

Summary Handout

“The Desert Shall Rejoice, and Blossom as the Rose”

Lesson

36

Summary

Scripture Summary:

Doctrine and Covenants 58:2–4; Revelation given through Joseph Smith the Prophet, in Zion, Jackson County, Missouri, August 1, 1831. HC 1: 190—195. On the first Sabbath after the arrival of the Prophet and party in Jackson County, Missouri, a religious service was held and two members were received by baptism. During that week, members of the Colesville saints from the Thompson Branch and others arrived. Many were eager to learn the will of the Lord concerning them in the new place of gathering. 1—5, Those who endure tribulation shall be crowned with glory.

Doctrine and Covenants 64:33–34; Revelation given through Joseph Smith the Prophet to the elders of the Church, at Kirtland, Ohio, September 11, 1831. HC 1: 211—214. The Prophet was preparing to move to Hiram, Ohio, to renew his work on the translation of the Bible, which had been laid aside while he had been in Missouri. A company of brethren who had been commanded to journey to Zion (Missouri) was earnestly engaged in making preparations to leave in October. At this busy time, the revelation was received. 33—36, The rebellious shall be cut off out of Zion

Doctrine and Covenants 82:10; Revelation given to Joseph Smith the Prophet, in Jackson County, Missouri, April 26, 1832. HC 1: 267—269. The occasion was a general council of the Church at which Joseph Smith the Prophet was sustained as the President of the High Priesthood, to which office he had previously been ordained at a conference of high priests, elders, and members, at Amberst, Ohio, January 25, 1832 (see heading to Section 75). Formerly unusual names were used in the publication of this revelation to conceal the identity of the persons named (see heading to Section 78). These unusual names have now been dropped, except in cases where the identification is not known (see verse 11). 8—13, The Lord is bound when we do what he says.

Doctrine and Covenants 93:1; Revelation given through Joseph Smith the Prophet, at Kirtland, Ohio, May 6, 1833. HC 1: 343—346. 1—5, All who are faithful shall see the Lord.

Doctrine and Covenants 130:19–21; Items of instruction given by Joseph Smith the Prophet, at Ramus, Illinois, April 2, 1843. HC 5: 323—325. 18—19, Intelligence gained in this life rises with us in the resurrection; 20—21, All blessings come by obedience to law.

Supplemental Holy Land and Jewish insights:

Israel Learned Prosperity from Adversity: Prosperity is a contrast or opposite of adversity and hardship. The greatest deliverance of the Children of Israel was from the adversities and hardships in Egypt. That 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. “Hear me, O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem; Believe in the LORD your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper.” (2 Chronicles 20)

Prospering Both Temporally and Spiritually: 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 “prosperous” 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. They prospered both temporally and spiritually.

Israel’s Deserts—World’s Rose Capital: 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.

Roots Hold Imprints: 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.

Thriving City by a Salt Lake: Looking at what can happen in a desert, let’s examine En-gedi an oasis on the western shore of the Dead Sea and one of the most important archaeological sites in the Judean Desert. “En-Gedi is actually the name of a spring which flows from a height of 656 feet above the Dead Sea. In the Bible, the

wasteland near the spring where David sought refuge from Saul is called ‘the wilderness of En-Gedi’ and the enclosed camps at the top of the mountains, the ‘strongholds of En-Gedi.’ In the period before the Bar Kokhba War (132–135), the Jewish town of En-Gedi was imperial property and Roman garrison troops were stationed there. But in the time of Bar Kokhba, it was under his control, and was one of his military and administrative centers. In the Roman-Byzantine period, the settlement of En-Gedi is mentioned by the Church Fathers; Eusebius describes it as a very large Jewish village. En-Gedi was then famous for its fine dates and rare spices.

Ancient Evidences of Prosperity: “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, or anyone revealing the secret of the town to the gentiles . . .’ (According to one authority, it was designed against those revealing the secrets of the balsam industry.) A seven-branched *menorah* of bronze and more than 5,000 coins (found in the synagogue's cash box near the Ark) were also uncovered.

Old Roots Reestablished: “In 1953 a kibbutz was established nearby and took the name En-Gedi. Its primary function was initially defense; but it also successfully developed farming methods adapted to the local conditions of a hot desert climate and an abundance of fresh water from the En-Gedi Springs. An area surrounding the Springs has been declared a nature reserve. A field school of the Society for the Preservation of Nature, a youth hostel and a recreation home are all situated there.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Modern Tree Planting: Once the Jews began their “Aliyah,” their physical return to the Land of Israel (Erez Israel), they began planting trees. To date, more than three hundred million trees have been planted. The weather has changed. The rains have increased and the land is prospering once again.

Tree Holidays: “Tu Bi-shevat [is] the fifteenth of the Hebrew month of Shevat (usually falling in January) which traditionally marks the festive ‘New Year of Trees.’ It is a joyous holiday celebrated by the donating of trees to Israel, the eating of fresh fruits, and the singing of psalms and songs. “This date was chosen because it marks the beginning of a new cycle of blossoming and fruit-bearing for the trees in Israel. All *mitzvot* relating to the annual growing and harvesting of fruits are also applied as of the 15th of Shevat. “In Ashkenazi communities in Europe it was customary to eat 15 different kinds of fruit on Tu bi-Shevat, special preference being given to the varieties grown in Erez Israel. The eating of fruits was accompanied by the recital of Psalms.

Celebration of Desert Sands Becoming Green Fields: “The Sephardi Jews gave the New Year of Trees a greater significance. The day was called ‘The Feast of Fruits’ and special poems called ‘complas’ were sung. A special service, believed to have been compiled by the 17th-century kabbalist Nathan of Gaza for this holiday, was modeled on the Passover *seder* and included the drinking of four cups of wine. This service was expanded and published in the 18th century under the name *Peri Eẓ Hadar* (‘Citrus Fruits’). “In Israel, the New Year of Trees has come to symbolize the modern transformation of the Land of Israel from desert sand to green fields and forests.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Rain—Powerful Biblical Metaphor of Reward and Punishment: “In the Bible, reward and punishment—whether individual, national or universal—is described as appertaining to this world. It is recognized as axiomatic that God rewards the righteous by granting them prosperity and well-being, and punishes the wicked with destruction. This forms the basis of the passage from Deuteronomy which constitutes the second paragraph of the *Shema*: adherence to God's commandments will bring ‘the rain in its seasons’; disobedience will cause God ‘to shut up the heavens that there be no rain, and the land will not yield her fruit’.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

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