C.E., when the first glass beads were produced in Egypt and Mesopotamia. Since that time, and particularly after the revolutionary invention of

glassblowing in the first century B.C., the manufacture of glass and glassware has been an important industry, in which Jews have often played a major role.”

“The only mention of glass in the Bible occurs in Job 28:17, where it is equated with gold. This demonstrates the great value of glass in the biblical period. Archaeological excavations have revealed glass objects in Erez Israel from as early as the 14th century B.C.E., and the Mishnah includes regulations concerning the trade of glass making.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

The brother of Jared had a name which has come to us by revelation.

“While residing at Kirtland, Elder Reynolds Cahoon had a son born to him. One day when President Joseph Smith was passing his door he called the Prophet in and asked him to bless and name the baby. Joseph did so and gave the boy the name of Mahonri Moriancumer. When he had finished the blessing, he laid the child on the bed, and turning to Elder Cahoon he said, the name I have given your son is the name of the Brother of Jared; the Lord has just shown or revealed it to me. Elder William F. Cahoon, who was standing near heard the Prophet make this statement to his father; and this was the first time the name of the brother of Jared was known in the Church in this dispensation.” (*The Juvenile Instructor 27/8 [15April 1892]: 282*)

“Mahonri Moriancumer is the name of the Brother of Jared, that mighty prophet who led the Jaredites from the Tower of Babel to their North American promised land. Our present knowledge of the life and ministry of this man, one of the greatest prophets ever to live on earth, is so comparatively slight that we do not even find his name recorded in Moroni's abridgment of the Book of Ether. It was, however, made known by the spirit of inspiration to the Prophet.” (*Bruce R. McConkie, Mormon Doctrine, p.463*)

“The prophet of the Jaredite colony, Mahonri Moriancumer, commonly referred to as the brother of Jared, spoke of this land as a choice land . . . above all other lands. He indicated that those people who live here should worship the God of this land if they were to enjoy the blessings of freedom and liberty and be free from bondage. Otherwise, if they failed, they were to be swept off. And he proclaimed that this is the everlasting decree of God.” (*Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson, p.575*)

In reviewing the brother of Jared's faith and works we see a formula emerging that we should follow. It is called the “Mahonri Formula.”

1. Identify the problem.
2. Consider possible solutions.
3. Make yourself worthy.
4. Develop humility.
5. Make a specific request.

In spite of backsliding, the Lord recognized the repentance of the Jaredite family and turned toward them. In fact, due to the humble faith of the brother of Jared, the Lord manifested himself to him. Repentance works! Then, as Moses was shown the “ends of the earth” and was able to see the creation, the beginning to the end, so did the brother of Jared. Moroni was also privileged to see this account. As Jared and his brother turned from their backsliding and reflected humility, they were blessed. So shall the Gentiles be blessed as they return from their backsliding and once again reflect humility.

“By Faith All Things Are Fulfilled”

Ether 7–15

Scripture Summary: *Oriah reigns in righteousness—Amid usurpation and strife the rival kingdoms of Shule and Cohor are set up—Prophets condemn the wickedness and idolatry of the people, who then repent.*

There is strife and contention over the kingdom—Akish forms an oath-bound secret combination to slay the king—Secret combinations are of the devil and result in the destruction of nations—Modern Gentiles are warned against the secret combination which shall seek to overthrow the freedom of all lands, nations, and countries.

The kingdom passes from one to another by descent and intrigue and murder—Emer saw the Son of Righteousness—Many prophets cry repentance—A famine and poisonous serpents plague the people.

One king succeeds another—Some of the kings are righteous; others are wicked—When righteousness prevails, the people are blessed and prospered by the Lord.

Wars, dissensions, and wickedness dominate Jaredite life—Their prophets predict the utter destruction of the Jaredites unless they repent—The people reject the words of the prophets.

The prophet Ether exhorts the people to believe in God—Moroni recounts the wonders and marvels done by faith—Faith enabled the brother of Jared to see Christ—The Lord gives men weaknesses that they may be humble—The brother of Jared moved Mount Zerin by faith—Faith, hope, and charity are essential to salvation—Moroni saw Jesus face to face.

Ether speaks of a New Jerusalem to be built in America by the seed of Joseph—He prophesies, is cast out, writes the Jaredite history, and foretells the destruction of the Jaredites—War rages over all the land.

The iniquity of the people brings a curse upon the land—Coriantumr engages in warfare against Gilead, then Lib, and then Shiz—Blood and carnage cover the land.

Millions of the Jaredites are slain in battle—Shiz and Coriantumr assemble all the people to mortal combat—The Spirit of the Lord ceases to strive with them—The Jaredite nation is utterly destroyed—Only Coriantumr remains.

Supplemental Holy Land and Judaic Insights:

Although these chapters in The Book of Mormon deal mostly with wars and secret combinations and little Jewish or “Israelitish” insight can be given, one thing comes vividly to mind. That is, vows and covenants are usually made with the Lord and not used as an instrument of people to people.

“In Jewish law, ‘oaths’ and ‘vows’ serve as distinct terms, each representing a different class of ‘sworn statement.’ The oath, which in Hebrew is called *shevuah*, is limited to sworn statements made during the course of judicial proceedings, while the vow, called in Hebrew *neder*, has a much broader application and refers to all types of sworn statements made outside the courtroom. Both are treated at great length in the Talmud, in separate tractates entitled, respectively, *Shevuot* and *Nedarim*.”

“Today in courts in most countries, it is common practice to ‘swear in’ all witnesses. Jewish law never adopted this custom, preferring to accept testimony without the administration of an oath, as long as there were at least two witnesses who corroborated each other’s testimony, as well as other supportive evidence. Testimony given under oath was, in fact, considered to be a particularly weak form

of evidence, and it was only accepted when there was a complete lack of some thing better. When the judicial oath was administered, it was only used in civil cases and then not to the witnesses but to the defendant, or less often, to the plaintiff. In capital cases, a judicial oath was never administered, since it was assumed that no one charged with a capital crime could be believed, even under oath.”

“In contrast to the judicial oath, the ‘vow’ has very wide application. It consists of a fully verbalized statement made by an adult (not a minor) that he (or she) takes upon himself a specified obligation (such as giving a definite sum of money to charity) or that he denies to himself the enjoyment of a given object, person or experience (such as eating a particular type of food). If the vow is made voluntarily, without any compulsion from anyone else, it is fully binding, and only with great difficulty can it be declared void.”

“Vows were regarded by the rabbis with great seriousness. They attempted to discourage indiscriminate making of vows, for they realized that most people made them without fully realizing the consequences. It is reported in the Talmud that the sage Samuel even declared that ‘he who makes a vow, even though he fulfills it, commits a sin.’ The rabbis tolerated vows only when they were taken in order to get rid of bad habits and encourage one to do good; otherwise they emphasized that one should strive for the desired ends without the aid of vows.”

“Because of the strict binding nature of vows, and the great difficulties involved in having them annulled, even today many people have the habit of saying *beli neder* (‘without it being a vow’) whenever they make statements about acts which they plan to undertake in the future.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Notice that just prior to the destruction of the people, the various Kings and rulers like Shiblom, arrested and killed the prophets. In the days of Ahah, Ethem and Moron even the people rebelled against the prophets. A parallel to that is in Israel when Jeremiah was imprisoned for speaking against the government. This is also just prior to the destruction of the City of The Lord, Jerusalem.

“For then the king of Babylon's army besieged Jerusalem: and Jeremiah the prophet was shut up in the court of the prison, which was in the king of Judah's house. For Zedekiah king of Judah had shut him up, saying, Wherefore dost thou prophesy, and say, Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall take it;” (*Jeremiah 32:2-3*)

The contrast in these chapters is that of trusting in the arm of flesh versus trusting faith in the Lord. Today, the modern structure of Judaism is based on keeping commandments rather than on the “spirit” or personal “faith.”

“The medieval Jewish philosophers gave a great deal of thought to formulating articles of faith and disagreed among themselves as to how many there should be. Some even opposed any such formulation on the grounds that every *mitzvah* [commandment] is an article of faith.”

“In post-medieval times, interest in dogmas on the part of Jewish philosophers waned. Moses Mendelssohn rejected belief as a requirement of Judaism and claimed that performance of the *mitzvot* is the sole criterion.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

In Judaism, one of the commandments is to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem three times a year. Once is in the Spring celebrating being delivered from Egypt. That is called Passover. The second is fifty days later, the celebration of Shavuot. It is in commemoration of receiving the Law of Moses. It is also the time the “Spirit or the gift of the Holy Ghost” was given after Jesus’ atonement. The third is called Sukkot. It is celebrating the journey through the wilderness, eventually arriving in the promised land. These were done in Old Jerusalem, and now after several utter destructions of the Holy City, it is done in the newly rebuilt Jerusalem.

“Jerusalem occupies a very special place in the Jewish religion. It is, of course, often mentioned in the Bible, in a historical and poetical context. It is sometimes given a quasi-mystical character and is frequently used to signify all of Israel or all of Judaism. Because of its special holiness, Jerusalem is treated differently from other cities by the sages. There could be no permanent ownership of property in the city; its ritual purity had to be protected, and so no burial sites were allowed within the city walls.”

“While the Temple stood, Jews were expected to make three pilgrimages there each year --- on Passover, Sukkot, and Shavuot. Many still make these pilgrimages, using the opportunity to mourn the destruction of the Temple.”

“Jerusalem [is the] capital of the State of Israel and spiritual center for most of the western world. Jerusalem is more than just a physical grouping of stone buildings and ancient walls spreading out over the Judean hills: it is the Holy City, symbol of universal peace and redemption for over 3,000 years.”

“Jerusalem has since had many names, reflective of the love and reverence of its admirers, including ‘God’s City,’ ‘Faithful City,’ and ‘The Beautiful City.’”
(*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

The imagery of the Holy City, Jerusalem, applies to the past, present and future. It will, however, be more than just a city, it will be the “City of The Lord” with just as sacred and

caring respect as the “House of The Lord.” As there is more than one eternal, righteous and one-in-heart “House of The Lord,” so will there be more than one eternal, righteous and one-in-heart “City of The Lord.”

“Now many will feel disposed to say, that this New Jerusalem spoken of, is the Jerusalem that was built by the Jews on the eastern continent. But you will see, from Revelation 21:2, there was a New Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven, adorned as a bride for her husband; that after this, the Revelator was caught away in the Spirit, to a great and high mountain, and saw the great and holy city descending out of heaven from God. Now there are two cities spoken of here. As everything cannot be had in so narrow a compass as a letter, I shall say with brevity, that there is a New Jerusalem to be established on this continent, and also Jerusalem shall be rebuilt on the eastern continent (see Book of Mormon, Ether 13:1-12). ‘Behold, Ether saw the days of Christ, and he spake also concerning the house of Israel, and the Jerusalem from whence Lehi should come; after it should be destroyed, it should be built up again, a holy city unto the Lord, wherefore it could not be a New Jerusalem, for it had been in a time of old.’” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, Section Two 1834-37 p.86*)

“As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the LORD of hosts, in the city of our God: God will establish it for ever.” (*Psalms 48:8*)

“I will early destroy all the wicked of the land; that I may cut off all wicked doers from the city of the LORD.” (*Psalms 101:8*)

“The sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee; and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet; and they shall call thee, The city of the LORD, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel.” (*Isaiah 60:14*)

“And he spake also concerning the house of Israel, and the Jerusalem from whence Lehi should come--after it should be destroyed it should be built up again, a holy city unto the Lord; wherefore, it could not be a new Jerusalem for it had been in a time of old; but it should be built up again, and become a holy city of the Lord; and it should be built unto the house of Israel.”

“The city of the Lord is different wherein we seek not only that which is better, but that which is best. Filled as our city is with people who are increasingly of one heart and of one mind and who are moved by the same basic beliefs, there is need for less and less in the way of structure to see that people do their duty toward each other. Here we do not divert people from their own labors into wasteful secondary tasks; basic love and honesty obtain increasingly between our people.” (*Neal A. Maxwell, Of One Heart, p.38*)

In an overview of God's dealings with his chosen people, the Children of Israel in ancient times knew Him first, lived in the "Camp of Zion" and had a city of the Lord. The tribe of Judah from Old Jerusalem provided the Kings, the leadership at that time. From Judah's line came the King of Kings. In our present time, the leadership is with Joseph, who received the keys of Temple worship, builds and uses these Houses of the Lord to bind us together and prepare us for His future return. One of the places he returns to is New Jerusalem, Adam Ondi Ahman. He will also appear in Old Jerusalem made new and the Jews, waiting for their King of Kings will recognize Him as the Holy One their forefathers knew. Have faith! All things will be fulfilled as the prophets told us.

"I saw Adam in the valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman. He called together his children and blessed them with a patriarchal blessing. The Lord appeared in their midst, and he (Adam) blessed them all, and foretold what should befall them to the latest generation." *(Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, Section Four 1839-42 p.158)*

"And when these things come, bringeth to pass the scripture which saith, there are they who were first, who shall be last; and there are they who were last, who shall be first." *(Ether 13:12)*

Lesson
47

“To Keep Them in the Right Way”

Moroni 1–6

Scripture *Moroni writes for the benefit of the Lamanites—The Nephites who will not deny Christ are put to death.*

Summary: *Jesus gave the Nephite apostles power to confer the gift of the Holy Ghost.*

Elders ordain priests and teachers by the laying on of hands.

How the elders and priests administer the sacramental bread.

The mode of administering the sacramental wine is set forth.

Repentant persons are baptized and fellowshipped—Church members who repent are forgiven—Meetings are conducted by the power of the Holy Ghost.

[Between A.D. 400 and 421]

**Supplemental
Holy Land
and Judaic
Insights:**

True religion is based on true faith in the Lord. The Hebrew word for faith is *emunah* and that is probably derived from the word *imun* which means practice, procedure or work. Inherent in the word *emunah* is faith and works. Both are necessary to keep us in the right way.

“Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.” *(James 2:17)*

One procedure or practice of true religion is the “laying on of hands” with proper authority. There is biblical evidence of this when Moses laid hands on individuals and gave them authority.

“And Moses did as the LORD commanded him: and he took Joshua, and set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation: And he laid his hands upon him, and gave him a charge, as the LORD commanded by the hand of Moses.”
(Numbers 27:22-23)

Even in Judaism, where it is recognized that since the last Temple destruction there is the loss of priesthood, the “laying on of hands” is still done.

“Hands are also significant in the symbolic act of bestowing a blessing. In rabbinic literature the priestly blessing is known as *nesi'at kappayim* (“raising of the hands”) and is pronounced with the hands uplifted, and the fingers spread in a special formation. In fact this special formation of the hands is often engraved on the tombstones of *kobanim* (priests).”

“In the same way that priests lift their hands in blessing, so parents place their hands on the heads of their children when they bless them. (For example, in the Bible, Jacob blessed his grandsons, Ephraim and Manasseh, by placing his hands on their heads.) Placing the hands on another person is symbolic not only of transferring blessing but also of passing on authority. In Talmudic times, scholars received their

rabbinic ordination through the symbolic act of placing of the hands (known as *semikhab*).”

“All Jewish religious leaders had to be ordained before they were permitted to perform certain judicial functions and to decide practical questions in Jewish law. The Bible relates that Moses ordained Joshua by placing his hands on him, thereby transferring a portion of his spirit to Joshua. Moses also ordained the 70 elders who assisted him in governing the people. The elders ordained their successors who in turn ordained others, so that there existed an unbroken chain of ordination from Moses down to the time of the Second Temple.”

“For some centuries the tradition of ordaining by the laying on of the hands was continued, but the rabbis later decided to ordain by merely conferring the title ‘rabbi’ either orally or in writing.”

“Ordination was required for membership in the Great Sanhedrin (supreme political, religious and judicial body in Palestine until the fifth century C.E.) and in the smaller judicial bodies. The lowest degree of ordination entitled the rabbi to decide only religious questions, while the highest degree entitled him to also judge criminal cases.”

“It is not clear when the original tradition of ordination was discontinued. According to some historians, Rav, a third century scholar, was the last to receive the traditional *semikhab* just before moving to Babylonia. In accordance with the restriction which authorized ordinations only in Erez Israel, [the land of Israel] Rav refused to confer *semikhab* while in Babylonia and subsequently none of the Babylonian *amoraim* (talmudic scholars) were ordained. By the early Middle Ages the traditional *semikhab* procedure had completely ceased to exist and the direct chain of ordination begun by Moses was broken.”

“In 1538 Rabbi Jacob Berab of Safed tried to revive the original *semikhab* practice. At his initiative, 25 rabbis convened and ordained him as their chief rabbi. Berab then ordained four other rabbis including Joseph Caro and Moses di Trani, hoping to ultimately reestablish the Sanhedrin. But Berab had neglected to obtain the consent of the Jerusalem rabbis and, feeling slighted, they opposed his efforts and eventually the institution of ordination was again abolished.”

“With the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, Israel's first minister of religious affairs made a similar plea to restore the Sanhedrin, but he too was overruled.”

“During the 19th century, the functions of the rabbi began to change and many communities demanded that their leaders be versed not only in Talmud and Jewish law but also in secular studies. To meet these new conditions, rabbinical seminaries were organized, issuing a variety of ‘rabbinical degrees.’ The term rabbi is today the commonly accepted title for all ‘ordained’ (certified) spiritual leaders.” (*Encyclopædia Judaica Jr.*)

The practice of using bread and wine in a sacramental procedure is ancient. There is a reminder from last year's New Testament Supplemental **Lesson Number 23 - "Love One Another, As I Have Loved You"** about the sacrament.

The central issue in this lesson was foreshadowed by the Children of Israel through the Passover Meal for almost three and a half thousand years. In fact, the substantive elements of that meal, "fruit of the vine" (wine) and bread preceded the deliverance of Israel from Egypt. It is important to realize that what Latter-day Saints call the Sacrament, was in fact an ancient ordinance. The meanings of ordinances may be updated from time to time, yet the basis is still the same.

"And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God." (*Genesis 14:18*)

"And Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought forth bread and wine; and he broke bread and blest it; and he blest the wine, he being the priest of the most high God . . ." (*JST Genesis 14:17*)

In modern Jewish life, there is something like this that is actually done in the home. There are two blessings each Sabbath eve. One is the *kiddush*. It is the blessing for the wine. It always precedes the blessing over the *hallab*, a special Sabbath bread. The blessing over the bread (which happens at every meal) is popularly called *Ha Mozi*. Many religious families prefer to eat at a four-cornered table because since there is no Temple the table at least represents the shape of the altar.

"The table is set for the festive meal, with the Sabbath candles glowing in polished holders. The family stands and the father raises the brimming silver cup to say *Kiddush*, the blessing and sanctification over wine."

"Kiddush is recited on the evening of the Sabbath, or the festival, before the start of the meal. Nothing may be eaten before Kiddush."

"*Kiddush* continues with the benediction for wine, preceded by the word *savri* (Attention!) so that all present, men and women, may fulfill the requirement of *Kiddush* by listening carefully to the recital of the prayer and by responding 'Amen' afterwards. When wine is not available, the blessing is said over *hallab*, the Sabbath loaves."

"The proper recitation of *Kiddush* is just before the festive meal, at the place where the meal will be eaten. However, it is a custom among Ashkenazi Jews to say *Kiddush* in the synagogue just after the Sabbath services. Originally it was for the benefit of travelers who were lodged in the synagogue, to enable them to fulfill the precept. This custom is not followed in Israel."

"On Sabbath and festivals the blessing over bread is recited over two loaves (representing the double portion of manna that fell on Friday and did not go bad

when kept till the Sabbath). These loaves are specially sweet bread and made in a distinctive shape. They are known as *ballot* (singular: *ballab*), and are usually covered with a cloth embroidered with Shabbat symbols. Should there be no wine for *Kiddush*, it can be recited over the *ballot* . . . beverages other than wine may also be used.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

It may be significant that, to the Jews, the blessing of wine and then bread is in anticipation of a greater deliverance than from Egypt. To believers in Jesus, the ritual is done by blessing the bread first and then the wine. This is done in remembrance of the great deliverance, the atonement. Another important Biblical ritual is immersion or what is called *mikveh* in Hebrew. This is done for a religious cleansing as well as required for conversion to Judaism. Once again, reviewing the Jewish concept of *mikveh*, (immersion) is helpful.

“A potential convert (or proselyte) is first questioned by a court (*bet din*) of three rabbis. They usually begin by trying to persuade him to give up the idea of joining a nation which has been, and today still is, severely persecuted. If the candidate still affirms sincerely that he is ready to ‘accept the yoke of the commandments,’ he or she must undergo a period of instruction in Judaism, in its laws and practices. After thorough study, when he understands the *mitzvot* and is ready to begin his life as a Jew, the candidate is ready for the rituals of conversion.”

“For both males and females the *bet din* [witnesses] oversees their immersion in a ritual bath (*mikveh*).”

“Like the synagogue and the cemetery, the *mikveh* is a basic element of Jewish family and communal life, and thus the erection of a *mikveh* was among the first projects undertaken by Jewish communities throughout the world from earliest times.”

(*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

The admonition to meet often is part of the practice to keep us in the right way. Modern Jewry has public meetings where the Torah and other scriptures are read three times a week. These are on Mondays, Thursday and, of course, on Sabbath, Saturday.

“According to an ancient tradition, Moses commanded that the Israelites should read the Torah on the Sabbath, on festivals, and on the first day of each month; Ezra decreed that it should also be read on Monday and Thursday mornings as well as Sabbath afternoons. Scholars differ as to whether this tradition should be taken as a historical statement or not; however, even those who are skeptical about its literal truth believe that the tradition of reading the Torah in public is a very ancient one.”

“The Babylonian Talmud relates that the Jews of ‘the West’ (i.e., Erez Israel) took three years to complete their public reading of the Torah. They apparently divided the Torah into more than 150 different sections (*sedarim*, singular: *sidrah*; or *parashot*, singular: *parashah*). On the first Sabbath of their cycle they read the first few chapters of Genesis, on the next Sabbath a few more, and so on until, by the end of three years, they had read the entire Torah.”

“In Babylonia, the custom was different. There the Torah was divided into 54 different sections (naturally the Babylonian sections were about three times as long as the Palestinian sections) so that the entire cycle was completed in one year. Today, nearly all communities follow the Babylonian custom; however, some congregations, especially within the Conservative and Reform movements, are experimenting with a three-year cycle.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

In the days of the Savior, the Torah and scripture reading was only once a week and the three-year cycle was probably being used. Maybe, that is one reason he had a three-year ministry. That way he taught the entire Law and The Prophets. What is paramount in the Lord’s ministry, then and now, is that all religious work, procedures and practices are to be guided by *emunah*, faith, true faith.

“And their meetings were conducted by the church after the manner of the workings of the Spirit, and by the power of the Holy Ghost; for as the power of the Holy Ghost led them whether to preach, or to exhort, or to pray, or to supplicate, or to sing, even so it was done.” (*Moroni 6:9*)

“Come unto Christ”

Lesson 48

Moroni 7–8; 10

Scripture Summary: *An invitation to enter into the rest of the Lord—Pray with real intent—The Spirit of Christ enables men to know good from evil—Satan persuades men to deny Christ and do evil—The prophets manifest the coming of Christ—By faith miracles are wrought and angels minister—Men should hope for eternal life and cleave unto charity.*

Infant baptism is an evil abomination—Little children are alive in Christ because of the atonement—Faith, repentance, meekness and lowliness of heart, receiving the Holy Ghost, and enduring to the end lead to salvation. [Between A.D. 400 and 421]

A testimony of the Book of Mormon comes by the power of the Holy Ghost—The gifts of the Spirit are dispensed to the faithful—Spiritual gifts always accompany faith—Moroni’s words speak from the dust—Come unto Christ, be perfected in him, and sanctify your souls. [About A.D. 421]

Supplemental

Holy Land and Judaic Insights:

The three attributes of God-fearing people are faith (*emunah*), hope (*tikvah*) and charity (*zedakah*) or (*hesed*). A Jewish look at these three words is illuminating. The word faith as discussed in the last lesson has the element of practice or work. Judaism has, however, evolved to the point that *immun* (practice or works) has become more important than belief.

“In the Bible there are no articles of faith or dogmas in which the Jew is commanded to believe. Belief in God's existence and infinite ability is taken for granted and is the basis of the Bible. This is the importance of the story of the Exodus from Egypt; the Children of Israel witnessed God's wonders and passed on the record of their own personal experience to their descendants. The biblical word *emunah* (and its other forms) which is often translated as ‘belief’ really means ‘trust’ or ‘confidence,’ which is something quite different.”

“There is no catechism (i.e., a creed of belief) even in the Talmud. Although the rabbis did enumerate those ideas which a person must believe in order to merit ‘a portion in the World to Come’ they did not compile a list of the fundamental dogmas of Judaism. In discussions throughout the Talmud and midrashic literature there is material on the subject and this material was the basis for later developments.”

“As the Jews came into contact more and more with Muslim and Christian religious philosophy during the Middle Ages, the need was felt for a definitive statement of those beliefs that make a Jew a Jew. This need had not been felt before because a person's Jewishness was natural and not exposed to external challenge. The medieval Jewish philosophers gave a great deal of thought to formulating articles of faith and disagreed among themselves as to how many there should be. Some even opposed any such formulation on the grounds that every *mitzvah* is an article of faith.”

“Perhaps the most famous of the various formulations of dogmas is the Thirteen Principles of Faith of Maimonides. Originally written in Arabic, this creed is the

basis of the *Yigdal* hymn which is part of the daily service and is usually recited at the conclusion of the Friday evening synagogue service. The 13 fundamentals are:

- (1) The existence of God, which is perfect;
- (2) God is 'one' in every sense of the word;
- (3) God has no body or physical attributes;
- (4) God is eternal;
- (5) God alone must be worshiped;
- (6) the prophecy of the Bible is true;
- (7) Moses was greater than any other prophet;
- (8) the entire Torah was given to Moses;
- (9) the Torah will never be superseded or abrogated;
- (10) God knows the actions of men;
- (11) God rewards and punishes;
- (12) the Messiah will ultimately come; and
- (13) the dead will be resurrected."

"These principles have also been put in the form of a creed in which each begins with the words 'I believe with perfect faith that . . .' the creed is printed in most prayer books."

"In addition to belief in God, one of the important articles of faith of the Jew is that God is good. Often human beings cannot appreciate God's goodness, because no human being can see the whole course of events as God does. A unique aspect of the Jewish faith is that although God rules the world with absolute justice, He is also merciful and forgives sins against Him. The doctrine of repentance is based on this belief." (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

True faith is more than belief. Having faith in the Lord and believing things that are true brings confirmation and His verification and validation. You will know that your belief is true. True faith transcends a wish.

The word "hope" is also more than a wish. It is a powerful expectation somehow connected with Heaven and redemption.

"The ideal of freedom has always been cherished by the Jews, for their history has been one of slavery, exile and persecution --- slavery in Egypt until the Exodus around the 13th century B.C.E., and exile and oppression since the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 C.E. Throughout the exile, the hope of the return to Erez Israel was kept alive, developing into the Zionist movement in the 19th century, which found its fruition in the creation of the State of Israel in 1948. A fitting symbol of the Jews' desire for their own land, government and defense is the national anthem *Ha-Tikvah* ("The Hope")."

"The poem was first written by Naphtali Herz Imber, probably in 1878, as 'Our Hope,' to express the yearning of the Jews to live as a free people on their own land.

In 1882, after Imber had read the poem to a group of settlers in Rishon le-Zion, Samuel Cohen, a recent immigrant from Moldavia, set it to a melody based on an old Moldavian-Rumanian folk song. The song achieved the status of a folk song almost overnight, and was sung in settlements throughout Erez Israel, as well as at Zionist congresses. The Seventh Zionist Congress (Basle, 1905) ended with an ‘enormously moving singing of *Ha-Tikvah* by all present,’ a moment which probably confirmed the song’s status. The 18th Zionist Congress in Prague, 1933, declared *Ha-Tikvah* the official Zionist anthem. In 1948, the Italian conductor Bernardino Molinari orchestrated the song for the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, giving it its final version. At the Declaration of the State of Israel on May 14, 1948, *Ha-Tikvah* was sung at the opening ceremony and played by the Palestine symphony orchestra at the conclusion; however, *Ha-Tikvah* has never been given official status as a national anthem by a proclamation of the Knesset.”

“As long as deep in the heart
The soul of a Jew yearns,
And towards the east
An eye keeps watch
upon Zion,
Our hope is not yet lost
The hope of two millenia
To be a free people in our land
The land of Zion and Jerusalem.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

An inspiring instrumental rendition of *Ha-Tikva* was played and recorded by the LDS/Jewish concert pianist, Marvin Goldstein.

In a second century disputation between Tryphon a Jew, and Justin Martyr a Christian, an illumination of the Jewish concept of hope can be seen -- hope is connected with God. Tryphon, who does not have an understanding of the Godhead, is assuming that the Justin’s belief in Jesus is belief in a man.

“Tryphon . . . argued, ‘. . . when you forsook God, and placed your hope in a man, what kind of salvation yet remains for you?’”

“Although Judaism sees sin as a most serious matter, even the sinner is not without hope. One of the most important theological doctrines of both the Bible and the Talmud is that if a sinner repents his bad deeds, God will forgive him.

“Children are considered a great blessing; they are the hope and the promise of continuing life.”

“. . . it was the hope of redemption that sustained Jews through centuries of suffering and persecution.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

The great redemption festival for the Jews is Passover. At the Seder meal, parsley and lettuce or other green vegetables are dipped into salted water. The greens are associated with the hope of spring. Passover is in the spring as a memory of the past redemption and the hope of a future greater deliverance that comes from heaven. Latter-day Saints believe that the fulfilment of hope, the heaven-sent Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, was born in the spring – at Passover. His death, resurrection and subsequent atonement were also at Passover.

Along with faith and hope comes charity. In Hebrew it is called *zedakah* or righteousness. Sometimes charity is called *hesed*, loving kindness. Charity is the energy that reflects the faith and hope of a person following God.

“Although the idea of charity and almsgiving is spread throughout the whole of the Bible, there is no special term for it. The rabbis of the Talmud, however, adopted the word (*zedakah*) for charity and it is used (but not exclusively so) throughout rabbinic literature in the sense of helping the needy by gifts. The word has since passed into popular usage and is almost exclusively used for charity. The term *hesed* (‘loving kindness’), which is used widely in the Bible, has taken on the meaning of physical aid, or lending money without interest.”

“The word *zedakah* literally means ‘righteousness’ or ‘justice’; by their very choice of word the rabbis reveal a great deal of their attitude to the subject, for they see charity not as a favor to the poor but something to which they have a right, and the donor, an obligation. The importance the rabbis attached to the *mitzvah* of *zedakah* can be understood from Rabbi Assi who stated that ‘*zedakah* is as important as all the other commandments put together’ and from Rabbi Eleazar who expounded the verse ‘to do righteousness (*zedakah*) and justice is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice’ (Proverbs 21:3) to mean that charity is greater than all the sacrifices.”

“To give a tenth of one's wealth to charity is considered to be a ‘middling’ virtue, to give a 20th or less is to be ‘mean’; but the rabbis decided that one should not give more than a fifth lest he become impoverished himself and dependent on charity.”

“The rabbis were especially concerned about the manner in which alms are to be dispensed. The prime consideration is that nothing be done that might shame the recipient. About one pious man it was related that if he met a man of good family who had become impoverished he would say, ‘I have heard that a legacy has been left to you in such a place; take this money in advance and pay me back later.’ When the man accepted it he then said to him, ‘It is a gift.’”

“Maimonides lists seven ways of giving *zedakah* which are progressively more virtuous: to give . . .

- (1) but sadly;
- (2) less than is fitting, but in good humor;
- (3) only after having been asked to;
- (4) before being asked;
- (5) in such a manner that the donor does not know who the recipient is,

- (6) in such a manner that the recipient does not know who the donor is; and
- (7) in such a way that neither the donor nor the recipient knows the identity of the other.”

“The highest form of charity is not to give alms but to help the poor to rehabilitate themselves by lending them money, taking them into partnership, employing them, or giving them work, for in this way the purpose is achieved without any loss of self-respect at all.”

“This last way of helping the poor is known as *gemilut basadim*, ‘dispensing kindness.’ This term also includes aiding people who need help and encouragement and includes such matters as visiting the sick and looking after them and inviting needy guests to eat at your home. One of the greatest acts of charity is to provide for orphans.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

In Israel, the centers for charity, hope and faith are usually focused in Jerusalem. Jews pray three times a day for the rebuilding of Jerusalem. One day, it will be the City of The Lord where all faith, hope and charity will emanate from the Lord Himself.

“And awake, and arise from the dust, O Jerusalem; yea, and put on thy beautiful garments, O daughter of Zion; and strengthen thy stakes and enlarge thy borders forever, that thou mayest no more be confounded, that the covenants of the Eternal Father which he hath made unto thee, O house of Israel, may be fulfilled.”
(*Moroni 10:31*)